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Ray Hall Jr.

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Indemnified in a January Soup Kitchen Line

Ray Hall, Jr.

This noon you noticed Portland's chimneys.
They belonged to another time this cold day:
no one in Portland was upset
because those chimneys were smokeless.
Like a dinosaur's bones in a museum,
and making a useful skyline,
they asserted the recurrence of interesting fossils.
It was easier then, in that beat line,
getting that mystifying lesson about remains
that it takes looking at emptiness first
to find the shape that you may happily depend on.
The good intruder into nothingness is anachronistic,
but, assuredly, clean, and bone.

Ray Hall, Jr., is a contributor to Pile of Papers; Stack of Karma, a collection of poetry published by the Portland Coalition Press. Reprinted with permission.