

Peter Hammill

"The Institute Of Mental Health, Burning"

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It was the first day of July;
no wind breathed in the sky
when a pin-striped suit
saw that the Institute of Mental Health was burning.
He stood upon the corner
where the sun was warmer...
looking across the street,
he moved the shackles on his feet
as the Institute was burning.
Flames were roaring, singing like a thunderstorm;
smoke was pouring straight up to the sky;
windows smashing, Gothic doors and lintels fall;
timbers crashing and we both know why.
Nobody else came by to stare;
you see, they didn't really care.
Can't call the fire brigade -
none of them had been paid
and so the Institute was burning.
Throughout the city, people say it isn't pretty,
everyone agrees, and everyone feels glad;
doctored brains celebrate and everyone waves their
chains...
It's a pity they're all mad.
The Institute of Mental Health
spontaneously killed itself.
Ashes to ashes
and dust to dust:
my chains began to rust
as the Institute was burning, burning, burning.
(Chris Judge Smith)

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