

Homecoming

Reid Bruner

I.

An unexpected sight-

 You framed in my doorway with the sunlight
 Silhouetting your tenuous thespian poise and twitch
 Of a smile, and I breathe in the azalea incense.

This abandoned house of ours-

 Our decrepit Jerusalem with defenses and Temple ransacked-
 Is all yellowing walls, decaying floors, and harsh
 Light spilling in through the crumbled eaves.

 Still, at a table residing in a floorboard chasm,
 We will-amidst tea, stale bread, and a muggy afternoon-
 Talk, strangely enough, about our separate ways and the
 Measure of our lives.

II.

Sparking, Sparking, Sparking,
So begins the cleansing of these
Past eight nondescript years.
Four with you. Four without.

Your French textbooks and ballet dresses,
My incomplete poems and untuned piano,
(How ridiculous, now 28 years old with
Penniless names, these times seem.)
Barely paid medical bills without seals,
Torn tickets to seedy galleries now extinct,
Blood-stained razors and shards of empty bottles,
Statues of formless icons and luckless saints,
Thirty or so silvery coins we shared,
And every memory dreadful and delightful
Are swept into the pulsating fire and,

somewhere

Between where heat distorts the air

and

The blank slate above, dissipates.

By 1:00 AM, the flames consume one another in
Search of sustenance, leaving a barren shell
Housing three generations worth of ash.

All adrenaline and caffeine, we sink into the heap
And watch as the final flares of our endless, set
Days stretch thin across the sky.
We break and eat bread with our soiled hands.

Falling to my knees as you slip to dreaming,
 The altar was founded, the true sacrifice made,
 To restore these weathered bones and sinew,
 To stir "Hosannas!" anew in me.

Drifting, Drifting, Drifting
 Through consciousness and unconsciousness-
 So we prepare for our new bodies, new minds,
 All the dark desires and haphazard images of G-d.

III.

Morning's fingers crest over the expanse, the resounding
 grooves,
 The silent ridges, and curl about the charcoal founda-
 tion of the house and,
 Upon scraping its skin on the surface, bleeds a winding,
 unsettling odor.

A distant orb stares us down through a now
 blackened doorframe.
 We sooty faces with spotless minds
 glance aimlessly at the work of
 Our own hands, the erasing of gossamer,
 diseased sutures.

Then I focus on the weedy
 road, the limb extending from the door, at a
 Point where all the colors, lines, and
 streets blur and converge.
 This destination in limbo must be
 where we always set course.

Yes, all the quarrels, all the ecstasies-

The licking of the last bitter tea leaves en-
crusted on the rim of the cup,

The steady rise and fall of our chests synchronized,

Yes, all the visions, decisions, sins-

Will return, only written in a
refined, inspired verse.

Was it worth it and will it be worth it,
after all?

Dawn whites out
the horizon and you awake, Lean on my

Knobby, scrawny shoulder
and shake. I kiss you once on the

Forehead, twice on the
cheek, and thrice on the lips, a smoky

Taste with a hint of chardonnay.

As we stumble through the
doorframe onto the gravel path,

How our trembling fingers inter-
twine, how your hair flows

Into mine, how the light
refracts from the gloss of your eyes-

We have discovered Zion
shadowed in a film of ash.