

The Homecoming/Reginald Gibbons

This summer the garden really did make.

The mildly toxic tapwater
percolates at a boil through string beans.

Bread and salad on the table,
the knives and forks that never have changed.

As I walked past the closet doors
they swung open like vaults

and displayed the artifacts
of an earlier self, stacked neatly,

but for a journey
I made without them: I wanted

nothing with me, and one day
I will have to pay a stranger to return

to all this archaeology and sell it.
Nothing,

in fact, is ever thrown away, but still a
ceaseless devotion to creditors has

kept the gods of income and expenditure
hovering at the windows: they

exacted a sacrifice, once, through the junkie
who appeared brandishing a gun and

(even here, in the deputized shade, under
dripping, subtropical eaves)

demanded the forgotten hopes
glittering on your ring fingers, and the key

to the car . . .

Your grandmother would like you to call her.

The trip there
leads to the realm of the fabulous—

the ribboning scissortails
pose a last time on the wires;

new apartments rise haunch-first, half-
timbering faked over plywood; and the glowing malls

whose werewolves of commerce
thrive on a diet of credit. But—attend

to the unremembered and the old:
“Drive Friendly” past buzzards standing

glutted at the roadside; fetch groceries
from the U-Tot-Em; heed the factory roar

transmitted through anesthetizing
airconditioners to every den . . .

As we eat, eponymous heroes haunt
newscasts and conversation: Travis,

Houston, Polk, San Felipe—streets
where trucks collide

with a televised whisper and an occasional
building crumples in flames.

Lethargic thoughts acquiesce
as anchormen recite today’s crime report:

Homicides 7, Robberies 82, Assaults 29, Rapes 6
Double this sum, multiply by nine,

walk thrice in a circle. There is
a decorum that demands one’s silence.

Don’t you want more gravy?

This road leading home—through the security
check, jet din, past concrete fields,

yaupons and banana fronds, to this
fiefdom of regret, dotted

with petite tract castles—ends in an
old routine, the clearing away, the ritual

refusal that greets an offer
to wash the dishes. The closet doors swing

shut. There is a decorum. Put out
the light, let love fill the dark.

Condensation / Stephen Sandy

A wisp of straw hangs from
the apple branch. On his window
condensation blurs his
view, couples walking by the
river. Apples, spilled by the wall.

This autumn plenty. There,
white noise from the heart. And no one
to hear the old voices,
the singing. The cricket crutches
moonward from the cooling hearth. This

small clamor in his blood
is somehow some small knowledge of
his child: which will become
a protean encroachment on
the petty dark of solitude.

Possession is nine-tenths
of the disenchantment. The hills
go platinum with frost.