

1977

# The Homecoming

Reginald Gibbons

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## 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.