



BROWSE

 **Homecoming, and: Aubade: For A Dancer**

Edward Byrne

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ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

HOMECOMING / Edward Byrne I have a feeling for those ships Each worn and ancient one . . . —Herman Melville Often I think of those lost and luring evenings I'd walk along the wharves where the charter ships were rooted: Virginia II, Susanna B, Princess Ellen. . . The workers would still be there, hosing down the decks, storing supplies, sometimes scraping paint from the blistered hulls. After a while I knew their names too. Slattery was my favorite. He understood what a boy wanted to hear, wanted to see. Once, pointing to a lagoon where scows lay at anchor in the off-shore shallows, each darkening the green water-light like a brush stroke too thickly applied, he spoke of their owners, men he'd known since he was a boy, and how they lived the way their fathers had before them, unchanged, like the long, straight skyline of the sea. Daily, in all weather, they cruised those waters, indistinguishable as driftwood. In the pre-dawn they'd cross against the slow pull of the tide, their lamps burning through the frost-smoke that rose over the black bay, then linger along the point in the first wink of sun. When the ships returned in the late afternoon, each with an elongated shadow trailing 56 - The Missouri Review beside the whiteness of its wake, I'd watch until I could

see every man's face, each one sun-puffed, imprinted with squint-marks. Overhead, the flowering sky would clutter with gulls following indiscernible clouds of fish-scent, as if in a homecoming. Soon, the constellations, too, would collect far above the darkened harbor, and I, too young to know any better, would leave for home, believing everything would remain the same, that even I would never change. Edward Byrne THE MISSOURI REVIEW · 57 AUBADE: FOR A DANCER / Edward Byrne I wake early and watch you, asleep in your white body. The violent weather that threatened all night has blown out to sea. Only a damp breeze remains. Today, is the first day of my new year my thirty-first, and I do not want to share it with anyone. The blue-ness of pre-dawn has begun to drift in over the ocean, the black waters giving way, and the sand dunes have started to shed their night-skin. Yesterday, over the white icing of my cake, I had hoped those dark waters would stay as they were. It was the wish I wouldn't tell you. II Seated at the breakfast table, I see the flare of morning lifting over these few yellow trees and the string of unlit lanterns that stretches between them, and I remember the slight shadow of your dancer's body moving through their colors— from red to green to orange. It is the one gift I will always carry with me, though I know you hadn't intended it—were, in fact, unaware that I had watched while you returned to the garden and switched off those bright bulbs, a woman unlighting the night. Still, under this sunlight, I watch you dance. III Where the hillsides slope away from the sun there are still pools of darkness. When you awake, they too will have evaporated. The air will be warm, dry. The bay will appear smooth and the sand around it will shimmer like a bracelet worn for the first time. Under an unclouded sky, white garden-flowers will seem luminous: a few birds will scratch their way among the leaves already fallen to the lawn. 58 · The Missouri Review I'll be crossing to the other side of the sound with that one wish I was unable to tell you and with a gift you didn't know you had given. Edward Byrne THE MISSOURI REVIEW · 59 ...

HOMECOMING / *Edward Byrne*

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Cash worn and ancient size. . .*

—Herman Melville

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