

'Spitalfields'

Daniel Bennett

Count the ghosts— they've gone.
The louche antiques dealer
of Vesalius etchings and tribal masks.
The tender spiv selling waistcoats,
Hawaiian shirts, a broken Leica.
The women from the commune,
offering the sour steam of lamb.
Why fall in love with places, times?
Why expect them to always remain
steady and tolerant as parents
as you roll back in, after years away,
to tell stories of divorce and yoga,
your shoes all over the sofa cushions.
You'll know the cry when you hear it.
It echoes inside a sherry cask,
wobbling against sticky lees,
becoming scratchy, interminable:
it's the sob of lazy heartbreak.
The whole world passes through
a flea market, eking out one last sale
before throwing itself on the junk-heap.
Somewhere, a hospital bed waits,
its springs already shrieking
with the weight you'll bring.
A line of red earth is buried deep
from the times this city has burned,
and it ghosts your steps as you tread
west south north, north south east.