

Aranjuez

Nicholas Mason-Browne

The railroad coach is a reverberating, oblong
thought, and summer itself a vehicle,
reaching limits
of its own. The palace of
Aranjuez, like a parched
music-box, emerges later from the
asperity of local trees,
to be reflected among
water-plants on the bottom of
the Tagus. It seems a mortal leap from
one cloudless sky
to its equal; from childhood
walls of memory
to the courtyards of the new, where
foreign guns are stacked, a partridge
mutters in a cage, and a small boy with
misaligned eyes is doing
his English homework. It seems a long
journey from the first maimed
smile to the last, from the
mouth of one imprecation,
small and iron-colored, to another. But
the farthest jump isn't to August or Spain:
it leaves behind old clothes, a
suitcase, and a battered
grammar; alien precincts and a
faint contempt—
the sidelong look, the moment of
relief, a reasserted balance.