

Rote

W.R. Griffin

In the late spring, early summer heat of youth,
His smiles were like chariots parading.
A man-boy—his eyes sparked, made trumpets sound.
His chin was notched in youthful triumphs.

Now on that tarmac, the end of a path traveled twice before.
He found it—a fate set with his first breath—
Worn under his grandfather's, then his father's boots:
A trail etched in stone and fire.

Into Babel's breath he walked, into Khan's
Cradle, where Alexander had passed
Long ago, where Britannia had foundered,
Where the Russo-Union failed at last.

With his brothers, seared and bound by smoke,
Peering into darkness, up blinded hills,
He met that winded myth, mirage, and legend—
And there the fable, fleshed, destroyed him too.

Shell in a velvet box on that ramp.
He is not there; he is beyond our seeking.
He is a memory, an echo of a boy once loved.
Lost now under whispers and bright chest ribbons.