

Martín Espada

**Return**

*245 Wortman Avenue  
East New York, Brooklyn*

Forty years ago, I bled in this hallway.  
Half-light dimmed the brick  
like the angel of public housing.  
That night I called and listened at every door:  
in 1966, there was a war on television.

Blood leaked on the floor like oil from the engine of me.  
Blood rushed through a crack in my scalp;  
blood foamed in both hands; blood ruined my shoes.  
The boy who fired the can off my head in the street  
pumped what blood he could into his fleeing legs.  
I banged on every door for help, spreading a plague  
of bloody fingerprints all the way home to apartment 14-F.

Forty years later, I stand in the hallway.  
The dim angel of public housing is too exhausted  
to welcome me. My hand presses  
against the door at apartment 14-F  
like an octopus stuck to aquarium glass;  
blood drums behind my ears.  
Listen to every door: there is a war on television.