

Sore Feet in the City of Light

LAWRENCE RHU

for Karen

Is this some bairro of Parnassus
That names street after street after poets
Or just a flight from where we live?
The airport's a quick Metro ride away
From Rua Fernando Pessoa,
But my fasciitis prompts no song
On cobblestones where two cops clamp
Denver boots on two parked cars.

We met at the school bike rack down yonder
Where nine streets invoke the Muses
In New Orleans and Clio's debate
With Melpomene and Calliope—
Epic and tragic history—
Still rages. General Lee's lost his place
On top of the column at Lee Circle
Where we shared such distances
As Tucson and Lake Wobegon,
Mater Dolorosa and Our Lady
Of Perpetual Responsibility,
And found our way from job to job,
To children and family trips out West.
Memory's daughters are keeping

Their titles down at the river bend.

The last time we drove through Denver
Tim hosted us outside at Vincenzo's.
His kids both played Frisbee with ours
And, before we pressed on to Boulder,
Our pair became their slightly older
Idea of kindness, according to Tim.

On the drive back through Denver we dined
At a sidewalk café in LoDo
And watched a guy on a penny farthing
Pedal by in a dress—one of many
That evening on bikes in drag for Men-
Can-Wear-Dresses-Too Day. I'd never
Seen women's outfits like those guys'
Since Doolen Junior High's prom,
I recall, on Rua Fernando Pessoa
Where one often wonders, Who am I?
And why?

 Ten years before, in our new
Preowned minivan, our kids were upset.
They missed the fireworks back home
As we pressed on through Oklahoma
Due west to Shamrock, on the Fourth
Of July, heading to Santa Fe.

The sun sank in the Panhandle
While the radio played country songs,
And darkness dropped down all around.
Small towns, on both sides of the road,

Began kindling up the night sky
With rockets that sparkled and burst
With bright streaks and stars. Soon
Disappointment disappeared
From the kids' faces. They gleamed
Looking out at their windows wide-eyed.