

After the Fire, Returning

(for the Seckers)

Lidded jampots,
spoon-slotted, earthen-
ware, meat platters,
hearth-dashing goblets.
Blueglazed mug, mine
when I come

to eat. No fast food
in Water Valley. Things simmer.
We talk, look out over the fields
from our yielding chairs.
Raise the glasses in our hands
in all the languages between us.
Somebody plays the virginal.
We sing madrigals, gossip.
Josephine, bawdy, joking,
stirs the pots and I could dish
the good feelings
especially as night settles round
this house that shines
in me, still.

I kick the rubble
left when fire blasted
in little over one greedy hour
an entire history; the table settings,
sheet music, that make you different
from anybody else.

Not a blackened bracelet.
Not a wall. Not a photograph coiling
the metal of a first edition.
Just this. Those earthen pots.
Licked clean.

CORNELIA HOOGLAND