

# The Greenhouse

by [Adam Zagajewski](#) in the [January 2, 2002](#) issue

In a small black town, your town,  
where even trains linger unwilling,  
anxious to be on their way,  
in a park, defying soot and shadows,

a gray building stands lined with  
mother-of-pearl.

Forget the snow, the frost's repeat-  
ed blows;

inside you're greeted by a damp an-  
thology of breezes

and the enigmatic whispers of vast

leaves  
coiled like lazy snakes. Even an

Egyptologist  
couldn't make them out.

Forget the sadness of dark stadiums  
and streets,  
the weight of thwarted Sundays.

Accept the warm breath wafting  
from the plants.

The gentle scent of faded lightning  
engulfs you, beckoning you on.

Perhaps you see the rusty sails of

ships at port,

islands snared in rosy mist, crum-  
bling temples' towers;

you glimpse what you've lost, what

never was,

and people with lives  
like your own.

Suddenly you see the world lit dif-  
ferently,  
other people's doors swing open for  
a moment,  
you read their hidden thoughts,  
their holidays don't hurt,

their happiness is less opaque, their  
faces  
almost beautiful.

Lose yourself, go blind from ecsta-  
sy,  
forgetting everything, and then per-  
haps  
a deeper memory, a deeper recog-  
nition will return,

and you'll hear yourself saying: I

don't know how—

the palm trees opened up my  
greedy heart.