

## *Born Again in Brooklyn*

JOHN AZRAK

I want to be born again  
in Brooklyn. Oh, how I would  
worship the very playground  
where I lost my virginity to a public  
school girl, and a few teeth to  
slick Italian boys who didn't take  
kindly to my stickball prowess  
or mixed blood. How I would fall  
to my knees at the foot of the sacred bridge  
where my cousin was mugged and  
nearly raped at eighteen, and no longer be  
wary of Greenpoint's blind alleys  
or the weathered back streets  
of Williamsburg where writers now gather  
their thoughts: no small share of the fiction  
that lines the shelves of my suburban den.  
How it would do my soul good  
to run Prospect Park, not as if my  
life depended on it, and walk Dean Street  
where my father's heart failed in the heat  
of a soul blistering piece goods factory.  
I'd learn the culture of the Arabs  
I foreswore on Atlantic Avenue and

pay homage to the Hasidic Jews whose  
silent passage over the Brooklyn-Queens  
Expressway casts a holy shadow.  
I'd take back the brownstone my  
brothers and I sold for a song,  
with its postage stamp yard, and climb  
to the roof where we went from cigarettes  
to joints and turn instead,  
with heartfelt reverence,  
to the open face of the Manhattan skyline  
and proclaim my new faith.