

Tilt & other poems

Tilt

White aprons,
twice stained

by blackberries,
summer-picked
beneath stars

by fingers,
bramble-pricked:

what thorns
we clutch
to find
the fruit

Redbrick chimneys
scrawl calligraphy
in smoke

our breath
flash freezes,
rises to
the Pleiades

seven-jeweled,
winter's crown

our footprints
balter through
the snow

we are
lost together

Red maple,
ash, and
oak shed
their shrouds

sap runs
cold as
embalming fluid

trees are
poems, the
skeletal frames
of words,
waiting for
spring to
drape them
once more
with meaning

Trout swell
the rivers
deep and
cold and
clear, as
dandelions burst
on breezes
sweet and
sharp as
wild onions

“If I am alive and taken prisoner,
the city jail is located at the end of the bridge through which we always passed...”¹

—toward Dallas,
as Brutus the younger staggered Romeward
with all the grief of Gaul,
with your young wife
and child and no job,
passing flyers on street corners:

The Daily Worker

Fair Play for Cuba

Searching classifieds:

An opening at the book warehouse—you circle it in red.

And clipping coupons:

The American Rifleman

6.5 Italian Carbine

Good Quality 4X Scope

\$19.95

¹ Excerpt from a letter written to Marina Oswald by Lee Harvey Oswald on April 10, 1963—the night Lee attempted to kill retired Maj. General Edwin Walker at his home in Dallas, Texas.

Babel

this is the City
& its Tower
our hands are still raw
from lifting stone
atop stone

this is the river
that slakes our Thirst
my Friend died here
when he could no longer work
I still feel his cool shadow
upon my neck

this is the Bazaar
where we are Bought
& Sold
where men with gleaming swords
& kufiya as white
as distant peaks keep watch
& women in their bright dresses
jostle with vendors
the air stings of spice
Paprika & Cinnamon & Cardamom & Jasmine

they say that here
every beggar is a King
but tomorrow
every king will be a Beggar

Taxco (recollections)

Birds like
children or
Lost Souls in
leaf-dark trees and
amber-tired streetlights
Spanish-strange

Night

Cobbles,
petal-stained and cracked,
churchyard Shadows and
Christ

Penitentes,
knees raw from
the ascent to
Santa Prisca

Faith,
fragrant
and heavy
like wine

back-bent Men
with canvass bags
and canes,
labored Breath
like prayers, and

Tourists lazing on
wrought-iron benches in
the Zocalo

al-Hallaj

One morning
in the market,
among barrels
of almonds and
baskets of rock salt
and fresh-slaughtered lambs
swinging from silk ropes,

A man exclaimed,
“I am God!”

When they came
for him, he
went dancing
in his chains

He hanged
in the spring
of 922,
and the Caliph's men
scattered his ashes

upon the Tigris

between whose banks
the Earth divests
her innocence,

whose waters carry seeds
that may soon
swell with life,
and centuries late,
prove him right