

Parisa Ashraf

Untitled (A Graveyard in Dhaka)

Some of the graves are immaculate  
manicured little lawns like  
astro turf you could stick  
a pink flamingo  
in between the jasmine  
and the poems  
carved into stone

I could not read them  
but I knew them

I traced the letters  
foreign and just feet away  
from bones and pressed  
my tongue against my teeth  
begging to read the poems  
carved into stone

"In this country you have to bribe a man for a plot of land"

Others are unkempt, wild  
like banshee hair  
their children long ago  
faded to the west  
to buy plots of crew cut  
land to be  
buried in

My grandparents' are modest  
eternally modest  
such that even this memory  
wishes not to impose  
but I remember (I do)  
slipping off my shoes  
a sign of respect  
and feeling the red hot stone  
underneath my feet and the  
bones under them

I said the only prayer I knew  
I did not understand  
myself  
could not tell the guttural holy arabic apart  
from the phylum of faded pink flowers  
that grow wild

in between the jasmine  
my wet red tongue  
against my teeth  
all the same

Tim Barzditis

Traveler's Asterisk

We unfolded a secondhand  
road map, stuck it with colored  
thumb tacks, hung it high on the wall  
and began  
to mark in red all of the pit stops we'd never  
piss in, all of the continental breakfasts  
left uneaten, all of the cities and back alleys  
we could have  
named our children after.

When we finally stepped back  
to gaze upon its direction, no long or true  
path wired through;  
only scatterplot, sharp and vulgar.  
Bullet holes were all  
that shone through the reddened mess.  
With no true veins to flow  
through, we set fire  
to the heavy atlas, all that it ever carried,  
and tried to travel on without any blinking star.