

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.