

MARY CROW

The Coca-Cola Tree

—San Cristóbal de Las Casas

In the main plaza, the giant upside-down
cone of a green xmas tree is spiraled with wide
red ribbon, “Coca Cola” repeated in white
round and round in this city trying to ignore
the small shoe-shine boys who drum up little
business among us sneaker-clad tourists.

In the early mornings, a grainy mist conceals
mountains, or dunes, or tanks, burning
rooms, another kneeling, another city trying
to forget bones—how to act as if nothing
happens, how to sum everything up in a sigh.

My memory worsens, so many nouns slipping
away that I cannot retrieve. Instead: Like/

unlike: But unlikely. To be found. Out.

Someday, Sweetheart

Yes, I lied about the size of that fish,
mango snapper caught in a Florida inlet
(someone Photoshopped the picture).
But it did fracture the water as I reeled it in.

Who can hold this liar up or love her?
To that one I leave Arethusa Fountain's
papyrus plants and black ducks, wind
that tears pillow slips from lines outside
apartment windows to drop down to us.

Ah, pillow, who sleeps with me tonight?
In the pit of the world we'll curl ourselves
into the twilight and stretch out on
Hieron's massive altar, feet and legs bare.

Someday I'll love me though that day
can't come soon enough if it can ever
rise out of the slimy mud of my words
to myself—don't I deserve every one?

No, that day has already tried to arrive—
stumbling.

The Worst Time of the Year

The worst time for such a journey,
three stages, three flights, weather sharp,
“the very dead of winter,”
cities’ gray chill which feels hostile.

But if travel is folly—why indeed
are we traveling so far for the sight
of broken columns, for sleep in snatches,
for dirty snow melting on a volcano?

Better, perhaps, a world of interiors,
shuttered rooms at the end of long corridors,
walls like screens—flat, upright, impenetrable—
on which to project a shadow play of loneliness.

Or to feel one’s self as the center of a painting
without a speck of context but where sunshine
seems to float free and drift out, paint like a veil
under which the background disappears.

The visitors’ audiophone measures out genius—
artist remote as a star in outer darkness.