

The Witness Garden

Row after row, the garden grows husks
that sway like arms, legs that disappear.
Each fruit hangs like crumpled fist.
Each leaf glistens like a gnarled ear.
In springtime, the trees take the shapes
of crucifixes. They grow next to wooden
stakes with shoes still smoldering
in the noonday sunshine. Socrates
would recognize this place, having been handed
a goblet of hemlock to drink away
his political beliefs. When the tongues
of poets were cut out, they were mailed here.
Another regime executed everyone guilty
of wearing eyeglasses. Those wire frames
are buried in this plot, and though no one remembers
where, in the orchard, one can see
the length of a century in any direction.

Perhaps you think this place does not exist?
You think it's the smoke and mirrors
of fairytales, the shadow game
of magic shows? On the news tonight,
a Senator in our country mulls the viability
of using torture to protect democracy. Everyone
is watching. Even the quiet lady across
the street. Blue light from the TV fills
her apartment as she pours milk into a bowl
for her cat, then lifts a flowerpot from its place
on the windowsill and pulls it inside.