

“Tired of the stench, Haitians burn bodies in plaza”

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [December 12, 2012](#) issue

And the flames leap higher in the darkening sky;  
a vivid wall of fire sheds its light on faces  
hushed as if a child were being born, a manger  
ready in the rudest inn. Everywhere straw  
and the droppings of chickens, broken plaster,  
dust of collapse. In the camps, children die  
of cholera, hungry dogs drag garbage  
through back alleys running like a sore.

Here, the stench of bodies trapped in bricks  
and mortar will remain a little while. In the plaza  
they wrap their noses, silent as the captives  
find a quick release—a sudden rush of wind,  
a rain of embers when each soul flies up.

A mantra stills their scoured tongues.  
Expectant, calm, and speechless underneath  
white winter stars, they eye the pyre simple  
as a crèche, this crowning what a birth might be,  
no midwife but their prayers that mount,  
gray gulls above the stretching limbs of trees.