

Cold Street & Skulls

Like an exile I return
to the playground
of childhood
A maze of roads
Empty lots *callejones*
Spaces gentrified by progress
Nothing left to the imagination
in this place but shadows
passing in the evenings
when the Texas heat
relaxes its stranglehold
on the day & a desert breeze
eases a small artifact
from those mummified years:

Frío y Calaveras—Cold & Skulls—
translation lost in its haunting breath

A distant train trips my reverie
like a muezzin calling prayers
A child rummages through
his father's drab green duffle bag
of army souvenirs
Robert punts
the football in the air
end over end
until it bounces back to him
Pedaling bikes late
into the night
Mother calling them in
Riding the rickety bus
with Amá al Centro
His eyes barely peep
over the worn vinyl seats
Head tossed back and forth
como titere a puppet
The yeasty scent of pan fresco
from the bakery across the tracks
The flash flood of '64 that turned
the streets to mud
The sky a deep blue bruise
like the purple shrouds
covering the statues of
Christ during Lent

*as they bowed their heads
in oblivious repentance*

Overhead clouds march
past like pilgrims
to Mecca or Jerusalem
& I among them