

“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.