

The Lie

Under the ancient ahuehuate
 in Mexico City, Cortes wept
 over his disastrous defeat.

This is before he
 utterly destroyed the Aztecs.

The tree is now shaped
 as if it grew out of anger,
 twisted and branching
 into subtler passions
 and suffering. What is it

rooted to under the city?

Another time, the same city
 founded on a myth of roses
 and the Virgin opening
 a robe of stars, the moon
 supported under her feet
 by angels encircling
 the hills and muddy water.
 She is a symbol of the conservatives,
 painted purple, white, and gold

and nailed in place
 by a 16th-century carpenter.
 In Houston, they let
 the crazies out
 in the middle of the city,
 and they drift
 into the neighborhoods, weeping
 sometimes in the streets
 as darkly as Cortes,
 destruction on destruction.

Ninfa got up from bed
and went to one
to chase some horror
out of him. She must have
appeared as the guardian
of his heart, her soft
Mexican face, her encouragement.
Who knows what feats
he went on to accomplish
in the dazing heat

and local trash
or how he was brought down
finally? Ninfa says
she never weeps
unless she is angry,
which is not the truth.
I remember on the phone once
out of loneliness she wept
a huge immovable silence
that still roots in me.