

ARLINGTON

On a gravesite is a flame, flipping in
the wind, like a dry maize stock torch. The flame
is not allowed to grow, yet tears of
the world rear it into a bonfire. It is a small flame.

No fire in this country comes near this flame. Since
its lighting, nineteen years have walked over it as
unpropitiously as each day sets, yet each eye that sees
the flame breaks its own tear shell. It is not a big flame.

Like a Christian visit to Jerusalem, a
visit to Washington includes a tour of Arlington,
the city of the hero, where peace and love
lie below the soil. O that flame, lit on a November day

Was this America's last death? Or its first? That flame
wrinkles faces like old age, drawing the peoples of the world
daily, very unlike the pilgrimage to Mecca. Even the tour
conductor, like someone who has been charged

With complicity in a treason case tells you
solemnly, "I have not described a gravesite here
as well and as repeatedly as John F. Kennedy's." It is
the only flame in that city of gravesites: Arlington.