

A Walk on Wet Ground

The memory of my country spoils my walk.
Thoreau

A wet morning. Gray. A little too warm
for frost. Grackle and raven having their say.
Some time yet before the blackbirds
clack and flutter toward the apparent sun.
I had forgotten, given my own children,
that the harvest and new year's rites each fall
are first of all a response to certain death.

No place to sit: puddles in low spots,
the swelling high ground spongy underfoot.
The wettest fall in white memory.
As the light rises, the air quickens,
adding new chill to the damp: standing
still too long, the skin wants to shiver,
the hand and finger knuckles to be held;
walking, only the toes seem to feel the cold.

Daylight burnishes the orchard leaves
still clinging to last year's new growth.
The mesquite are finally dropping their fronds,
getting as much sun to the trunk as they can.
Underneath, the beds of leaves and grasses
migrantes have made glisten with damp light.

The border patriots have a point of course:
though some birds return to the nest each spring,
others do not. Names borne in a land
they came to call home, wherever their bodies may go
they themselves disappear into their songs.

*For Joel Climenhaga, born in Rhodesia,
who died en la frontera on All Souls' Day*