

TWO POEMS

Mark Fruitkin

Fourteen Lines On Discipline in Poetry

Barcelona is one of the three or four densest cities
in the world, she said, caught between
mountains and sea like Conrad's mythical Sulaco.
Later, speaking of words, someone mentioned
`paradise' is connected to `prison'.
The Old Man of the Mountain with his assassins
in the walled gardens, I said, walled paradises.
Near Gaudi's houses in their architectural ripples
like shapes of sand caressed by sea wind,
we spoke of sonnets, haiku and poetic discipline
over beer and cheese, wine and cockles.
Later, walking down the Ramblas at dusk,
from within the closed-up stall of the birdseller,
a warbler calls to the evening sky.

7 May 1993 Barcelona

On the St. James Way

On the road to Santiago de Compostela
this fancy hotel of St. Mark was once
a monastery refuge for pilgrims,
a medieval resting place housing holy knights.
Today, the elegant waiter pours the "aqua mineral"
with the flourish of a bullfighter
while the lush cloister with its gallery
of medieval statues is a natural place
for tourists to make snapshots.

Now in dusty evening twilight, swallows
dip and dive and swirl about stone towers
in their ancient way.
Nearby stands a hundred-foot brick chimney,
an early industrial remnant topped
by stork's nest of woven branches.
The stork leans over feeding her young
like one providing sustenance to those on pilgrimage.
Everything has changed, nothing has changed.
Like the river Bernesga which has never stopped flowing
past these walls, the seeking of the pilgrim remains.

11 May 1993 León.