

COMING HOME OLDER

Lori Anderson

I. Diorama (Salt Lake City)

I, tourist, would push this button forever
to keep the angel lit

if America's Joseph, this Smith, would stop
his spectacles, his reciting

of visions. I want you not the man
to talk, turn neon,

tell me my mission, o beauteous
angel of wax. I've followed

the blue books of Mormons
all the way from the land of Junipero Serra

motel by motel, and it's too far
not to have seen inside

your Temple—tower, spire, silent trumpet
held by a golden herald. Must I linger here,

visitor citing brochures
in chorus with Joseph?

Can't you break this strange alliance,
step from your showcase?

Can't you let me in?
I just wanted to touch your ear,

tell you of my home, of the fountain
at Mission San Juan Bautista. There's a flea market,

a monk's robe, eucalyptus leaves.
I could adorn you

with the water and wonders of this world.
You could give me wings.

II. King's Highway (San Juan Bautista)

No Lord, child, just thirst.
Thirsting and quenching

& a quenched spirit's no good—that's why
we work toward always wanting.

Kingdom *at*, never in,
hand. Going for the bush

just to feel
birds ignite into flight—

the harder, the sweeter. The liquor
we all drink:

words mostly, pretending
we can fly.

When we can't, pillage . . .
missions, towns, this market

stall in the heart of El Camino Real.
Go ahead, buy it.

Hat from fragile feathers of a white egret
worn by a lady between wars.

Go on, St. Paul said cover your head
so as not to tempt

angels, meaning men.
See how they turn

& with this hat—long, exquisite plume,
finest of waterfowl—

you could begin your quenching,
could learn your loveliness.