1984

Arlington

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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.