

thirteen

s a m g o l i

i walk

desolate streets beside my family, three-thousand
miles away from the rubble of two
smoking stacks of three-thousand
lives, too many tons of debris.

we enter

a diner. a grey silence saunters
over then sits
among us—an unfamiliar visitor.
on the t.v. behind the counter, images
of bruised
men with turbans, their wives
weep, plead for Allah's mercy.

Osama, Osama: we hear my father's
chewed name, ground between tooth
and tongue, spit out like the shells
of sunflower seeds we usually share on sunny
days like these—pockets full of laughter,
drinking black & mint tea. today,

we share

a grand slam breakfast, beneath
a freshly printed banner declaring *united*
we stand. but from my own circle, at this table,
i notice people peer in, strangers
squinting to investigate our Arabic
coffee-colored eyes, turned downward
beneath thick dark brows. my siblings,

too young to notice. my parents
pay with the credit card stamped
with my mother's Mexican name instead.

we leave,
bellies full, spirits betrayed,
in my dad's ford s.u.v. driving
away, i look for the shadow of
one of the two American flags
we have clipped to our back
side windows. at high noon, all i see
is pavement.