Two Poems

MALCOLM G. FARLEY

From the Insurgent Southern Prefecture

(Black gall and gilt on silk,
circa the North/South Period)

Dear Y:

The gnarled branch of the white
mulberry beyond our concrete parapet

resembles Nana's wrinkled arm as it slipped
from her kimono's sleeve one lemony

April years ago. Today, from the pink
sakura podium in the Situation Room

of our President-for-Life, a stone-faced
porte-parole shrugged off civilian

causalities. Our pylon is unpeopled now,
but the stadiums are full. Partisans applaud

like angry bees. Men in anti-riot gear appear.
From our high dormer, they look like samurai

who struggle with a small, scared pig.
This August, the mulberry will bear

bone-colored, seedless drupes. We smile.
No more bitter saplings to uproot.

Yours, Z.

Rules of the Game

A golden barrel cactus,
bulging in its too small
terracotta crock,

is not unlike the sun

this August morning:
orbed, glistering

and fatal to the touch,

a hybrid
of beneficence and nuclear
commotion.

Spines—

like stellar coronas
with excess virulence and throb—

radiate and poke.

And yet, *per ardua ad astra*
the Latin proverb chirps,
as scalding coffee

beckons. "Through thorns
and gamma rays

to stardom."

Whatever sears—
or pierces—serves.