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# Orange War (South Carolina Review)

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## ORANGE WAR

*Inspired by the Ozier Muhammed photograph that appeared on the front page of The New York Times, March 26, 2003*

What makes it orange?

The earth and sky and convoy from the first  
Marine Division rolling toward Baghdad  
through the densest sandstorm in recent memory.

What makes the whole scene the color of citrus fruit in a wooden crate?

There are no fires in sight (yet), so why this amber hue?

Who would wage war inside a single color—  
with only one, what's there to fight about?

Do the soldiers feel a part of the effect the way skaters at a roller rink  
can look down at the light they wear off the mirror ball  
or are they merely objects of camera composition  
meant to be viewed at a safe distance?

But why orange?

Frank Sinatra's favorite color.

Mine too.

Though perhaps it's time to pick a new one  
if armored tanks advancing in a cloud of sand rival  
the color of the sun, autumn leaves, and popsicles.  
Then again, all the more reason to stick by it.

No one could have predicted this monolithic ocher  
any more than poet Tao Harrison was prepared  
for the inside of the gas chamber at Majdanek to be blue.  
Why blue? Turns out it was a chemical reaction  
in the poisoned last gasps of victim  
after victim that painted the walls a shade  
somewhere between cerulean and lapis.

Who taps whose shoulder first

when art and atrocity start to dance?

Are we to blame for not keeping them on opposite sides of the room  
and if they move as one, how dare we admire?

War is hell, this we know, and yet here's this awesome picture  
of it going on in an orange sandstorm and I'm digging it.

I'm digging how orange I didn't know everything could be.

I'm not condoning hell, just sometimes

I can't take my eyes off it.