

Lamenting the Inevitable

The world dances with hate
Like heat waves
Coming up off blacktop.

In Jerusalem, city of zeal,
Tante Zillah, intelligent
And compassionate, pours black

Coffee in the checkered shade
Of the oleanders,
Laments that your Arab

Friends finally always
Betray you, they cheat on you,
They presume on your friendship

To put you
In the way
Of danger,

Inviting you where the bombs
Will detonate, the crowd
Will riot. This is of course just

As the Nicaraguan revolutionaries
Invite their American
Sympathizers

To the Honduran
Border where
They are shot at

And barely escape,
And just as the nine year old
Black girl in the Project

Whose haughtiness I admired
When I bravely asked her to play
Looked me up and down

And spit on my shoes. To prove
Something, to share
Something, to throw us safe ones also

Like sticks
Into the fire
Of the burning world.

Alicia Ostriker