

*Ode to the artichoke*

The soft-hearted  
artichoke  
put on its warrior suit  
and, straightbacked, built  
a little dome.  
Underneath  
its scales,  
it was  
impenetrable.  
Right next to it  
crazed vegetables  
bristled  
and twisted themselves into  
creepers, cattails,  
or histrionic bulbs.  
Beneath the earth  
slumbered red-whiskered  
carrots,  
the earth  
sucked dry the vines  
that draw wine from the soil,  
cabbages  
spent their time  
trying on skirts,  
and oregano labored



to fill the world with perfume,  
and all the while sweet  
artichokes  
in their corner of the garden  
dressed for war,  
like shiny  
pomegranates,  
and just as proud.  
One day  
they marched  
through the market,  
side by side  
in wicker baskets,  
to make their dream come true:  
to be soldiers.  
All lined up,  
they were never more warlike  
than that day at the fair.  
The men  
in white shirts  
who stood amidst the vegetables,  
they were  
the artichokes'  
officers.  
Tight formation,  
the drill sergeant's screams,  
drumroll  
of a falling crate.  
But  
then  
along comes  
Maria  
with a basket on her arm.  
She picks up  
an artichoke  
fearlessly,  
she looks it over, she holds it  
up to the light as if it were an egg.

She buys it  
and sticks it  
in her bag  
along with a pair of shoes,  
a cabbage and a  
bottle  
of vinegar;  
back  
in the kitchen,  
she drops it in the pot.  
This is how  
the carer  
of the armored vegetable  
we call an artichoke  
comes to a peaceful end.  
For the final act  
we reveal  
its delicious flavor,  
plucking it leaf by leaf,  
and devour  
the peaceable dough  
that lies at its green heart.