

THE SPICE MARKET

ANNE CHAMPION

Bethlehem, West Bank

On one side, the stands waft perfumes of basil,
thyme, oregano, and cayenne. On the other,

bars of olive soap. Perhaps a woman bathes her lover
with them, cleansing away the wear of grueling heat, rinsing

his eyes of the sting of tear gas, letting sand and soap
mingle to polish him soft again. Perhaps she thinks

of him while vendors brush silks and carpets
against her cheeks, imagines the day they marry,

how afternoons in the market will belong
to them both, and every scent will lead

to a future like a morning sun
burning off a fog. Or perhaps, an eclipse,

and she will lose him. She'll touch her own
shadow as it cascades over every spice, plunge

her hands in it like she's burying his bones—
in the herbs, in the seeds, in something that can grow.