

Standing within, but also in critical opposition to, the poetic tradition that Walt Whitman established, "Dark Fields" questions the American hope for millennial perfection. Emphasizing the judgments of history, these poems cast doubt on the conviction that America is the City of God and that Americans are His Chosen People.

Dark Fields: Poems and an Essay

by Mark G. Malvasi

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Dark Fields

Poems and an Essay

Mark G. Malvasi

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A City on a Hill*

Why have you come
to this new land,
this city on a hill,
living always in the
shadow of God,
somber and luminous,
this brilliant, mad
failure, cursed and
divided between the
saved and the damned?
The beacon summoned;
all depends on
the beam of light
that shines forth now
in artificial splendor
to reassure that the fingerprint
of God marks every puddle,
and that every dog urinating
on a wall has a divine
mission.

*The title derives from John Winthrop's description of the New World in "A Modell of Christian Charity," the sermon he delivered in 1630 aboard the *Arabella*, bound for Massachusetts Bay Colony.

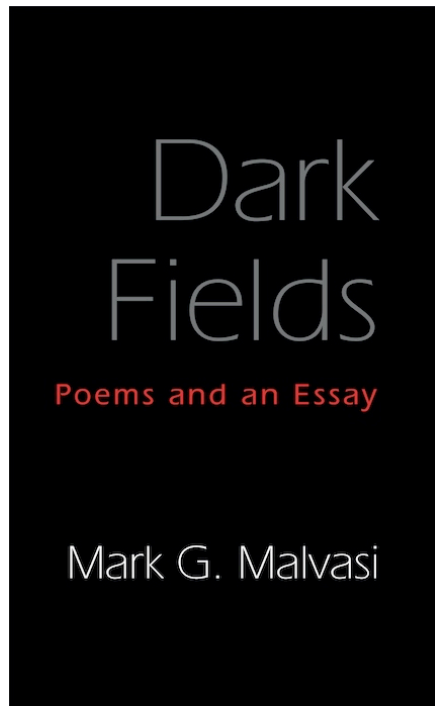
The Real Thing

Car dealerships, motor homes
casinos, gun shops, strip clubs
Las Vegas, Disneyland, Silicon
Valley, talk radio, reality TV,
Coca-Cola, Big Macs,
Super Bowls, opinion polls,
innovation prodded to excess,
the uninterrupted rhythm of
fashion, the promiscuity of
the moment, the anxious
swirl of centrifugal force,
the fierce concupiscence,
the obscenity of liberation:
the real America. This
soft, air-conditioned hell
at the edge of the world,
this vulgar, mournful,
scrap-heap paradise,
abandoned by the gods,
is paradise still. There is no other.

Always With You*

An infinity of faces,
invisible, anonymous
amnesiac, missing
persons for whom
no one is looking,
lives unfolding into
indifference, consigned
to statistical tables
and lists of endangered
species, free to die
second-class deaths.
The only requirement
is to leave without
a trace, for poverty
is an affront not
credible, and the poor
must be cast out,
wiped off the face
of the earth, for having
shown such bad taste.

*The Gospel According to Matthew, 26:11; the
Gospel According to Mark, 14:7.



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