

Casualties

The remains of a refugee half-tucked in earth, an arm stretched, a chicken's claw clasped in hand. Plumes of white hang over, keep the dead decent. A foot and three toes remain in the open, one nail flared, the underside a thorn-red youth. An absent face peering from the depths, a dog licking the tit of an upturned woman. Drops of rain pushing out the first worm.

Tiger-Man

To hold the head, to feast on
breasts, to grow new
mountains, slicing love
out of children, to uncrowd
the teeth, unclaiming
loneliness, to cleanse for
holiness. To see days
through the hauntology of (no)
literature, to pass from the old river
into the dead river.

To be fiercer than death in
near-death, to lose your idea,
losing, the idea, to think it
over, soaking in an imagined river
(again and again),
to go home without a home,
to mark down the terror of
tiger and man becoming one.

To blame yourself, to blame
the self, to watch you suffer,
coming out all the weaker.

To taste what he's saying,
to taste what you're saying,
to know the enemy, to be
the (not) enemy, outstretching

daughters who bleed and work
for the story-wrecker.

To carry mountains, to beg
the earth, to fill with earth,
to expand belly-out,
chemical count, to unreach
the South China Sea, noting
these mountains are unlike other
mountains, to know this forever,
to paw the first wave, seeing
tiger-man closed around water.

A Woman Rides Bus 12

I pretend she has come to see me, but she is not seeing me. Grayhaired, quieted—slumped into smallness. Her scent evokes my mother's presence—a bit of sun from last year's winter, oil from weathered skin. I think to talk to her, share the incident that happened earlier today. *I'm okay, and how are you?* The outside passes us. People spilling all around.

The turn up and down the mountain is a long ride from here. Graced with deer along the way, a man sitting on his porch observes a fawn reaching for a pear hung loosely from a bowed branch. A mile later, a doe lowers her head into a garden. A cat peers from the window. A magpie beside a waterspout.

Turning her head from side to side, her eyes smolder—the face inanimate. Trapped in a meadow on wheels, we climb and fall. Two birds descending. I count the skin tags on the back of her neck, think of each as a body.

I think to hold her drooping ears between my fingers and say *don't get lost*. I touch my ears.

Postcard to Nicaragua

at the turn
of floral breath—
 my sleep demon burns

the neck full & I
do not hurry my release—

in the veil we exchange—
 skin our first trap
overrule this lust

though I harrow—
 wage my number—
the terms feigning arm
& arm

swathed in premature rain—
city fawns in the love song
 of a bluebird—