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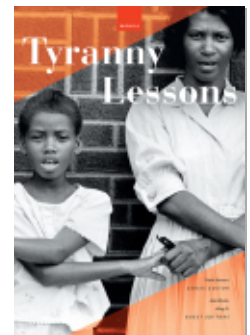
Cannon Fodder

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Cannon Fodder

We try to hold the ashes
in the remaining, deformed palm.
When mixed with tears
the ashes solidify into cement.
Do we feel grief? We are too numb
even to sort out the fragments in the ashes.

They fall from the sky like snow
smudging our faces with their blackness,
as if a punishing spirit wanted us to see
our streaked faces when we gaze in a mirror.

So we must bathe,
try to cleanse ourselves,
though it's not possible to wash away the memory,
or scrub away the stains.

Splintered like painful nerve endings
they are everywhere in our bodies,
crying out to us like rivers.

Cannon fodder. Cannon ashes.

We roll the cannon ashes through the snow
as if creating a giant snowball
that could gather up the fears
that overpower the remnants
of our dreams, and roll away our silence.
The snowball of ashes is enormous, like a monument
that could collapse at any moment:

dark ashes, heavy and brittle.

Hubei
2017

Translation by Frank Stewart and Ming Di