

Two Poems

Tara Ballard

Two Days after the Assassination

What is the human equivalent / of ten monsoons? An
infinite number / of seashells leaf the oak-colored
dunes / northeast of the capital, / where streets are
leather jacket pockets / stuffed with protestors / who, T
swears, are paid / to march in support / of the regime.
There is a tremor / manifest along the coast, and
libraries / are set aflame. / He memorizes the carried,
lifted, / and lost with each toss / of surf to shore. / I
wade / and bend to choose the right shell / for its ear-
song, topography of grooves / and ridges, lilac smooth
/ inner face. I reach for as many / as my hands can purse,
/ then look toward the sea / where an empty boat rocks
itself, / rocks itself

After Umm Fadi Asks Whether My Country Cares

Young boys flatten themselves
to the ground like missiles

into concrete. Their wails siren,
prophesy of air raids, rockets that fly

over the family gate. Bullets
lodge into a church

where tiles the size of fingernails scatter
stone squares in a harvest.

Tucked below a mountain's low ridge,
a hollow of homes on a fog-thick morning:

an empty cup, the groan of wind.
A thud like water-heavy towels on marble.

Inside an underground hospital,
electrical fixtures quake upon impact.

Smoke the color of tires billows
above sun-bleached hills, terrace after terrace,

rows of tree stumps. There is a city
I dream. That city merges with a city,

and I remain America in both. I wake,
guilty, the names of boys on my lips.

Tara Ballard is author of *House of the Night Watch* (New Rivers Press, 2018), winner of the 2016 Many Voices Project Prize. Her work has appeared in the *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Consequence*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poetry Northwest*, and elsewhere. She is an assistant poetry editor at *Prairie Schooner*, an affiliate editor at *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and a PhD student of English in the Midwest.