

Territory

Paolo Tiasas
Translation by author

Bird unchained by sky, hurry your flight.
The ark wields a cannon. They're allies with the flood.
We're yet unlisted in a theory of the world, no parts for us
in the new testament: we exist merely as examples,
lessons learned for future foreign generations,
asterisks in extra histories (with parentheticals like
these when the historian colonizes even here),
dregs of civilization when in the book of revelation
the soup bowl of the universe spills. With all due respect,
tell me who pays for those souls dragged along dirt roads,
entered by rifles, impaled by bayonets, returned by planes in boxes,
livers knifed open, hanged as heretics christened,
turned homeless by a mayor's arson, starved in the farms they plow,
made target practice and trophied by cardboard medals,
sunk on boats made puny by the rival ship's shadow,
fed broken glass, made to kneel on salt, bones turned old
the day of their birth until then engulfed by dirt in cemeteries
that can't afford to repaint broken gravestones? Oh
I haven't asked you to speak yet. We're on page one. I haven't even
enumerated all your transgressions, all your sins turn to static
noise that enters one ear and leaves another. But I haven't even
started the introduction. Not the middle. Nor at nothing's
end. In all the myths of creation, in any possible version
or modification, you've never bestowed territory, only
water that rents out dirt. You've lent no eyes
yet ask our tears to pay your bail.