

thrusts in her small victory for women
of Nanjing; for women of all China then.
But now for all the women of the world.

2012

*President Sun Yat-sen

FUGITIVE'S TAMBOURINE TUNE A Prelude

Rattle of death is in the tambourine
and then you hear the beat of snare drum's
volleying fire, played by skeletons, who march
with mocking smiles--leather trappings creak,
black banners flap on jutting staves--and this
rutted road is knived by wheels of carts.
In dusk ahead, red fires among ranked tents reflect
as blood in puddles that the troop stalks through.

Humped behind iron gates of a graveyards,
the already dead peer out like barred inmates,
strait-jacketed now in their own cadavers.
From holes that were their mouths they
clamour aloud to the marchers passing
by. With scabrous claws they rattle the bars
and rave. Indifferent drums maintain their
rate, equipment clanks in the marchers' wake.

At the evening shore, the wash of waves
subsides and the failing light is caught
by bubbles around decaying blubber and
soft trail of weeds. In the foam, immense
crabs, like huge damp spiders, nudge and
scatter among body parts. Smoke from
clustered fires of camps drifts down with
stench of something cooking. Sea birds swoop.

And so you conclude, fugitive crouched
among clammy reeds, that you are the last
one left. After you, Earth will be rid
of this sapient species willed to war and lust.
So wrap your rags about your frame.
Too soon to deliver up your flesh
to the cooking fires? Yet, can one
make war alone? On whom to lust?

And so you advance towards the fires:
await the rattle of trap, the swish
of bludgeon, crunch of bone.

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