

Elegy of the Gallows

My memory works like clockwork,
cogs whirring like the inner machinations of my mind.

I remember the emaciated children
with gaping pothole eyes walking like corpuscles,
massless particles along a straight line,
pleading for morsels of food and wearing scraps of clothes.
Pills of despair were lodged in their throats by men
in gray baying for the spill of blood.

In the barracks, a man lay on his wooden bunk,
unmoving and head lolling to the side.
Papery, jaundiced flesh stretched over
tissue and sinew, silent and unflinching.
He oscillated between technicolor and grayscale as
lacquered, antiquated eyes opened and closed slowly.
He was the antithesis of living as the ground swallowed him
and keeps its bloodstained secret.

My dreams, once smelling like manna and soup,
were plagued by the man's hollow face,
and I wondered if I would be next.
When I awoke, the warmth of sunlight crept in,
shining through from the blemished sky.
A sure-fire sign of a day renewed,
of another body drained of vitality
and another melancholy day of mourning.

The specter of my mother's face etched
with pain lingers in my mind
like a phantom limb with its ephemeral presence.
But there is no panacea for my memories,
only remembering the elegy of the gallows.