

 TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE **Stranded**

I come from a long downtrodden line
that stepped through Station Pier
hopeful recipients of foreign charity
amputees leaving the Cold War behind
in what was actually summer
the raw throb of their stumps
seeking alleviation in sunnier days
only to arrive downside up in winter.
They were haunted by their decision
but thought it prudent not to admit this.
Although *they* were the renegade outlaws
this frontier town scorned strangers.

Stories soak my brain like bloodstains.
What, or where would I be but for them
their exile with one eye on the job market?
Sweating in the drought I feel the tug
ludicrous, really, of my ancestral place
lying awake like they must have done
not truly belonging in either hemisphere
though I can fly like a film star.
The frontier has been pushed back
but new arrivals are still endangered.
I am trying to listen to their songs
cut off, in a way, stranded.

Ian C Smith

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