

One Man

Dominican Republic, Massacre River 1937

One man—

his blood is red, coursing through his weary limbs,
but turns pink when it spills into water,
carried by the current,
up and over rocks,
until it is lost.

His heart beats, as loudly as machete meets cane
until life leaves his eyes;
heart pulled from chest,
carried by the current,
up and over rocks
until it is lost.

His eyes, his nose, his human bones sit where they belong
until they are seen only for their color;
white bones of a black man broken,
carried by the current,
up and over rocks,
until they are lost.

One man—

his blood is red, coursing through his proud veins,
and though his blood is untainted,
his heart is not when he spills
another man's blood
in the water.

His heart beats, as loudly as machete meets bone,
but if his heart tells him to kill a man for being born
with the blood of his neighbors then what a heart
he has; what poison it must pump.
Like the bodies of men, his innocence is lost
in the water.

His eyes, his nose, his human bones are superior, are pure
or are they so
if powder lightens the dark of his skin;
if, under layers upon layers of mask, rests
a man,
not so different from the ones
in the water.

By Kiana Rawji, 2016