

Tweets to Iskandar from the Capitol, One Hundred Years After His Death

1.

Great-grandfather,
I wish you could see
this land your children's
children now wander—

how from three directions
you can't even perceive
the palace of the emperor
for the leaf-lush trees.

2.

The dredged reflecting pool
looks roughly like the flesh
beneath my ruptured nail.
The stone tower unleashes

and roots down its double.
If you could see my face
would you see your face
hovering back like a skull?

3.

This is the stone and water
for the millions who died
fighting in a war called good.
Your son warred a war

before and after the war
against everyone who didn't die.
For my empire, should I
object or volunteer?

4.

The war no one won
almost drowned
my father your grandson
in its black stone.

He carries the stone
hidden in his spine—
and all the names
he couldn't save.

5.

When they came for you
and brandished their guns
in your store in Salina Cruz—
you could not imagine

El Norte any more
than I imagine I hear
you plead in two tongues
to spare your children.

6.

Are you the secret reason
my father's at home
speaking any tongue
of all the migrant people

he welcomes as kin?
He holds the umbilical
passage to the homeland
beneath his olive skin.

7.

In the heart of empire
I swallow my sword
and exhale a great fire,
hollow out my words

until they can float
you over the stolen river.
My heart and its borders
swarm with migrant hope.