Machine Gun Women,
or They Mist Black Trees in Wet Walking

Black—
black outline of the horizon
a black silhouette of trees
against a watercolor red,
violet,
milky,
pink sky
with a few stars scattered sparsely about
a thick mist.
One,
two,
three,
four stars
arching overhead.
Damp and wet trees,
water droplets from the leaves.

The occasional sound of machine guns blaring somewhere in the distance
the sound of an airplane moaning overhead

....
Sixty seconds.
Walking
creaking steps crushing the stones
passing by dead leaves on thin stalks,
hanging damp and wet.
A crunch and the shadow and the mist
light
a stillness and a silence
a bunch
of wet leaves.
Water dropping.
A general silence.
No one is there.

Alzo David-West, ‘Machine Gun Women, or They Mist Black Trees in Wet Walking’.
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 1, November 2015.
The four of them
walking
quietly
worriedly.
The sounds of other people who are not there.
A certain fearsomeness about circumstance
trailed by their own shadows
under a moonless night
where the light is only the deep,
red,
violet firmament over the horizon of black,
naked branches
and trees
stretching somewhere.

They’re walking
and trudging.
The mist is thick,
and they’re hungry.
And pain
pulling inside
their stomachs
like tearing,
like twisting.

Cold damp air hitting their faces
turning around,
hearing waterdrops on stones.
Turning around
and again that moaning sound in the sky
and a barrage somewhere they cannot see
a mountain
nothing visible
beyond that thick mist.

And they walk and walk.
Their hands are cold.
Their feet are cold.
And their stomachs are empty.
They’re hungry and tired and weak,
and they see a tree.

Alzo David-West, ‘Machine Gun Women, or They Mist Black Trees in Wet Walking’,
*Transnational Literature* Vol. 8 no. 1, November 2015.
They come to what seems like a path.
More blotches,
black trees
and mist
a vista of thick,
suffusing mist
and black trees.

Her nose is leaking and itching,
and the fatigue straining their bodies.
And the heart—
their heart
aching
as if being compressed
uncomfortably.
The pain.
No food.
A hunger pain
in her heart
pulling,
stretching
an echoing crunch
walking on the wet stones and dead leaves
in the dark
in their shadows.
Tired.

February fourteen,
nineteen fifty three.

*Alzo David-West*