Earthquake

(To the people of Haiti)

In the first minute

a tree branch shook

under the bird’s claws.

In the second minute

the whole city shook

under the bird,

confounded

by the sheer speed

of the fall:

The boy who was bathing in the river

as the one behind him drowned

the tourist in the white boat,

the student who slipped a note for a rendezvous

into her pocket.

The shared taxi
that ran out of gas,
and the mother who scolded her son
because he was in the street and not in school.
The singer with the tanbu drum,
and the dancers naked under the sun.
The little girl with her broken doll.
In an instant
they sank beneath earth,
trees under the bird fell,
this time not for the sake
of the paper or
the white boat,
or the rendezvous note.
Not for the school or for gas,
the houses or that drum.
Not for the little girl,
not for her doll.