

Somerset

When Father read Maugham at the balcony,
he didn't see the sheep blocking the traffic.

He was deaf to the screams of the taxi driver.
When the shepherd boy banged his staff

on the hood of the Mercedes and cursed,
May God cut your testicles, Father flipped

a page as if shooing a fly. A bearded militiaman,
high on hashish, fired his Kalashnikov into the air.

Father sipped coffee. The sheep didn't move.
A stray bullet pierced a cawing raven. A tainted

feather found an open page, smeared words
like *clubfoot* and *bondage*. Maugham required

a bookmark on Father's lap.

Where the Trees Have No Name

No one dared to climb the skeletal tree
in the dead end alley. Its trunk without
branches surrendered to bullet holes.

The drunk sniper spotted wayward
children sprouting from bowing boughs.
That's how Coconut Avo died.

He climbed the crying tree by Cinema
Arax because he wanted to touch the halo
on Miss Marilyn Monroe. Love forced

hefty hooligans to take miscalculated
risks in Beirut. We heard the crack first.
Then the snap. Both the branch and Avo fell

instantly as if struck by lightning. The priest
warned us, "The sniper shoots at drooping
limbs and drifting children like lambs."