

Catherine Strisik

### Body Guard

When the baby came  
it came in pieces: skull dropped  
onto dirt where chickens scratch, limbs  
fell between porcelain footsteps.  
I recognized my daughter's face  
in its face. I covered it with a rag.

When the baby came, I tossed  
the brain stem over the wall  
of the tin outhouse. I drowned it  
in the seashore next to Khmer girls  
selling octopus skewers. I rubbed it  
against my inner thighs. I named it Helen.

The bodyguard waited with a thin tissue,  
handed it to me. I did not know what to do  
with the tissue: wipe blood off my foot?  
Wipe away another tear?  
Life begins with lovemaking  
and ends. I smudged her  
into my husband's palm.