

AT THE BORDER

Derick Burleson

a pile of machetes and hoes
higher than your head most bloodstained

and every thirty seconds or so
another body pounds
down Rusumo Falls in the pool
at the bottom they bob
back and forth so
bloated and gray
you might think
massacre had created

a new race

beyond the border those farmer
who piled these tools of food and war
sit for days waiting for a kilo of beans
the rains begin again it's that time of year

nobody drinks from the river

on land the bodies
seem wings of laundry
bright cloth spread
on the Akagera bank
to dry flat as if
the flesh inside
were already sinking
eager for the river

in the water these pale balloons
float easily
north to Lake Victoria
so putrid even crocodiles

stay away

behind the border every day
while the gods hover like starving birds
Achilles still pursues Hector
round the city walls
and makes very sure
when he catches up he waits
long enough
to hear the voice pleading
before he swings the blade