

SUSAN TICHY

Imago

*You will be sent a brief biography of your prisoner,
along with a photograph if one is available.*

—Amnesty International, instructions to prisoner adoption groups

And some days I hold before me
like a cross against the devil
the face of a man who was jailed.

I say his name
instead of weeping, and this is what comes of it:
the tie,

just barely loosened from his thin neck, stays
the same. Four hundred and eighty days
in solitude stay the same. Seventy days in a cell
in which he could not lie down remain
one day and then

another.

A man leans forward as if impatient
with the edge of a green couch.

And so much depends upon the palm
of one hand against another, the shape of his knee, the glaze
of sweat across his forehead—

Confess: he is no proof against the sky,
but bargains with it.

Like a witch on a wheel, like a raven
who speaks long after death, he makes himself
ungainable, he makes himself an obstacle
to ease.

But I am not dissuaded.
Each surface I look into holds
this battered, minor god—
pressing upward, flayed, pursued.

Look, it says—a face—we do not die.