

Descent Fragments

When we arrive, the rabbi says, we make a cemetery first. Then a kosher butcher, then a synagogue.

When one gull's caw sets off a sky-siren, I rubberneck toward a dozen chasing off an eagle. Is it that easy?

Is that why we burned our papers as our ships neared shore?

Aren't you descended from a famous rabbi? says E.

The rabbi says *Asbes to asbes*, but we don't cremate. Something about a body for the rapture.

No need to tell my J about packing up the motionless hatchling and bleaching its stain off our balcony.

Would you rather be exterminated or assimilated?

Between the eaves and gutters, clumps of death-come-quickly volunteer their violet blossoms.

Without a prayerbook, without the requisite ten men for a minyan, I whisper the mourner's kaddish after the administration's first bombs.

I watch K worry her roving into matted shrouds before needle-felting the migrants: mothers, slim-limbed men, children.

We have a homeland now, the rabbi says.

Inside their fleeced radiance, a flotation.