

Trail of Tears

When the first of us come to the bluff,
the mud swirl of the water shows how small

we are. Mississippi River, the soldiers say.
The far shore promises

a trail, rutted and wet.
Step there and we

disappear. The smallest of us knows.
The mothers clutch their babies. The old men

and the old women fall into the mud
and try to hold it

to fight being pulled away.
On the other side they put their feet on the sand.

They look back. They wave.
They have decided to believe the lie.

The forest the same, floor damp and the smell
of earth, acorns lumping

underfoot. It will seem right. We will stand
there soon. Another lie of moving on, forest

of water and smoke.