

Five Deaths of a Nation

Penry was the first.
They say a train whistle blew
As bullet broke through bone.
The face of the revolution, no longer.
Anthony is miles away, perched in the dark alcove of an inn.
When the mourners came, he laments over his fallen friend—lie cleavers past from future.

Nicholas was found at dawn.
Cadaver in the barley
Flaxen strands now bloody.
“Horse must ‘ave had a fright,” a flatfoot reasoned.
Anthony wins the party vote, having become the only living nominee.
At the funeral, he sits with Nicholas’ mother and kisses her hand.

Leon barely stood a chance.
Maudlin, mourning buried friends
When jagged glass pierced neck.
Maid found him slumped, seeping, spluttering one name.
Anthony pays the threadbare drunkard a handful of coins
And a bullet in the back when he turns.

Dear Pierre fought tooth and nail.
But frostbite took his fingers
And hunger took his strength.
Defeat consumed slowly, his name taken too.
Anthony forgot about Pierre, as he did with them all.
The death notice sat on a pile until thrown into the fire for warmth.

Yuri was the last.
Gone into forgotten past.
A note left - quickly burned:
“There was no noise, apart from that dreadful gun.”
Anthony speaks to his nation on the martyrdom of Saint Penry.
The names of Nicholas, Leon, Pierre and Yuri never spoken, never written, never remembered.

Anthony outlived them all.
But every night he heard in
A chamber void of sound
The same train whistle keening, wailing, crying.