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## Selected Poems

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## Selected Poems

### Acknowledgements

These poems were written shortly after the April 25, 2015 earthquake in Nepal. Many men and women who helped my research team with our research—which focused on the economic importance of environmental products to rural livelihoods in Gorkha District—were killed. Several medicinal and aromatic plant traders we had just interviewed for another ongoing research project—focused on transiting to ‘green growth’—also died in the natural disaster. These poems are for them and their country.

# Selected Poems

Carsten Smith-Hall

## Going Down [26°12'-30°27'N & 80°4'-88°12'E]

Triple-whammy slammed is what she is no one  
batting an eye too occupied looking elsewhere  
counting cash or sucking on hope like some  
goddamn red lollipop and she can't go nowhere.  
Yeah fifteen thousand times it happened  
an Everest of bodies in the name of change  
happening so fast a snail flashes by Formula  
One style left isn't right hard bullets replacing  
hard words one indifference replacing another  
everyone starving as always goodbye innocence  
pain doesn't help her wake up there's too much  
mind too little faith and the divinity of no hope  
is radiant : small wonder strength's leaving  
she's been de-youthed family scattered in the  
desert and plains sweating gunny sack heaving  
humanity on trips of unlove we're talking  
millions here goodbye demographic dividend

her femininity imploding in silence pop pop  
tears prayers for salvation future disappearing  
in the rear-view and the river keeps snaking  
carrying one child after the other but she's still  
alive and her perfume is on every body : time  
for the bonus climb another nine thousand  
times courtesy of the Gods or just tense plates  
whatever entire villages cut out of her story  
dessert has been served time to pay the billion-  
dollar bill with an empty wallet soul-purchasers  
roam freely still no one sees her faint breathing  
visible on cold mornings her slow-motion ride  
towards existence maybe she won't live forever  
as beautiful as she is cursed reproducing every  
possible human error on a daily basis while  
touching your heart. She is inside you billowing  
mirror reflecting the dark sky what are you  
waiting for bat that eye and take her hand.

## Going Home

There's the old tree, the Sentinel in front of our house!  
Look, dad. Even taller than before. But where's the  
house? . Where did it go, who left that rubble,  
all those crumbled bricks? Weren't the Sentinel  
watching our house, like you said? *He couldn't*. It was  
the big shaking that did it, wasn't it. I was so scared.  
Why would the Gods do something like that? *I don't know*.  
Where's mom? . She is always home at this hour,  
making lunch for us. This morning she said she would  
cook a surprise. Maybe she went out to buy some rice  
or fresh fruit. *I'm sorry*. . Perhaps she went over  
to aunty, or for a walk, to stretch her legs and watch  
people. She likes that. Talking to neighbours. *She didn't*  
*go out*. Yes, she did, or she would be here. . Let's  
look for her and see who finds her smile first. *We cannot*  
*see her smile anymore*. . I think she's playing

hide and seek in the house. Yes! She wants me  
to find her. Yes. She always has such good hiding places,  
like behind her dresses. *Stay here*. Let me go! You're  
hurting my arm, I'll find her for us. *She's not here*  
*anymore*. . Then where is she, where has she  
gone? You said she went home.

**Carsten Smith-Hall** is Professor of Forest-People Relationships at the University of Copenhagen. He is Director of the Sustainable Tropical Forestry Program and the Forest and Nature for Society PhD Program. He enjoys doing fieldwork during the monsoon. His non-science texts have appeared in the *Yellow Chair Review* and *La.Lit*.

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Figure 1. Striving to come back, brick by brick (Photo of Boudha stupa, under scaffolding).

(Smith-Hall, 2015)