

Virgil Suárez



So Much Like My father

My mother claims my feet
are like my father's, pale, calloused.
My temper like his, my exile...
His hands I remember best,
though not the hands of a blue collar
worker, a butcher-horse feeder
at the Havana zoo, later a pattern
cutter in the factories of garment
district Los Angeles.

My father laid his hands on me
twice in my life, once because
he saw me with a used condom
in my mouth (I had found it
on the sidewalk on my way home
from school and thought it was
a balloon) and the next time
when I got lost at the San Diego
zoo for a couple hours.
I was twelve. He grabbed
my neck hard and squeezed. I felt
his rage, he my confusion...

I am thirty-eight now, my father's
been dead for four years. I can feel
his hands burning under ground,
rooting themselves toward my feet,
grabbing hold. My exile has become
like his, my mother says. He grabs
hold so we can both rage on, rage on.

