

x. *Bardō-being*, the consciousness between death and the afterlife བར་དོ་བ།

What has occurred is untimely. Despite the whispered instructions. The wood has run out. The bodies barely burnt. This death is of words too. Lines that feel like they're right here, around the corner, but just where you can't see them or hear them. Liberation not even by listening. The pages can't speak because there is no air. You can smell them. They smell like felled trees.

When the paper runs out, we manifest. This time is now. We, the bardo-beings, live for forty nine days, one for every language that has been lost. We are made of a grotesque emptiness, not lucid but cloudy, jumbled. The final utterances, wanting always something to be more than life. We carry them with us.

The passage is not always even – we are led through a maze of twists and turns, and the gods and monsters we encounter are peaceful and wrathful alike.

As the journey comes to a close, there isn't light but blood. The corpses of things said and unsaid swaddled in tarp, the cotton is soot, the ink thin, then tied with thread: narratives neatly resolved. The loud burst of--.

We see the red
blanks and we

We delete. We
dead.

We fuse,
teeth,

The new surface

We e

No flame. So

Material, we are
are the



and the white, reams and reams of
lay the stencil for the afterlife.

dream. We rewrite. The book of the

copulating with other tongues and
manifesting onto a new surface.

is the old surface.

transmigrate.

young and already eaten by moths.

now the afterlives of afterlives, we
knowledge of erasure and

obscuration. We crumple in this rubble of false truths, powder on the rites of restoration.

We long for the threshold again, long to travel through it to the empty pages past the epilogue, where maybe a new way waits, before the book is closed altogether.