The Rivers Have Not Only Me
Van Cam Hai

Vietnamese rivers are often contemplative
cloud levels of memories
slurp the sad grass a mouthful of blue river
on the body convulsed with laughter bomb craters reflect back at the sun
from high above a tongue wanders
her language is a tireless light spread evenly, in spite of the sleepwalking rain,
the roof of a church, a pier, a dry log like death leaning against your porch
my pain does not have a flowering or fruit-bearing season
night barks at a face with countless pimples
a rose holds a gun
my heart
a flame-blowing tube
a time when words fall asleep drunk next to the wood-burning stove
a hand spits out a well-chewed death expression
my brother’s previous life
a blind tv
still I watch till the end of the card game
a cigarette burns a naked body
a car collapses on its knees having won the eternity prize
even if someone does howl a dirge tomorrow
O my scent don’t you borrow from a deficit
To the rivers is added a little sister’s waist
filled with the self-confidence to seduce the map of the world.

Translated by Linh Dinh