RUSHLIGHT

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New love came early this year,
a skunk cabbage in the snow,
its rigid pink flower rupturing the icy ground
like the upturned spire of a shimmering whelk
unburied by an outgoing tide.

I was still in winter when you blossomed,
more coiled than the hardwood buds
bound tight in their burgundy shawls,
while you stood, radiant and
unassuming in our small and rolling wetland,
proud to usher in the warmer days
of running sap and bird songs.

Could I find a friend in you—
your mottled skin smelling like earth and flesh,
flecked with damp soil and new sunlight.
Could I lie with you—
unwrap myself beside you
here at the onset of a thaw.
push/pull
Andrew Dominello

the best and the worst
sensation when i feel
even nearness is not
a notion with which i align
at the moment our figures
enmesh in the unmade
bed. what i am
saying is that i hold
her closely but never close
ever enough and so i get all
restless for the pleasure
and incompleteness—
my feet wriggle and my free
hand measures her back’s
curve, her hip’s hilt.
i tilt my head and lean
in for the sweet-
kiss-become-desirous-kiss.
this motion, this mutual pull,
this is the love-
making nobody
thinks about.
People will say
They’re in Love,
and They Are.
The First Lieutenant
Kayla Kennett

We finger-fucked in Latin class, and got away with it by playing make-believe.

You were a concert pianist, plucking the Bumblebee in my panties.

I was an airline pilot, preparing your cockpit for the ascension.

We wasted our ripest years playing bride and groom, feeding off each other’s Daddy issues, and sharing everything but the wet dreams.

You dreamt of MKs and premeditated revenge on bottle caps, Camel packs.

I dreamt of reading banned books beneath streetlamps, and lapping lattes at 9pm.

We thumbed a ride off I-89 hurtled over the state line to this bod-mod joint in Vermont, where they’d ink a kid without permission.

You marked your body ❤ ab imo pectore ❤ in my name.
I marked your words
and hoped to die, survived
by a warm-hearted man.

We begged consent of our parents,
mine named you Hamartia,
the downfall, the bad boy phase.

We begged consent of our parents,
yours named me Femme Fatale,
the one who plants ideas

of education, insurrection,
and riding two-wheelers
without protection.

Lovers are lunatics
who speak with tongues and teeth,
in a language of promises

too big to keep,
in a language of lies
they dare call poetry.

We turned eighteen
with the leaves, and
dropped our love in embers.

You enlisted your body
with one hand, and tied
the other for safekeeping.

I enlisted the help
of my better judgment
to find an exit worth making,

and made it.
*ab imo pectore, ego contristo*

for leaving you.
Asphalt
Emily Bergmann

you played that solitaire
of saving with me
saying “I will remember now forever”

and tomorrow morning it’s gone
like your fingertips never made me soft
and i remember everything

like the bottle caps i collected
but i don’t win your game
if i tell you things you used to say

you keep things in your holy pockets
but i keep things in amber
and one day i tripped and

a piece socked me in the jaw
and chipped my front tooth
so when i smile big now

you can see it still hurts
and i will not play marbles
in the schoolyard with you anymore

because i will always lose
and you keep all the pretty ones
in your pockets

before you leave without asking
Celtic Burial
Katherine Humphrey

Lay my body beside Medb’s:
Let me sink below the fertile brush
And join Mother Earth.
Spare me the cuts and stabs;
Place me amongst the glistening
Limestone of Knocknarea.

Store the rock in my sturdy jaw
And let me drift to the other world,
Donning jewellery worthy of Danu’s praise.
Don’t disturb my slumber, and
I’ll keep your existence content.

In the new November year,
Wrap my body in Eslene.
Let the torch burn beside my bier;
Cover my hair in shamrocks,
Tint my cheeks golden,
Sing a dirge for me:
Bless my soul.
I’m still thinking about my brother and how he wouldn’t have wanted to be buried.

He told me so, seven years ago, when we were at Grandpa’s funeral. As the casket was lowered into the ground, he had leaned over, and with his three years of older sibling wisdom, he made me swear that I would never stick him six feet under in the dark, where all the worms would eat his brains out.

I had promised I’d burn him instead.

The Vikings had gotten death right. Not many had the iconic funerals that we picture, though, with burning ships drifting into a hazed horizon. Most couldn’t afford to let a ship burn to ashes before their eyes.

Those who could, did. Not for the beauty we see in it, but the fear—the fear that embeds itself in mourning. If the funeral wasn’t up to their social standing, the dead would get to spend their afterlife as an eternal wanderer, forever tied to the shore of Styx like waves tugged by the tide.

I can understand the fear. I mean, how can you move on when your loved one cannot?

But that was centuries ago. I am not at a Viking funeral. There is no ship. There are no warriors. I am not a Helga or Hagar or Helena the Horrible. I am just plain Helen.

I am just Helen, and my parents are away. My parents are away, and I’m burning the house down. I’m standing in the living room. The flames have started to lick up the sides of the flowered yellow wallpaper. It’s starting to get interesting; the smoke is no longer the thin grey wisps I love to watch twirl. Instead, it is black as a demon, thickening beneath the ceiling.

I’ve already set the second floor on fire. I started with his bedroom. Started with what I should have done a long time ago. There was a stack of papers still on his desk from that awful day, his homework from freshman year. A couple notebooks. I stood over them for a moment, afraid to do anything—it had been so long since any of us had passed the threshold. Then, I piled them up. Shredded a few for kindling and doused it all with a bottle of lighter fluid. I lit the match—
always a match—and let it get to its newest meal. Fire does have quite the appetite. His room would be its first course.

The story goes like this: one day, he disappeared. That was it.

It’s always so dramatic in movies. There are witnesses, there is a clear struggle. There is surveillance footage: a loose end to unravel. In movies, the protagonist has a chance.

In reality, he was taken, gone for good. After a year of no news, of cooling evidence, my parents decided on a funeral. It was open casket. We didn’t even place a picture inside. My younger cousins kept asking what was in the box. I told them, memories.

It’s the same dilemma Vikings tried to solve with funerals and flaming pyres—how to move past death. They had their rituals. We have ours. But where do we truly begin—the sigh of ashes from a dying flame, the crackle of a growing pyre, or the smoke of our smoldering souls?

After the funeral, I lit my first match. It was an old set kept by the liquor cabinet. I snuck outside, dragged the bubbled red edge across the sandpaper strip and reveled in the chill that rocked through my core upon feeling the friction. I went through the whole pack, letting each match burn down to the nub, watching as it crept down the stick—gnawing away—and by the end of the night my thumb and forefinger were marked with enflamed, smooth callouses.

The scars have remained even now, the nerves long gone in the past two years of abuse. They blend in with the rest of my skin now, though, with the distinct glow of the burning house coloring everything around me a shade between pumpkin orange and blood red.

When I close my eyes, it almost feels as if nothing’s changed from those early years of pyres and sacrifices. Even with my eyes shut, I see the deep colors swirling. I can hear our home moaning, crying out and pleading as the fire begins to roar in response, heat lacing its breath. The mixtures of different textures burning—the wood from our floors, the cotton in old stuffed animals, the rotting trash in the garage—is what I’d imagine a Viking funeral would smell like. Pine, cloth, and death.

Perhaps nothing has changed after all.

Either way, I am just Helen: the girl who dreams of stoking the fire.
**Ash**
Milana Meytes

I. Ode

The cigarette ash on the rust of my fire escape
looks as if flies were crumbling,
while my inhale makes my exhale burnt sienna.
Knees crouched into chin, taut, goosebumped skin
smelling of smoke and leather like papa,
of cubicle Marlboro packs in the back of his pocket.

The tick-tack of my palm slapping that packet, ass to bare asphalt,
my teeth on dry paper, with tongue slithering filter.
My words slinkier than a noose
of tar winding, begging for an excuse, waiting for the next pull.
Sometimes this makes me insecure.
But when ash contacts with filaments in my blood, I can feel my jaw bones rise to salvation.

II. Palinode

My brother, a relic of Babylon.

Whose black clothes leaked gray, as Twin Kingdoms hugged hoards of screeching silhouettes
breathing blank sheets of Kinko paper, memos left.

Tumbling Woman, Tumbling Man, Thuds of Sand.
My brother, please stop rewinding those fingers clutching collars of white shirts, whipping them through the windows to slap God in the face.

And please stop watching CNN, that ribbon on the bottom seems infinitely long.

And I know, I know Manhattan was crying under your toes, tolls on the journey home. And Manhattan, she told you to walk, you made it 200-some blocks.

Your slate body reeking of gasoline incinerating bone.
*I just want to shower,* you said. Wash away the ash on my tongue.
San Antonio Palopo, Guatemala
Margaret Walton

crackle of palm fronds, dried from hot wind.
beach blue-washed boards, straight against the wind curve of the world.
forgotten fruit falls to the wayside, a tiny red planet, oozing from heat.
paralyzed grass stands dry stiff against the sun, whimpering for relief.
imperfect sidewalks, greyblue and stained, warp down the streets.

bees, wasps, hide in the fruit sweet—
children screech as they buzz in halos, a nasty surprise.
their screams tumble through chain link, waning through the town

to the ears of their mothers.

women with hair to match their home,
two braids, a scarf, a ribbon.
beam brightly at us, cartographed fingers pointing at our bone pale skin.
chattertalk, whisper giggles.

past the church, pickup trucks rattle and sway,
accustomed passengers ignore the bump and moan of too fast travel.
they stumble to a stop on the whitewashed stairs, and chickens, burlap and blue
cascade out.

the bold white of the church stretches to the sweet simmer of daytime sunlight,
a beacon atop a fruit basket.
color and cobblestone intermingle, clash with plastic storefront, preaching
modernity.

a computer, a television, tunnel vision.

fruit basket lives, sweetly captured within wicker walls.
happy, but with a few wasps.
Acid Alphabet
Kate Bartel
After “A Psychoalphadiscobetabioaquadoloop” by Thomas Sayers Ellis

They asked us
   The way to Worcester,
And we laughed
   At its letters.
Hopscotch dancers
   On Bostonian buzz,
We said to Dial M for
   Manzarek at the Door.
All those
   Painted gold letters
And velveteen nectars
   Soaking into the trust
Of the floorboards,
   Bearing weight of our borders.
In the flashlit psychedelics
   Of the least patriotic
Reds and blues,
   Some slur their words,
Or their accents.
   Some slur their letters
Over mixed dranks,
   Slurping sizzurp
In generational rhythm.
   Others wave their cigarettes
Like white flags,
   Pretending to fight
A backwards battle.
   Something about the 21st century
Balancing on the rim of a Budweiser
   Like the T on its tracks.
They asked us
   The way to Worcester,
And we laughed
   Knowing Worcester begins with W
And ends.
"IMFAO, It's Smart & Sexy Right From The Can."
Song of My Selfie I, II
Kayla Kennet
After Walt Whitman’s Song of Myself

I.
I monitor myself, and sing myself,
and compose the truth you shall assume,
for an arched brow only means as much as it signifies to you.

I choose to discard my soul.
I cut ‘cross puckerbrush, and plant dandies
among the summer grass.

My teeth, every incisor in my mouth, chatter in the open air.
Born with a jack o’ lantern grin, of parents who loved me all the same,
I, now thirty-seven paces tread into solitude, begin,
hoping to survive shutter death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
retiring reliance on cultural scripts, undocumented,
but never forgotten, I capture myself— for good or bad.
I permit the image to speak every hazard that
nature has imbued and, in its irregularities, reap energy.

II.
The house is deserted as a chestnut, rotted from inside out.
With perfumes, I concoct the fragrance of myself, and like it.
The vanity would noose me by the nose, but I shall not let it.

The phthalate is not necessary; it is dangerous and disruptive,
odorless, and potentially toxic, but I am in love with the bouquet.
I will haunt the powder room, doused in chemicals and naked,
smelling of red dye, unpicked.

The stress in my bated breath echoes, swarms
in buzz’d whispers, scandal creeps the vine.
My active mind puts me at the party, sniffing on green leaves,
punching air into my lungs, sucking off cherries and swallowing their pits.
The sound, O, the siren sound, of my chalky heels, striking the cellar floor,
eager for a few light kisses, a few embraces, an offering of arms.

In dreams, I play synesthetic, mouth open, tongue wagging in delight,
imbibing each balsamic beat, spit-shadows trailing my hill-sides.
The feeling of weak acid, cleansing the body, from inside out,
imitates health, and encourages me to rise. At the trill of full noon,
I will rise, and meet someone.
**Evergreen**  
Madison Wolters

How I know as much about you as I do is hard to explain  
when you’re about as open as a grizzly in early spring

when it just wants hot flesh running in its mouth again.  
How in the beginning there was no flash of teeth,

how we told the world we got it all right  
when we first fell into that uncharted territory,

when we were under-prepared and overwhelmed.  
How we worked – how we didn’t – how we ran in circles–

how we are now – how we should be; how you’d say  
*when are things ever what they should be?*

And when you finally look at me as we circle each other,  
how can I not think of the view from Moose Hill in November–

how can I not remember the browning trees sprawled below us,  
when all we saw were the few evergreens in-between?

When I could have – when you should have – when we stopped running–
A Stag at the End
Andrew Dominello

I. Friday Evening

A few middle-aged men stroll up to the poolside as the sun chills on a silvered cloud sprawled over the water. I’d been expecting younger guys to be attending this God-forsaken Montauk stag. One has the skin of a beat baseball mitt; another bears his obese great-aunt of a beer belly; a third flaunts nostrils erupting with bristling wads of gray nose hair. This motley bunch smokes cigars while sipping Grey Goose and Grand Marnier. Ad infinitum, they speak of critical matters: Turks and Caicos, the New York Jets, et cetera.

II. Saturday Afternoon

Fishing in the sun is what men must do. And so the crew hops aboard Captain Apathetic’s charter. The first mate—Johnny-on-the-spot—sits us in chairs, hands us poles, and tells us to wait. If God doesn’t see a dead fish on one’s horizon, then damn it, he rotates to the guy with serviceable fortune. “Fish on!” A lucky fellow reels one in. On deck, this striped fish struggles and snaps his suddenly-ineffective fins. “Now he’s pissed.” Johnny jams a rusted blade below the gills and tosses him in a cooler stained with blood and fish guts. That said, I pause, shiver, and have
a satisfying, ice-cold cola.

III. Saturday Evening

In a circle, we are sipping red wine. Paired with the quality of such a warm cab is an equally lofty conversation about hookers and strip clubs. Beer Belly looks at me and makes a generous offer: “Come to the City and I’ll buy you a lap dance.” Damn tempting, but I pass, at which point the mass of forty/fifty-somethings hit the club. Hardly acting my age, I hang back and read a book.

IV. Sunday Morning

Back again at three a.m. the men are plastered as *papier-mache*. I snatch an earful of “twenty year-old chick” this, and “ridiculous drunken text” that. Glad to know they owned the night, I hit the sack before morning’s interim of fond reflection, during which we bid farewell (to those awake at ten) and part ways. I brace myself for a five-hour haul back home. To leave a weekend of such jubilance is a shame. Regardless, one should hold tight to reality: all great things must come to an end.
My toaster oven died last December.

We had known the day was coming. The hinges of its door no longer functioned, and the tray never lined up the way it was supposed to. The bottom was coated in the melted cheese and burnt crumbs from one too many bagel pizzas. Its replacement was inevitable. And yet, I was woefully unprepared for its demise.

When Christmas Day arrived, my grandparents arrived bearing a large box with the names of my parents inscribed on the tag. My mother acted falsely surprised. “Oh, whatEVER could that be? I don’t remember asking you for ANYTHING!” Her sarcastic commentary only confirmed my dreaded suspicions. She was in on this terrible conspiracy. Grandma was trying to replace our toaster.

Later that same day, my dad pulled the plug on our old toaster, quite literally. As he removed it from the counter, the door hinge flopped open limply and lopsidedly, as if it didn’t understand what was going on. Then my dad turned to the cardboard box that held the new toaster, visibly thrilled at the idea of having a new piece of technology to recalibrate. He took the stainless steel components out of the recently received box with an alarming degree of reverence. Our old toaster was officially out of a job. For the remainder of the holiday week, it sat forlornly on the countertop opposite the place it used to be plugged into the ceramic tile wall, trapped in a terrible limbo between the life of service and the trashcan. For that week, I had to acknowledge the unemployed appliance, watching me from across the kitchen as I consorted with the new toaster. It felt traitorous. I remembered the time I had burnt my thumb on that old toaster, leaving a still-visible scar, and how I had forgiven it. I wondered if it would forgive me for leaving it by the side of the road for the garbage truck.

It was hard saying goodbye to the old toaster and adjusting to a new one. The old one was simple. All you had to do was turn the dial to the little icon that looked like a piece of lightly singed toast. Then it would give a quiet, polite *ding!* when it had prepared your toast for
you, which sounded like the bell on the Fisher-Price schoolhouse and was all you really needed to be alerted that your breakfast was ready.

The new toaster was overbearing. It had an electronic panel with separate settings for toast, bagels, pizza, and waffles, which as far as I am concerned are all the same thing. And the worst part was, when the timer ran out, it would unleash three harsh piercing beeps, regardless of whether or not you had already removed your food. My already-deep-seated dislike for this verbally-abusive toaster became more and more justified.

This new toaster was complicating my life. I longed for the simple system that once occupied that very space where the usurper sat smugly. My mom told me I was being overdramatic, that it’s just a kitchen appliance. I wanted to say something witty back, but I kind of knew she was right, so I didn’t.

After four months, I have come to tolerate this impostor’s presence. Though it hasn’t been the same, I’ve learned to accept the attention-needy tendencies of our new toaster.

Then my mom told us we needed to get a new refrigerator.
Delaney
Emily Bergmann

morning has a wooden mission:
of a flat table
dressed with a checkered cloth,
pulling at its edges –
I pull myself downstairs
like honey from the jar
while jams sit in a line
waiting for butter knives.
the plate holding yolk-yellow
running from your mouth
with grin unfurling,
perched on the mug you like best.
newspapers open like squashblossoms,
buzzing radio hymnals –
This must be the place.
Daddy Longlegs
Kimberly Williams

You are gluey spiderweb, pale and wiry,  
milky ankles wading through unfinished breakfast.

You are too young.  
You will never grow old.

Your hands are purple youth,  
fresh-minted tongue still, youth.

You are an apology on display,  
surfacing vein maps, I am  
a cartographer.

I am burning words, finger  
tapping to the last slow dance  
of the night.  
You reach for my hand as the  
sun comes up, I sink into the  
ocean, waves of sweat.

I dug through your web  
leaving language trailing  
hollow bone.  
You are a dining room dimmer switch,  
fading for the ambiance,  
dying electricity.

I am bodily ambivalence in the  
sweetness of your closing lashes.
On the Evening Train From Paris
Emily Rosello Mercurio

Here is a country like a cracked vase,
cut with shards of pink and blue
and the expunging seep of green.
This milk sky is singing purple
to the auricle Van Gogh;
see here where his olivine cypresses
twist across the fields at once open
and interminably closed, an earthly ocean
holding her breath.

In the grave train I cried silent for the deaths
of fictional mothers; from across the red aisles
I caught the eye of a writer and he gave me a word.

Triste ou fâcheux, comme vous voulez.
Je ne comprends pas, mais merci d’avoir regardé.

I, imago in the American chrysalis.

Ne me regardez plus; mon français est trop mauvais.
Peut-être l’année prochaine?
Ou peut-être pas.

As the train pulls in to Avignon
I think of the oracle Van Gogh,
who told me it would be
as beautiful as this.
Six (6)
Elena Umland

Six words to an NPR journalist
Six words to define your culture
Six words about who you are
and where you’ve come from six
words about who you belong to
Six words that described my culture
“I’m white. I have no culture.”
I stop and try to think
of what defines my culture Christianity
but Jesus isn’t mine he’s Israeli
I try to think of other
white myths and stories and legends
like the Greek and Roman gods
but Zeus isn’t mine he’s Grecian
and Jupiter isn’t mine he’s Italian
Even Santa Claus isn’t mine he’s Turkish
What else do I even have?
The fireworks I use to celebrate
my culture and freedom are Chinese
I stupidly belatedly realize that even
the land I stand on the
land I was born on the
land I walk and talk on
breathe on does not belong to
me I took from someone else
German Irish British Swedish Scottish Polish
and a little bit of Cherokee
cobbled together like some half-assed recipe
I fall apart under the slightest
scrutiny my hair my eyes my
skin are not mine every breath
every step I take has been
taken from another don’t you see
even the language I use is
not mine my language follows other
languages in dark alleys and goes
through their pockets for loose grammar
I am white my hands drip
with blood and the black oily
goop of hatred Out damned spot
will these hands ne’er be clean?
I am blank and unwritten on
like those useless pages at the
back of a book empty purposeless.
Six is an Arabic numeral. It
does not belong to white people
If you’re a serious gamer, you’re probably already familiar with the Educational Testing Service, as well as some of its more notable past releases: the 1964 classic “Test of English as a Foreign Language” (TOEFL) and the inexplicably popular “Scholastic Aptitude Test” (later “Scholastic Assessment Test,” or SAT). Not that the public was asking for it, but the critic-reviled ETS has rolled out a new game, exclusively for PCs, and this reviewer feels it is his duty to call attention to as many of the innumerable flaws present in the software, content, and general game-play as possible before any more innocent and uninformed customers are bilked out of their parents’ hard-earned cash.

The new game, available now almost everywhere in the U.S., is called the Graduate Records Examination (or GRE) and costs a mind-numbing $185. While gamers of a certain caliber may be used to shilling out over a hundred bucks for various types of premium game packs, usually including specialized controllers or optional add-ons to enhance player experience, the price tag on this game (which, by the way, includes exactly none of those perks) is even more unforgivable when you consider this is for a SINGLE PLAY, lasting no longer than four-and-a-half hours.

Gamers who are too high on Robitussin to be scared off by the price will nonetheless be disappointed to learn that they can’t play the GRE in the comfort of their own home: the ETS requires customers to play in specific “Testing Centers” scattered throughout the country, offering limited sessions at 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Once you’ve registered, paid, and dragged yourself to your appointment at the center, you’ll be required to personalize your on-screen avatar by posing for a headshot (beware of bed-head, 9:00 a.m. gamers!) and confirming your name. The first bizarre challenge is to copy a statement into cursive by hand affirming that you aren’t going to cheat in the game (not that it matters, as there seem not to be any cheat codes available yet online, and, after trying a few classic cheats out, this reviewer found none of
them to work). You are asked to store all your belongings in a locker for the duration of your allotted period of game-play, and are shuffled into a room with five or six other strangers (though don’t expect bonding time – talking is prohibited) all the while under heavy audio and video surveillance.

Once you’ve finally started the game itself, you’re bound to ask what all the fucking fuss is about. The throwback-to-the-70s graphics aside (and they should be thrown aside), the game is frustrating, boring, and awkwardly set up. It somehow makes reading about Marxist revolutionaries about as tame as a Partridge Family memoir, and descriptions of volcanoes, wars, and dinosaurs read like Apple’s Terms and Conditions. Only after four-and-a-half hours of identifying synonyms and solving for “x” are you allowed to see any scores, and even then only some of them appear, while the rest are mailed to you in 7-10 business days. (Taking the Kafkaesque bureaucracy of a government agency and unleashing it upon the gaming world was not, in this reviewer’s humble opinion, what the doctor ordered.)

But maybe there’s more to it. Maybe the GRE is truly a parody of the modern gamer. Perhaps the bloated asking price, shoddy graphics, unimaginative challenges, tired gimmicks, familiar consoles, and nonexistent storyline are a caricature of what video games in the 2010s have become. If so, the GRE is a brilliant bit of social commentary, lampooning an industry lured from the peaks of greatness by the seductions of quick wealth and effortless success, and holding a great, polished mirror up to faces across the country and calling, “Gamers of the world! Unite!” Even the intense Big Brother atmosphere of the “Testing Centers,” and the forms, and the signatures, and the sound-canceling headphones, and the time-stamped questions themselves are pointing to the mournful image of a surveillance state gone mad, and a shuffling, anesthetized public yearning only for the dopamine rush of another button pushed, another mouse clicked, one more answer, one more point, one more level-up, liberty be damned! If this is the message of the GRE, I say thee yea, Educational Testing Service! Yea!

But, in truth, it’s likely just a shitty game.

**GRADE: D–** (Stay away from this one.)
I have lost physical touch without emotional transgression
Milana Meytes

I have lost physical touch without emotional transgression. Memo: learn how to fuck

I have lost my brother’s Metallica shirt, back when his spiked hair winked at the sun

I have lost indie cinema night blues, which were followed by asphalt stoops--3rd Ave. talking to fiends

planning our own crystalline dreams, poppy seeds

I have lost Marx

I have lost some of the skin above my left eyebrow. Face raw on Valentine’s Day, when you skinned it. I was 90lbs and transparent so it wasn’t your fault. You laughed at the headscarf, and fucked like a rabbit.

I have lost Che

I have lost those bacon, egg, and cheeses with the buck fifty from the cart on the hill sold by John the Afghani. We reconciled the KGB.

I have lost Friere

I have lost that will to glinter; a will to look at His or his or whose face and say Ya Looblu Tebya?

     I Love You , Ya? Memo: Refind the Shema in the Torah

I have lost the ring that shone of the Tsar’s gold, given to me by mama as it was handed to her by baba– On the first day our panties dripped blood, the first cherry orchard harvest.
don’t seduce me with shakespeare
Audrey Dubois

To love or not to love?
That is the question.
Or so ‘twould seem to the untrained eye
that sees the kaleidoscopic earth
in muted greys and defeathered blues.

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day—
No thou shalt not
For if I held in me the evasive scintillations that constitute a summer
now would be the winter of our discontent.

Many times have I yearned to lie ‘mongst the grass
drinking the sunlight
and eating the earth
and blossoming all the same
For disregarding is such sweet sorrow.

This above all—
to thy lone self be true
The selfsame words that contaminate your credence
are those that cut off the heads of stars from their celestial bodies.
I seek the comfort of those with no such tongues.
Th’ bitterness of a plant lies in the root
And its heart is not so fragile.

There’s rue for you, and for me too,
and devil’s due, the final screw in the machinations of my existence.
The quest is silence.
Blazon
Emily Rosello Mercurio

I will start at feet, and there find
métacarpals and phalanges, a pyramid
of bones, ankles, the horrifying calcaneus stone.

Veins crawl upwards through the
parallel reaching of the shins, firm,
firm with muscle and fat. Strong.

Something in the knees hums with the voice
of water and pebbles, but the reach is painless.
Unearthed, the patella is smooth as a macadamia nut.

The thighs— that was why I came here. To see
from the inside the yellow that used to look
like sulfur, that I now see is the sun.

Only for a moment can I linger
at the space around which I have found my center;
it makes people uneasy when I know that it is mine.

And now the swell, the rise of the stomach
like a wineskin filled, decadent and gold.
Another shame I have come to adore.

The only place where the fat rolls over makes the most
incredible parentheticals of my back, bold as a painter’s stroke;
this calligraphy is cut from the inside, too.

Never forget that the ribs are a cage;
the great red machine knows no sky
but their flying arches, white as salt.
There she is: the size of two fists
locked together and pounding, furious, bloody,
and nobody’s valentine.

I found my voice clutched inside
the vibrations of these membranes,
the ones that seem to smile.

Lined up on a laboratory shelf I know
this skull would not look different than anyone else’s.
It does not have my mother’s nose.

But it is strong enough to hold
in its locked chamber the two pounds
that my soul is made of, wet and grey as rain.