Poem for the lost library of La Mancha

Gania Barlow
Abstract
After the books are burned there is a hush and then a flutter of ashy syllables out into the world

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Poem for the lost library of La Mancha

by

Gania Barlow

After the books are burned
there is a hush
and then a flutter of ashy syllables
out into the world—
to be read
by the bottoms of our shoes
their black phonemes smeared across
pages of dirt and stone.

(There in the courtyard a knight
no longer
and his lady
doesn’t).

In the still solemn manner of madness
each Manchegan among us
spells out the remains of the story
in muddy war lines
down our long gray cheeks.

Tell us again,
Don Quixada, Quexada, or Quexana,
what the fire read
because if you tell it
with your whole body
in a line like a string,
a chain, a graph
of hoofprints in the dust
like a line of music
we can’t quite remember
if you tell it as though
it is still here
it is still true
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