In another time, a linen winding sheet
would already have been drawn
about her, the funeral drums by now

would have throbbed their dull tattoo
into the shadows writhing
behind the fire’s eye

while a likeness
of her narrow torso, carved
and studded with obsidian

might have been passed from hand
to hand and rubbed against the bellies
of women with child

and a twist of her gray hair
been dipped in oil
and set alight, releasing the essence

of her life’s elixir, pricking
the nostrils of her children
and her children’s children
whose amber faces nod and shine
like a ring of lanterns
strung around her final flare—

but instead, she lives in this white room
gnawing on a plastic bracelet
as she is emptied, filled and emptied.