

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

## At the End

---

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.