

RISHMA DUNLOP

Bloodlines

*I believe I heard language through my mother's
belly both violent and sweet*

—Robin Blaser

As the clock ticks
too fast and too slow
your words guide me—
the need to write myself
into every century

The years have taught me
how you have lived and loved.
How you have hope
for my dance—
*fleet footed through
the corridors of dreams.*

You have taught me to
*Let the poet have her red shoes.
Let her have her liturgy of
wet vowels and syllables.
Let her be the throat of these hours.*

My mother, my companion,
my necessary lullaby—
Make me the last poem in your book.

Crib to coffin,
baby bracelet to toe-tag.

Your body turned to ashes—
spread in the blue waters of
the bay that you loved.
You've left me
with your ink stains
on white sheets.

You told me—
Child, you are my hymn
my anthem
my bloodline calling

I find you, your permanence
and presence imprinted
on the places you have loved,
you sign your name to it.

Read me, my pages inked
by inherited hands—

I will hold you in stillness.
Do not let go of my hand.