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Pigs

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Ziolkowski: Pigs

PIGS

THEODORA ZIOLKOWSKI

—*Kruswica, Poland*

The Russians expected to be greeted *Give us wine. Give us meat* with wine, with meat. They barged in on my cousin's family, my Polish family in their Polish home in their brown and broken Polish city. From behind the couch my cousin had listened to them poking in the black garden, where on the ground, moldy peaches rolled in the rain.

They ate the pig before it finished cooking.
They lugged it into the room, swinging it
by the hooves and grunting it over the fire. From the spit,
the soldier cradled the body triumphant as Salome, its tongue
a beige flap, the apple corked in its mouth. Bloodied, still wet
from the rain, the pig squirmed into an infant squealing on the table.

My cousin Anna was a child when the pig was eaten,
still soft, still trembling in her father's house while bullets rang
into their walls.

Now, she clicks a flame to her cigarette
as I ask if there were other pigs in the garden, seeing
more swine and the guns and the wine. I look to her
for an answer, but she is coughing up smoke.