A Photo of Madam Curie

Oh, woman with small hands,
Your lips, they are small too
Your hair is out of place

You brought us microwaves
Your fingers turn to pomegranates
In the light of your discovery

They place your hand upon
A book upon a table.

Your other hand glows
on the black background
of your best dress.

In this hand you hold
the chain that is
around your neck.

—Sydra L. Mallery

Pay Day

“Truth is subjective”

Got ten dollars
my money talks good
woman dangling cigarette
laughing pantyhose hysteria
my fried Joe stacks pennies
keeps the night light on
his wife don’t come back
begging for another quarter
shit playing country blues
doll baby asks for a ride
red lips chew on words like love
window down,
her thight sweats my palm
under working against leather
she don’t put out for rides
only dollars and cents
the roads wind
jill in the box pops up gets out
ramshackle house still living with her parents
too young she don’t understand
sickness comes on Sunday nights
smoking my last cigarette
the rest got to last till Friday.

—S. Goldsmith