

CHRISTINE PACYK

Postcards from Paris and Valdosta

If we excavate we return to this hidden thing—
police chief, townspeople constructing

parade floats bound by fire cord.
In this one Henry Smith is hanging,

his eye sockets singed by oil-slicked blaze.
Plate glass, silver salts. The pop of flashbulb

after picnic jubilee—straw-hatted men
pose with a trophy of cooling ashes.

The sneer with incisors captured in sepia tones.
Teeth and bones in children's pockets.

And tied upside a poplar tree, Mary Turner,
twisted, skin-slouched, knife-slit,

with a vacated cavity between her hipbones.
This past—toxic voiceless paper—

hush and hushed.