

Island (after “*Burning In the Rain*” by Richard Blanco)

Someday compassion would demand
the hard shoulder of bureaucracy to turn,
untwisting Russian flag,
caterpillar tinny radio waves
through glass, microphone; to ears
separating surrogate island from the other,
ready to negotiate friendly fire
with the expats coming to redraft themselves,
slapping red passports double marked anglo-russo,
double gold headed eagles flapping through metal slats,
pages flipping anthems to match
the march of drumming consonant tongues
tightening on the front lines of scrutiny,
quickenning their beat
as pearls of islands; white middle-aged women,
sensibly dressed,
red kievian lipstick crowning fleshy chins:
(sun topped kremlins
of bureaucratic prayer),
relayed scripts of government issue.
“да ... нет ... не правильно ... ты должен сделать все снова. Прощай.”
to exasperated expats who’d paid their dues,
been spoken to as children, with soft condescension and govt. coldness
as children of 5 were spoken to as adults,
offered a rare kremlin smile, not issued or in circulation.
Hard stop and start transmissions to soldiers on the front lines of scrutiny,
most wounded,
a man next to us repeating ‘mistranslation’ as an SOS
“буква я? буква я?”
he says, as if to find his troops, the missing letter
not issued in government script
missing in action,
and they wonder how he even got in,
“я? буква я?”
he repeats
this balding floating island, scratching his head,
staring through the spotless glass

made foggy with
mazes of radio waves impaling other hopeless
with jutting claws of double-headed eagles
who stand watch and
guard invisible connections of nation-state
clutch the Russian flag in their talons
unwilling to let it fly, as
polished manicures claw through official personhoods,
going in for the kill,
silence leaving room for stiletto clicks, radio tunings,
and the soft murmurings of “Я? Я? Я?”
in the corner.

and outside? Eagle stands guard over its children
and an american flag counters the tangled Russiann one.
flying freely, unguarded.
a reminder you are still here, Island.