

Hands with Wings

for the massage therapists of Kyiv

To open a living body these days
is like raiding a tomb. Done wrong,

too sudden, can feel like a rape.
So we go slow, hands cupped

around your ankle or knee, to connect
to your current—socket splicing

the past with your eternal present,
the secrets your muscles carry.

Every hunch or crouch goes on
tightening your trapezius, shaking you

awake even nights with no shelling.
We can tell when you slept in the subway

or when a missile cratered your son's school.
How you slithered through a tunnel

after the hospital was hit. Your body
won't mislead. So when the stone of you

finally splinters, we won't cry. We'll feather
your clavicle, burnish the archive

of soft tissue that records it all. The city's dark
but we learned massage with our eyes closed.

The city's dark, but we move underground
like voles, leaving before dawn, returning at dusk

to bread and cheese, lemony apples from the village.
A neighbor with a generator brings us currant tea,

hot water to soak our wrists and feet. Burdened
healers, we dream of hands with wings.

Blessed St. Olga, St. Volodymyr,
fire the cold chakras of our hearts.