

Carlo Matos

## Émilie du Châtelet

The least of her accomplishments  
was that she took a few turns with Voltaire,  
which is like starting a sentence with  
“No offense but” or “You know who you remind me of?”  
When she was a teenager,  
she used her math skills  
to crash the card tables  
whenever she was short some transferable currency  
to buy more math books—  
an elegant solution.  
And she never lost the trick:  
a good thing too, for Voltaire anyway—  
volatile, on the run, and always tediously ill  
except when he was dazzling.  
But who was he to begrudge her a little  
fun with Richelieu’s grandnephew?  
It was a small passion, positively infrared.  
Her skill was the skill of the arrow.  
Rules were for other people,  
and for the universe;  
she, on the other hand, was a “great man  
whose only fault  
was being a woman.”

