St. Agatha holds a scythe

gleamed with her own blood. My computer screen
tiles with the repetition of it.

As if a breast cannot
escape the symbol
of itself. I shut it off
and the bright

light still glows
like an echo, like anything
could be soluble.

My great
grandfather’s pasture; Sicily a speck
of dust on the ocean;

island, mountain, exit

& not yet dissolved. A pastoral

in retelling; I won’t
tell it.

My mother & I lay out
a plate of figs
opened like little

coin purses,
couched in cold

white cheese.

We are not the only
people in the room
In one, Agatha is made
to hold her
breasts on a plate
like holy communion—proof
of sainthood, mouth parted
as if to say
\textit{take this,}
\textit{eat, this.}

Two lines
so gorgeous across
milky chest.

\textbf{+}

On porches, women translated
letters, shucked
cardoons, hands
green with dandelion, passed a white onion
with the stratified depression
of a mouth-print.

\textbf{+}

At the lush areola of the Madonna,
with an oddly shaded discus eye—like brushed dirt—
the Christ child.

A forced diptych with Agatha
hung beside each other
on pea-green walls in the airy cavern
of what could be any gallery.

As I have been taught, I follow
Agatha’s finger which points away from him
to a blank
corner & looking closer, it is not empty
but made to look so with
shades and shades of layered charcoal

\textbf{+}
I fold a paper crane,  
put it in my mother’s hair.  

A daughter is not  
an exercise in sameness.

The inverted flower  
of a fig dissolves  
the wasp, then the wasp  
is still  
there, eggs long  
hatched or just alone.

Once, I was a girl.  
Once I told this  
story over and over and over  
but only once  
was I told of my grandmother’s hand  
and the bean grasped within it  
and the money she earned only  
given to her brother, who needed  
the cash to write, to seduce a wife.  
Once I was in love with girlhood  
& I was bed-dragged  
by girlhood, then starved.

Like an afterthought, as if the men  
couldn’t quite finish, blood is stroked  
to just break surface—an imagined pause  
for the sake of upturned eyes glossed, an orgasmic beauty  
of doing-to, of ecstatic release—but violence  
does not ruminate or care for the gorgeous  
fat flat edge of a canvas.
Only one painting exposes her clean ribs, and then her gaze boring right into mine.

& my mother, with a halo
like the Madonna like spilt gasoline & baroque
in her movements.

In my grandmother’s basement, I find a history of the town, but the book is Sicilian so I flip from mountain to field to sepia ocean.

The visitation of a saint is excruciatingly glorious.
& when the saints dreamt of heaven they were transformed by a horror so red hot they plucked out their own eyes, went mad with devotion.

It would seem obvious for her to come out of the painting & so she does.
A dust of herself, an imagination of another No longer taller than me as she was in the wall; her eyes no longer upturned to the light, but searching.