

Lucia LoTempio
Iconographic

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 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

+

My great
grandfather's pasture, Sicily a speck
of dust on the ocean;
island, mountain, exit
& not yet dissolved. A pastoral
is perfect
in retelling; I won't
tell it.

+

In one, Agatha is made
to hold her
breasts on a plate
like holy communion—proof
of sainthood, mouth parted
as if to say
take this,
eat, this.

Two lines
so gorgeous across
milky chest.

+

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

+

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

+

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.