

Love Story

She lifts her right elbow straight up
like a spear thrust at heaven, though her hand trails down

behind her neck, groping for Artemis' invisible arrow.
She was shot from a distance and not by love

except in the sense that homicidal revenge betokens
love, in this case maternal, Leto's

passion to assert her supreme and pitiless
motherhood of twins. So other people's children

die, bewildered, this girl
a cascade of uncomprehending flesh

not quickened by any passion except
surprise. The volcano we saw

from a distance, across fields of Sicilian winter wheat,
shouldered into heaven, crowned with snow? with ash?

It loomed for two days, in and out of view,
fuming — source, witness, arbiter — seen now

through torch-licked smoke-stacks and billows of Siracusa's
refineries, now rearing white against the bullion

of lemon groves. The rented car
fled through the wide lap of fields

toward Enna and that feathery meadow where another girl
met love as earth spasmed and she fell through the crater

out of the known world, clutching a flower
with curling petals, like narcissus, sprung from a fat bulb.

Eclogue

The high garden wall enclosed the corm
of the day, midday, and we sat together
on the wooden bench by the cypresses.
You had finished translating *The Phaedrus*.
High silence sheathed us. Beyond the wall,
carabinieri stood guard at another gate, and the city coughed.
“In order to speak justly,” Socrates says,
“a man must labor through much practice
to adjust his words, not to men, but to the gods.”
Scent of lavender drugged the air,
and that more bitter scent, of cypresses.
The carabinieri hold light machine guns, triggers cocked.
They look tired, young, bored. Socrates absorbed
several madnesses before he found his measure:
madness of the body’s want, madness
of poetry, young men dangerous
with all their poetry springing from hips and loins.
How many nights, how many days,
have we looked for each other inside
the hurts we have made? Within the wall,
we say nothing, we have come far to sit on this volcanic hill
formed of ancient ashfall and boiling rivers of mud.
The city is built of rock, of blood, of mortared time.
The dialogue ends with Socrates’
prayer to Pan: for beauty within,
for harmony of inner and outer
self, for freedom from too much gold.
It is enough, this moment, not to speak. To touch your hand.