

Davide Angelo

Elegy for a Tiler

When God is still young and of good hearing. When I ask you how one boat
could fit two of all living things. When sunflower landscapes of Sicily still bloom
the further south you go. When you never see a single sunflower in your aging.
When an illuminated road exists on a map, never incised into rock. When mist, like a cloud
unmaking Etna at dawn, wraps itself around the overpass so it appears unfinished.
When a thousand red shirts envelop the strait of Messina, ceaseless
and certain as a wave. When steel migrant ships beach themselves like whales,
in Alang, India, bloated hulls of rusted scarlet reef. When the migrant ship,
Gulgluelmo Marconi, is sold for scrap, liquefied and reborn as an impossible cantilever bridge.
When you make yourself very small, each portion of you pooling. When we lap at the folds
of your body and the paramedics beat on.
When you prepare us for the mystery between wind and water. When it is necessary to know
where you are. When I imagine birds with feathers so light,
they can only make their nests on the ground. When the Valdaro Lovers
and their enduring Neolithic embrace will always be proof that we are binary, show us how we
love when we are dying. When monologues transcribed on parchments still reach
for the higher plane of meaning-making in their slow violence. When each of the seasons
bully their way across your face. When I rewind thirty-five years.
When your hair is squid ink black. When your perfect eyes are in vitreous lustre,
skin silverpoint, the rest of you, muscle inside glass. When you try to teach me the way
of the floor, the way of the trowel, proper proportions of mortar-making,
and levelling. When you make me the cutter of the isolation
sheet before I can become the cutter of the tile. When I stare into a languorous zoom
of mosaic and memory. When you, dark and hulking over
the mousetrap, take the spring-loaded bar back, lock the latch, and wait for the sound of the wire
to swing down, snapping the mouse's neck. When I dream
of tiled floors, the mist of dawn unmaking the volcano and the bridge. When you,
made of fire clay, lay on your back on a generous bed of Lungomare sand. When vigil and sleep
mean the same thing. When you don't need a priest,
who you call the middle-man, to get between you and your God. When your courage
is a weapon and a lie. When the surgeon with the skilled fingers of a seamstress,
loosens the long thread, picks the garment apart. When Garibaldi and his mille arrive, wrapped
in the hill of Calatafimi, red twilight on their backs. When comets, the long-haired
stars,
leap out of the Sea of Sicily in arcs, guarding the house where you were born
and I have never been. When your clean and immaculate feet
point skywards. When I see you, half-way across the bridge, complete,
unending.