

PIE MAKER'S DAUGHTER

By Morgan Ray

Mother never measured anything,
just tossed it all in a bowl: a handful of flour,
a glob of Crisco, a few sprinkles of water.

She transformed it with her fingers,
first into little pearls then into
a soft round ball.

With an old wooden pin she'd roll
a perfect circle of dough, drape it on the tin
and crimp a pretty scalloped edge.

*The trick to pie is crust, she'd say,
You've got to have the knack.*

Did she know I didn't have the knack,
didn't want the knack?

Mother believed a good pie could fix anything,
but it couldn't fix us;
couldn't fix a daughter refusing her mother.

On the morning that she died I took refuge
in the kitchen, gathered together ingredients:
flour, Crisco, water, a pinch of salt.

Like my mother, I transformed it into
parchment-colored dough
rolled out like a treaty between us; an unfinished pie

I placed in a nook between two cupboards
next to her photo where I lit a candle
and hung her apron on a hook.

A STRUGGLE WITH OPPOSITES

By Morgan Ray

It was your life,
not your painting
that was a *tour de force*,
an eruption, a spiral,
a struggle with opposites.

Light and dark,
masculine and feminine,
gesture and geometry,
you were as unorthodox
as the materials you used.

Then one day
you found an idea
with a center to it;
a thick, overwrought
poetic evocation
you called *The Rose*.

In another time,
they would have locked you away—
a woman
with such an obsession,
painting day and night,
layer upon layer
for eight long years
until you were spent.

Your one-ton masterpiece
is as capable of pulling a person
through its portal to enlightenment
as it is repelling them
into infinite darkness
like a cosmic blast.

And that photograph of you,
standing naked

in front of it,
arms splayed
like you're hanging on a crucifix—
Is that a moment of precognition—after all,
you first named it
The Death Rose?

You breathed it
into your lungs,
absorbed it
through your skin until
you were consumed,

then built a wall
around yourself
and hid away for years,
as if you knew the destiny
of your *Rose*.

You emerged
in your true greatness
near the end, but in a
smaller, more delicate form,
your last painting done
from your place on the sofa.

A heart fading away or flying—
that would be more like you.
Were you loved, Jay DeFeo?
I want to know if
you were ever loved.