

## 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.