

Olive Tanka

Sara Henning

*These fruits are mine –
Small bitter drupes
Full of the golden past and cured in brine.
– A.E. Stallings, “Olives”*

It’s the olive tooth
-pick-stabbed, odalisque sleek in
her martini bath
I can’t untaste now, olive
soaking her tired body

in Epsom, so bored
she’s glamorous. Iced gin, watch
it glisten her, steep
her in its aching mirage.
Like gasoline in hot air,

it clutches her hard.
She’s a brine-hallowed goddess
I leave for the end.
Or is she little whale,
her belly soft with yearning?

I can’t resist her.
Fallen, pine-brusque, she’s calling
from her coup of glass –
olive, thick love. I pluck her
with my fingers. I eat her.

Notes: The term “thick love” comes from Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*. When the character Paul D tells Sethe her love is “too thick,” Sethe insists: “Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t no love at all.”