

Offerings at the altar

Stella Motta

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I wonder how they feel,
those ants that survived the holocaust
after my father poisoned them.
They die in a circle,
a congregation,
Church on a Sunday, Temple on the Sabbath.
If you ever buried a god you'll know what it takes:
a pillow to smother his tears,
a piece of ribbon for the hair,
pliers for the teeth.
A mountain of remains,
little black dots on the counter.
We forgot to burn lamb at the altar,
and now they suffer.
When you try to walk among gods they often blight you.
They gave me a tongue twice as heavy
so I would never speak the truth,
only stories.

Offerings at the altar is a piece inspired by the ant infestation the author's house suffered a few months into 2021. After seeing them die, congregating in a circle, stuck to a patch of honey left on her kitchen counter, Stella began contemplating themes of death, religion, violence, and hybris.

Stella Motta is a pseudonym for a poet too shy to reveal her true identity. This is her first published poem, but she hopes it won't be her last.