

**Anatomical Venus**

—by *Clemente Susini, 1782*

Though it's hard to read her face,  
    those glass eyes half open  
and rimmed with real human lashes,

    it's a breeze lifting her torso off  
like a lid, no scalpel required  
    to reach what's within

fashioned in colored wax—virgin—  
    from Smyrna or Venice.  
You count her ribs, the vessels

    and nerves made from fibers of silk  
and fine linen, then dive straight  
    into the abdomen's basin, sort liver

from spleen, locate the bean-shaped  
    kidneys and unspool the entrails  
as if naming her parts

    will help you fill in the thin  
chalk outline you've drawn  
    of yourself. Drawn and erased

for as long as you can remember.  
    *Thyself*, how will you know  
her? The one you're looking for

    in Susini's splayed mother in pearls  
when you dead-end at her uterus  
    fat with a six-month fetus.

Divine symmetry indeed,  
    you whisper under your breath,  
all the time wanting to believe

    in the body's perfection,  
as the artist must have,  
    needing to trust

your own articulated hands—  
    their branching of phalanx  
and tendon, right the left's twin—

as you examine what you've found  
with the care of a surgeon  
closing a wound.