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Giotto's Maesta

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Giotto's Maesta

A door, a room, a story.
She begins
by loving the child.
She sits in a dark cape, with the diffused
light falling
on her face, her darker
hands holding the baby unconsciously well,
the distance yellow,
her eyes strained with concentration.
She gives off the enormous heat
of new

perspectives, their rightness
frozen
as if in rock.
Everything is tenuously
angled, and the closeness
of the space is set in her face.
She begins
to turn toward the child.
The painter has fixed her in our eyes
so steadily that she is afraid
she will fall

into the solidity of the earth.
It is hard to hold these tangibilities.
She is unaware of our gaze.
The baby moves his hand on her breast.
She readjusts him, and listens
for movements in this world, what corporeality
there is.
Her child is what she treasures, not
the weighted stillness
of the people watching, or what
they think, or if

they think of her,
mothering him.
Sometimes she feels the cold from the varnish
of what frames her
numb her face.
She begins
to understand this,
that her gestures to her baby must be small,
must be seen only in time.
They will never let her forget
who she is.