

LUBNA SAFI

Portrait of a Mummy in Granada

She leans across the table in a small café in Granada,
her hair falling limp against round shoulders, an angular
curve outlines the rest of her arms,
her hands crossed over one another on her lap,
to tell me I remind her of a mummy.

In an image of an image I am refigured
to a relative twice-dead removed,
a mummy almost too small to be a woman,
too tight and wrapped in herself.

I did not ask her to clarify the portrait
of the painted woman of *fayyum*,
or what she meant when she said
“You have her nose from this angle.”

She might have meant it the way my grandmother means
when she tells me to face a mirror
and discard those reflections
that don’t suit me. The difficulty
of fixing myself
in frames like an object
suspended and gilded, pulling a face from its features.

My hand reached out of habit for the fruit
across her at a table as ancient as the city.
The difference a layer makes
when it wraps and covers and resembles.
The way it must have looked when I unraveled the fabric
framed around my face,
like seeing a grape for the first time without its skin,
an eye held between two fingers,
unadorned in my mouth as I chewed.