

Pagan

We ready our bodies, take milk baths,
soften our skin with Pompeii lotion
to prepare. We anoint our pulse points

with Florida water, sweeten ourselves
with citrus and clove until we're pure
enough to be changed. We're piñatas,

wonder-filled with marzipan and fruit,
sugar cane and heart-candy, wearing
crowns of tinsel and wreaths of flowering

thistle. We swallow rum spiced with hot
pepper from wine-cups, worship you
with offerings of knives and cigarettes.

Mater Dolorosa, Black Madonna,
Erzulie, we recite your many names,
channel your crying spirit, conjure

you with our tears. They took your tongue
so we translate your suffering
into language, story into song.

When the day gets pagan-dark, we lick
the strawberry moon until we're tranced
and delirious, lunar with delicious madness.

Tonight we dance to raise the dead.
Tonight we give our limbs to the sky.
Tonight we rise.

~Lissy Irions