10. CONSCIENCE

I fear my conscience because it makes me lie.

—Robert Lowell

Having gone mad once and found a therapist, who held my hand, so to speak, and listened to my litany of confusion, and with a word here and there put a finger on my words, sentence, nerves unregenerated, whipping out in all directions, having come, hat in hand, a single nod a blessing, and having risen from that plush, modern chair with lies at last coherent, strung like beads and told, I want, five years later to the day, I want still to write letters, wire roses, and compose extravagant telegrams, mea culpa, mea culpa, elaborate articulation of a full confession, like Luther or Augustine. Love, do not listen to me. I am trying to improve my image of myself.

11. FIG

We will not be there when the figs ripen on drooping branches under which we stooped to go through the gate of our house above Fiesole. In weeks they grew fully bulbous, hard and stiff, as intensely green as the furry-fobbed leaves bigger than our hands, casting shadows on the yellow wall, the gleaming blond of the wooden door where you fumbled in the double locks with the key. We will not be there when figs ripen and fall, though my mouth was ready like a bird’s for something, something warm, almost humanly warm like a cheek, purple-black splitting red and sweet and soft. Golden bees will come and hum and take off the clammy sweetness that was almost ours.