

BRANDON SHIMODA

YELLOW PICNIC

The Japanese do it better
With a certain kind of terror in the doing of it best
Removing the darkness from a face and revealing an even darker face
Perfectly cut, and laid
To the peaceable ends of the century

Young couples in the early 1940s, eating chicken
Out of river-scored sweet palm—abstracted
Through limbs of the vineyard—liver
And chicken—glimpsed
In the chewing of each couple's better self washed
To the surface among vineyard and mezzanine cloud
As either dog or man
Or swallowtail, doubled
Or doubled-over ancestor in halo future
Dog field biting a small building through the back
Of the leg of a man, minced
Swallowtail opening
Into the socket of a hand
Or a kami, essentially
An expression used to classify experiences that evoke
Sentiments of caution
And mystery
In the presence of the manifestations of the strange
And of the marvelous, nothing primitive
When truth is the failure

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A woman is cultivating a garden on her ceiling—artichokes
And cherries flowering high sockets, ringing
Taste, when taste is genuine

Unfolds parlors of wild parsley, rhubarb showers
To depilate under blab leaves like fish lights

She just returned from a street festival
Where she danced alone, a gangly pink bird
Twenty-five minutes straight, quietly out of the world
Before reluctantly agreeing to dance with a man
For eight minutes, gripping
His void, closing her eyes to the white arbor of ash, bowing
Begging off without a word
Back to her lunar bromelia

Too close
Is not close enough
To inhabit explode and then vanquish
The inflammatory solace of dancing alone

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Pale yellow lily
Rising
Through dark green haiku

Jury glass—pulped
To Posterity—

The Japanese do it better
And by Japanese I am speaking of the Americans
Climbing flagrantly the archives of history
To get a glimpse of what might befall
A lack of merits drawn from the vainglory of looking

To invent moments in air
Among “projects” and cages, eliminating one by one
Consequence thought extraneous

The garden has lowered a new canopy through which
To gaze dragonflies. I do not know
If you have noticed