

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ashley Wu: Three Poems

Ashley Wu · Saturday, June 13th, 2020

which hot suicidal female poet would you bang?

amen starts with
the mouth open and
ends with it closed as if
swallowing all that dead air
could bring you closer to god
is this not a form of worship
someone's dirt-caked nails
digging into my scalp
their mouth saying
can I touch you
like I am not a woman
but a briar
a thing to be hacked through
my eighteenth birthday
was a death march
the path to womanhood
lined with narcissists
but I did not know this at sixteen
for you were the first one
if a boy becomes a man
pressed between blood-slicked thighs
then I become a poet
baptized in hands
in neon bar lights
the sweat sheen of beer
in southern highways
flanked with wildflowers
in prayer
in knees clasped together
on hardwood floors
you ask me again
can I touch you
your tongue against

my neck before
I can say yes

*

eczema

tell me why
beauty is blemishless
when there are figs of grass
in the craters under my eye

my skin
shifting tectonic plates
erupting with
dysmorphic red flowers

my mother washes
away these blooms
with shame concealed
in her pupil

as if my red skin
were small hands
tethered to the bottom
of her skirt

pulling
inch by inch
being a woman is hard enough
being ugly is the

proverbial nail it is
the seal on an envelope
the last word still
hanging in the air

as if the one
who uttered it
wishes they could
swallow it back down.

my mother was once poor
she was bruised
her stomach hollow
with nothing but need

but she was never
ugly
she swallowed her want

into paper balls

she says it's the huo qi
so much fire
in the pit of my stomach
that it blooms out my lips

my yearning
makes a home on my body
where it should be clean
uninhabitable

I turn to her
with my ugly mottled face
and ask her
to look me in the eye.

*

old rituals

i dreamt you translucent
like the jelly

that sticks to the roof of my mouth
in hot georgia summers

i seek solace in touch

i seek solace in anything

with a pulse and two limbs
that can form a vise around my neck

do you remember
bridging the gap between language and abstraction

with nothing but a switchblade
and the mute tips of our fingers

do you remember
the centuries of stories

i pressed with my mouth
in the hollow divot of your spine

the secret i folded
and stuck between your ribs

a cry for god
in an apartment swathed in blue light

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