

SYDNEY JIN CHOI

With the Suddenness of May

I am surprised by everything
that moves forward.
The overarching
What have you done this year?

Very little, I suppose.
The daily consumption
of images, exercise videos,
looking in the mirror.

The mandarins are bitter now.
In sunlight, magnolias bloom.
Puddles collect swirls of yellow dust—
high pollen count this year.

A friend in Santa Barbara
tells me it's May Day.
The entire month is May Day.
It's her chance to explore
sexually, she says.

I'll be spending
my May Day as I have
the past four months,
dehydrated and waiting
for something to happen.

Of course, there are other things:
humid air and heavy rain,
long Sundays of afternoon sleep,
scratching irritation until skin bleeds.

One morning, I find a small pail
of stagnant water in the backyard.
This is where mosquitoes breed.
I take it to the rosebush
and pour it out.

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Suburban Love Song

After Gertrude Stein's "Flirting at the Bon Marche"

Some believe this is the only place where anything is, and some come from other places to tell us we're wrong. Some lift the wet grass in clumps of earth, and it feels like a violation, and it feels like it doesn't matter. Some build homes in this place. Some think this is a new place. We know it's not. We've been here for longer and we've had less for longer and we've been trying for longer.

Some look to the endless march of cars to tell them where north is. Some complain of the traffic. Some are scared to drive on the freeway. We remember when it was easy to drive and easier not to drive. Now everybody drives and has drive, driven to boredom, driving past construction site and tollbooth and crumbling brick wall. Some don't even have cars.

Some wake up this morning. Some wake up to the heat this morning. Some go to work this morning. This morning we make lists of the differences, new people, new places, new things. No new things, we say and close doors and mourn land and drive cars and drink coffee. But this morning we think of children and more homes and more drive and more work.

Some say this is living. Some say that it's not. Some say that there's more. But we know that there's not. We know this is living this is living this is living.