Arts & Humanities

Poem: "Opuntia littoralis"

By Moira Egan ’92SOA.

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I’d never even tasted

one before I met him, but

it was August in

Malta and they were

everywhere, standing like fences

between houses, growing

beyond the city walls,

in the fields behind ruined

temples of cultures so long

buried we’re not sure

which gods they worshipped,

but see in their fertility

figurines a love of

fleshiness, of the ripe,

not unlike the succulence

of these plants, in fact, whose

roots dig deep into

desert soil, finding

water and sustenance even

in the harshest climates,

the generosity

also to bear fruit. I watch

as he reaches carefully

over the barbed wire

tautology of

fence, protecting his hands with layers

of newspaper, and plucks

four spiky bright red pears.

At home he lays them gently

on the table, takes a fork

and spears one, then cuts

the outer layer

away, one practiced motion, one

intact, still-spiny peel.

He slices it, offers me

a piece, the yellowish flesh

only slightly sweet,

and the small black seeds,

perfectly round, seem to be safe

and so I swallow, and

ask him for another.

Moira Egan ’92SOA has published four poetry collections, including, most recently, SPIN *(Entasis Press, 2010). She lives in Rome, where she teaches at John Cabot University.*



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All categories >