

Of Soy

Carina Yun

I. Bean Curd (*dòufu*)

My little sister calls me *dòufu*.
She loves with only her teeth—
an impassable soul.
And me? I use the lips.
The preserved delicacy,
unflavored, malleable thing—
always in need of salt.

II. Fermented Bean Curd (*fǔrǔ*)

I am that which absorbs
soaked with salt
and Shaoxing wine,
warped and molded
ready to come apart
under wooden chopsticks.
I could never stay intact
between a lover's teeth.

III. Soy Milk (*dòunǎi*)

A cow's surrogate
or tapioca
custard blushing
on migrant lips.

IV. Soybean (*dàdòu*)

My mother soaks *dàdòu*
in a ceramic bowl
for two whole nights.
She waits for the skin to shrivel
before peeling back each pout.

She says when I turn sixty-five,
my face will wither away
like hers—soaked *dàdòu*.
She wipes her hands and touches
still the silk in my face.

She says by my thirty-first year
I must marry.
I wait for my mother's absence
before plunging my face
into the ceramic bowl.