

MATTHEW J. TRAFFORD

Lettuce

1. Buttercrunch

She hides herself behind papery fans,
wears frost like a lace dress,
and marvels at her own delicacy and pallor.
She shows us only the tip
of her fingers, toes, and ears,
and begrudges the little we see.
When we lift her foliar skirts
to reveal her veined ankles,
it's the embarrassment that kills her.

2. Boston

She tastes of cinders, tea, this history;
will speak to your tastebuds,
bleed from stained edges,
spill the dirt,
talk of ash and burning witches.

3. Head

She thinks twice
about the thrill-ride
of the salad spinner.
She bristles her leaves indignantly
and clucks her multifarious tongues.
She comments on the efficiency of the sphere,
would gladly roll away if she had anywhere to go,
and consigns herself to the shredding.

4. Romaine

Queen of Martyrs, Romaine stays impassive and calm
in the face of violent dismemberment.
She is silent as her leafy extremities are ripped away,
and keeps her crisp white spine straight and unbending.
With her last breath, she prays for our forgiveness.
The pile of white, lovely backbones in the bowl
implies something about sacrifice and unshaken faith,
but we continue to insist
that isn't so.