

The New Criterion

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Mezzogiorno

by Richard Tillinghast

Full summer.

The umbrella pines show burnt umber underneath
and cicadas scratch out a dry music.

The bells in the valley suspend unmoved,
their tongues hanging out.

Paving stones underfoot on the terrace
blossom salmon-pink, copper-tarnish, verdigris.

Every color goes with every other color,
even the faded football jersey
of the man out taking a stroll.

Children's voices from a hedged garden levitate
and—there!—a white shuttlecock
half-moons over the arrow cypresses.

But who's this
out for an airing?
A butterfly,
heraldic and unheralded,

as if these two wings
and they only
had kept themselves under wraps
while everywhere under the sun
spring edged into summer,

and now they find their moment to appear—
buttercup yellow and bold as a banner.

Richard Tillinghast's five nonfiction books include *Finding Ireland* (University of Notre Dame Press).

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