

2020

## mOthertongue 2020 (Full Issue)

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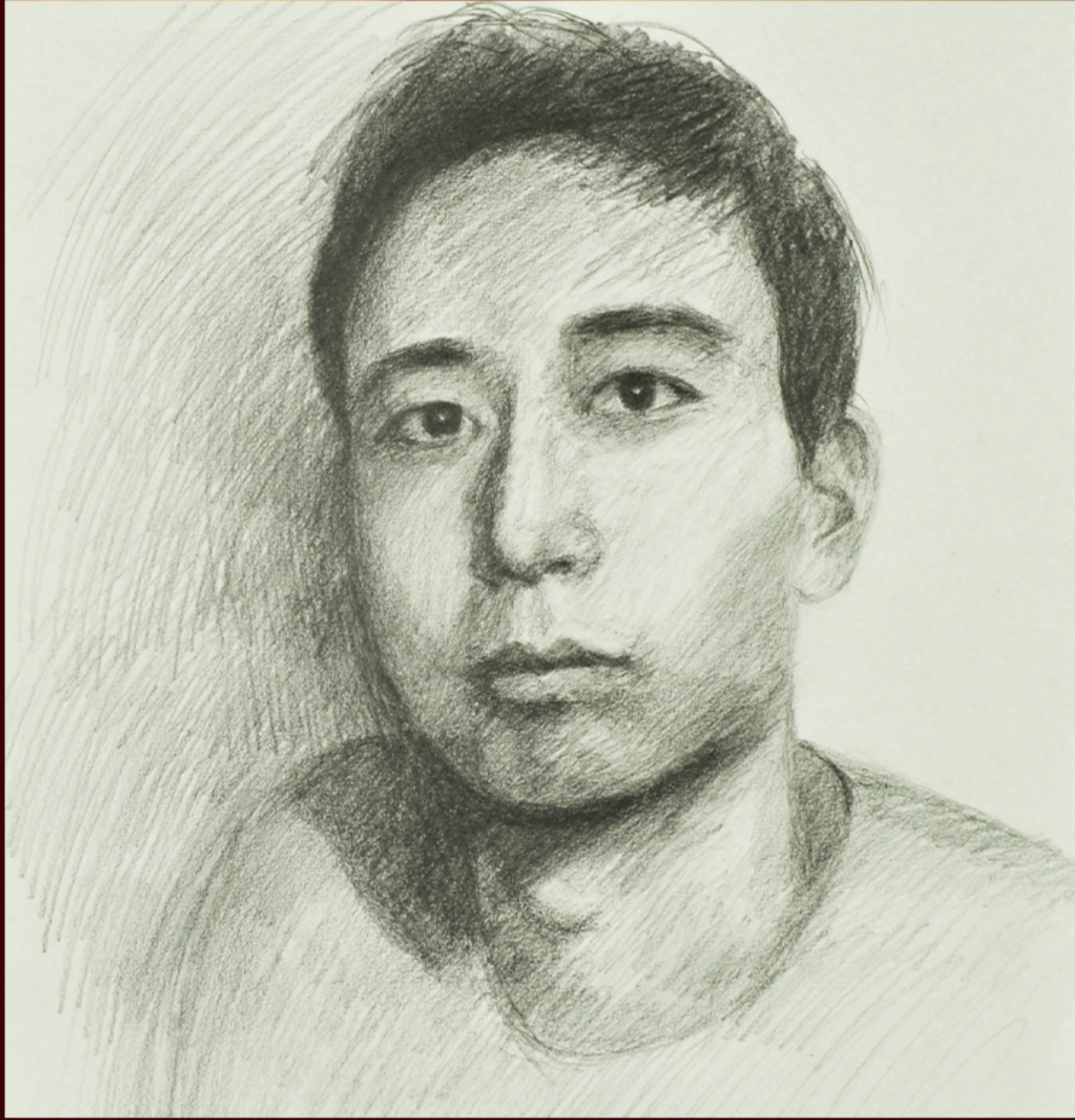
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# MOTHER TONGUE



Spring 2020





# mOthertongue

Volume xxv

Spring 2020

mOthertongue was founded in 1994 in the Comparative Literature Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The journal is published annually, and submissions are accepted early during the spring semester. The editors consider submissions from the Five College undergraduate and graduate student community.

428 Herter Hall  
Comparative Literature Program  
University of Massachusetts  
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Collective Copies  
71 S Pleasant St  
Amherst MA 01002

*Cover Art By Ani Jermakian, Carol Liu, Katrina Rojas, Sophia Vanhelene*

Dear Reader,

2020 has been an unusual year. It has been sad to have to postpone all our exciting plans, to not see friends, and to not share space with others. Despite all these unexpected disruptions, we can still find a trace of connectedness through our appreciation for literature and the arts. We are pleased to bring the 25th issue of *mOthertongue* into life. We believe that cultural humility and a shared understanding of humanity are vital, which is what *mOthertongue* aims to encourage.

This journal celebrates a variety of languages and cultures. We are honored to present to you marvelous works from writers, artists, and craftspeople within our Five College community. Each of them tells a unique story, and each of them contributes to the inclusive yet distinct voice of *mOthertongue*. Besides the value of creativity, this journal also acknowledges the worth of translation by presenting translations in different languages with the original work. We hope that you will find a piece that speaks specifically to you.

Thank you to all who have enriched this journal with their ideas and colors. Thank you to our faculty advisor and the language editors who have stayed with us along the way. Thank you, dear readers, for reinvigorating this journal with passion and curiosity.

Sincerely,  
The 2020 *mOthertongue* Editors

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# Cielo

By Katrina Rojas

Ayúdanos, pues no siempre podemos levantarnos solos.  
Enséñanos a ser tan auténticos como tu santa luz.  
Envuélvenos en nuestra cultura como tus nubes son envueltas por  
el cielo.  
Enséñanos a amar aunque hayamos sido quemados y enterrados.  
Somos parras tratando de crecer entre cuchillos,  
Nacidos en un mundo que nos arranca de nuestros propios  
árboles y nos planta en un ciclón.  
Cielo,  
Enséñanos a ser monumentos tan altos como tú.  
Haznos saber que, unidos, podemos conquistar cualquier cosa.  
Cielo,  
Ayúdanos, pues no siempre podemos levantarnos solos.



# Heaven

Help us for we can not always rise alone.

Teach us to be as genuine as your holy light.

Tell us to wear our culture like your clouds  
wear the sky.

Teach us to love though we've been burned  
and buried.

We are vines trying to grow on knives,  
Born into a world that plucks us out of our  
very own trees and plants us in a hurricane.

Heaven,

Teach us to be monuments as tall as you.

Tell us we can conquer as one.

Heaven,

Help us for we can not always rise alone.



# നദി

By Rachel Prince

ദിവസത്തെ ജോലികൾ പൂർത്തിയാകുമ്പോൾ കേരള പ്രഭാതത്തിന്റെ  
ചുഷ്ണവും കേരള ഉച്ചകഴിഞ്ഞുള്ള പുകയുടെ ഗന്ധവും  
പുറത്തെടുത്ത് വസ്ത്രങ്ങൾ വരണ്ടതാക്കാൻ തൂക്കിയിട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു p  
പിങ്ക് ആകാശത്തിലൂടെ നീളുന്നു  
ഞങ്ങൾ സ്ത്രീകൾ,  
പേപ്പർ പാവ പുഞ്ചിരികളും കനത്ത സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും ഉപയോഗിച്ച്  
ഞങ്ങളുടെ റിബേക്കേജുകളിൽ ബന്ധിക്കുക  
നദീതീരത്തേക്ക് പോകുക  
സ്ക്രബ് ചെയ്യുന്ന ചട്ടിയിൽ നിന്ന് ഞങ്ങളുടെ കൈകൾ വേദനിക്കുന്നു  
ഉയരുന്ന വിശപ്പിനെ താഴേക്ക് തള്ളിവിടുന്നതിൽ നിന്ന് നമ്മുടെ  
കൈകൾ വേദനിക്കുന്നു  
നമ്മുടെ മനുഷ്യരുടെ സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾക്ക് വഴിയൊരുക്കുന്നതിനായി  
ആകാശത്തെ വളച്ച് വളച്ചൊടിക്കുന്നതിൽ നിന്ന് നമ്മുടെ കൈകൾ  
വേദനിക്കുന്നു



ചുമക്കുന്നതിൽ നിന്ന് നമ്മുടെ പുറം വേദനിക്കുന്നു അതിലെ മുഴുവൻ  
വീടും  
ഞങ്ങൾ നദീതീരത്ത് ഇരിക്കുന്നു  
ഇത് വേദനിക്കുന്ന എല്ലുകൾക്ക് ജീവൻ നൽകുന്നു  
ഞങ്ങൾ വെള്ളത്തിൽ നിൽക്കുന്നു, നിശബ്ദ നിഴലുകൾ  
ആത്മാക്കളെപ്പോലെ പൊങ്ങിക്കിടക്കുന്നു  
അത് പൊടി കഴുകുന്നു, അത് നമ്മുടെ ചർമ്മത്തെ കഴുകി കളയുന്നു  
നമ്മൾ അസ്ഥികൂടങ്ങളല്ലാതെ മറ്റൊന്നുമല്ല, പരസ്പരം നേർത്ത  
വിരലുകളാൽ പിടിക്കുന്നു  
നമ്മൾ വളരെ മനോഹരമായി നിർമ്മിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു നമ്മിൽ ഒരാൾ  
മറ്റൊരാളെ പോകാൻ അനുവദിക്കുകയാണെങ്കിൽ  
ഞങ്ങൾ നന്നായി പറന്നുപോകും.  
നദി ഞങ്ങളുടെ എല്ലാ കഥകളും കേട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട് - ചിരി, കളിയാക്കൽ,  
തണുപ്പ് വരുമ്പോൾ ഫയർലൈറ്റിന്റെ തിളക്കം  
നദിക്ക് നമ്മുടെ രഹസ്യങ്ങൾ അറിയാം us ഞങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന്  
എന്തെങ്കിലും ആവശ്യപ്പെടാതെ ഞങ്ങളെ സ്പർശിച്ച ഒരേയൊരു നദി.

# River

when the day's work is done  
and the muck and grime of kerala mornings and the smoky smell  
of kerala afternoons  
have been wrung out and hung to dry on the clotheslines  
stretching across pink skies  
we the women,  
with paper-doll smiles and heavy dreams held captive in our  
ribcages  
make our way to the riverbank  
our hands hurt from scrubbing pots  
our hands hurt from pushing down the hunger that rises up in us  
our hands hurt from bending and twisting the very sky to give way  
to the dreams of our men  
our backs hurt from carrying an entire house on it  
we sit by the riverbank  
it gives life to our aching bones



we stand in the water, silent shadows floating like spirits  
it washes away the dust, it washes away the very skin we have on  
we are nothing but skeletons, holding each other with thin fingers  
we are made so delicately that if one of us lets go of the other  
we may very well  
float away.

the river has heard all our stories  
the laughs, the teasing, the sparkle of firelight when it gets cold  
out

the river knows our secrets  
the river is the only one that has touched us without wanting  
something from us

# Family Tribute

By Ani Jermakian





## **Artist Statement**

### **By Ani Jermakian**

From a young age, I've had a great interest in the artistic movement of Realism. Whether it's graphite portraiture or still life oil painting, bringing people or objects to life in my art has been one of my biggest passions. Abstraction was outside of my comfort zone for some time, but this muscle began to strengthen in high school, specifically while creating my AP Portfolio which concentrated on the Armenian Genocide—an important topic to me due to my cultural history and its continued lack of recognition. This topic continues to appear often in my work today, in which I tell my family's personal stories. My work transformed into a narrative art, which began to look like abstract twists to realistic representations of people. This is how I hold onto my passion for realism while also exploring the power of storytelling through art. Storytelling took on many forms in college while exploring several different mediums such as printmaking, ceramics, installation, and photography. No matter the medium—from painting to sound and digital media—all of my pieces usually end up having a tie to my family history in some way. This is a testament to the significance of personal narrative as the main inspiration for my art. As I graduate this semester from the Art Education Program at UMass and pursue my goal of becoming an art teacher, I hope to allow my students to tell their own stories through art.

# Two Tanka Poems

By Kerry Walker

脳の中  
生きてる漢字  
一文字を  
捉えたいけど  
いつも逃げちゃう

in meinem Kopf, dort  
sind lebendige Kanji  
ein Schriftzeichen nur  
will ich einfangen, aber  
ach, sie laufen immer weg

inside my brain, there  
are living, breathing Kanji  
just one character  
is all I long to catch but  
oh, they always run away



好きな麺  
百グラムだけ  
食べられる  
我慢している  
四百グラム

beliebte Nudeln  
nur Einhundert Gramm kann ich  
auf einmal essen  
mit Mut, bemühe ich mich  
schaff' ich es, Vierhundert  
Gramm

the noodles I love  
only one hundred grams is  
the most I can eat  
with some effort and courage  
I'll make it, four hundred grams

# Shibuya Crossing & Red Taxi

By Aaron Cheng



“‘Shibuya Crossing’ was taken during golden hour, a period of time before sunset where the sun seems to beam across the horizon.”



“‘Red Taxi’ was taken at the famous Shibuya Crossing. This shot was taken from an outlook of a tall building near the intersection.”



## ***La Sociedad 2020***

**By Mildred-Maria Reyes**

Mi corazón palpita de una manera sobrenatural  
Las palpitaciones aumentan su ritmo  
Cada vez más y más fuertes

En el silencio es lo único que escucho  
Hasta que de pronto mi alarma suena  
Mi cuerpo no quiere levantarse

Son las 10 de la mañana y es hora de mi clase  
Pero esta vez no será en el aula que conozco  
Todo ha cambiado y no hay vuelta atrás

De mi cama a mi escritorio  
De mi escritorio a la cama  
Me pongo a renegar porque ahora mis clases son por línea

Diez años atrás este método sería impensable  
¿Será que fuimos diseñados para vivir en este tiempo?  
Luego me arrepiento y reconozco que la tecnología fue diseñada para esto

2020 le dio un giro de 180 grados a mi generación

Sí, fue inesperado  
Sí, es inexplicable lo que vivimos

Ahora mi computadora es lo único que veo  
Toda mi comunicación ocurre frente a una pantalla  
Mis clases, en la compu  
La tarea, en la compu  
Mis reuniones, en la compu  
Mi futuro, en la compu

No sé qué pasará mañana  
No se si tendré un mañana  
Solo sé que el temor crece

Las malas noticias llenan nuestra mente de aflicción  
Un nudo de opiniones y predicciones inciertas  
Necesitamos un Salvador

¿No es El Creador el que ha permitido esto?  
Órale a Él, suplícale a Él, conócelo a Él  
No somos tan autosuficientes como creíamos ser

Solo somos humanos  
Nuestra humanidad ha sido expuesta  
Nuestra vulnerabilidad nos ha delatado

No somos tan poderosos como creíamos  
No somos tan astutos como pensábamos  
Nuestras limitaciones nos han traicionado

Pero, SI somos valientes  
Capaces de sentir el dolor de nuestro prójimo  
Nuestros corazones siguen palpitando

Es tiempo de reaccionar  
Tiempo de levantarse  
¡No más lamentarse!

Una nueva oportunidad ha llegado a nuestras vidas  
Es tiempo de crecer y resurgir  
Creando en esta crisis una esperanza

La esperanza en un futuro incierto  
Donde las máscaras nos hayan robado nuestra identidad  
Y los seis pies, nuestra libertad

Nos toca oír un poco más y hablar un poco menos  
Nos toca crear una rutina  
¡Ya basta de perder tu tiempo!

Aunque sientas que tu cultura ha sido arrebatada  
Que tu manera de abrazar y besar ya no importa



Que la sonrisa y la alegría que compartías con otros no es más que un recuerdo

Aunque pienses que ya no eres el mismo  
Que tus cenas familiares han llegado a su fin  
Que las visitas a la casa de los abuelos no son seguras

Aunque te digan lo que te digan  
¡Tu sabes quien eres!  
¿o no?

¿Qué harás hoy para marcar la diferencia en la vida de tu vecino?  
No hables, no hagas preguntas  
Solo escucha las súplicas y actúa

Es tiempo de reaccionar y tiempo de levantarse  
Mirando la necesidad pon en marcha tu solidaridad  
¡No más lamentarse! Pon tu empatía en marcha

¿Qué harás hoy para marcar la diferencia?  
¿Qué esperas?  
Yo te invito

## 2020 Society

My heart beats supernaturally  
The beating starts to intensify  
Each beat gets stronger and stronger

In the silence it's all I can hear  
Until all of a sudden my alarm goes off  
My body does not want to wake up

It is 10 in the morning and it's time for my class  
But this time it will not be my ordinary class  
Everything has changed and there's no way back

From my bed to my desk  
From my desk to my bed  
I complain that my classes are now online

Ten years ago using this method was unrealistic  
Were we designed to live in a time like this?  
I stop complaining as I recognize technology was made for a time like  
this

2020 has given my generation a 180-degree turn

Yes, it was unexpected  
Yes, it's unexplainable

Now my computer is all I see  
All my communication takes place in front of a screen  
My classes, on the computer  
My homework, on the computer  
My meetings, on the computer  
My future, on the computer

I don't know what will happen tomorrow  
I don't know if I'll have a tomorrow  
All I know is that fear is taking over

Bad news fills our minds with constant affliction  
A knot of opinions and predictions of the uncertain future  
We need a Savior

Is it not The Creator that has let this happen?  
Pray to Him, supplicate to Him, know Him  
We are not as self-sufficient as we believed

We are just humans  
Our humanity has been exposed  
Our vulnerability has sold us out



We are not as powerful as we thought  
We are not all-knowing as we thought  
Our limitations have betrayed us

But, we ARE brave  
Capable of feeling the pain of our neighbor  
Our hearts keep beating

It's time to act  
Time to rise up  
No more lamenting!

A new opportunity has come into our lives  
It's time to grow and wake up  
Making a ray of hope in this crisis

A ray of hope in the uncertain future  
Where masks have stolen our identity  
And "six-feet apart" restricted our freedom

It's our turn to listen more and speak less  
It's our turn to create a routine  
Stop wasting your time!

Even if you feel like your culture has been snatched away

That your way of hugging and kissing no longer matters  
That your smile and joy shared with others will become just a memory

Although you may think you are not the same  
That your family dinners have come to an end  
That visiting your grandparents is no longer safe

Although they tell you what they tell you  
You know who you are!  
Don't you?

What will you do today to make a difference in your neighbor's life?  
Don't speak, don't question it  
Just listen to the cries and help

It's time to act and time to rise up  
Look at what your neighbor needs, start up your solidarity  
No more regrets! Put your empathy to work

What will you do today to make a difference?  
What are you waiting for?  
I invite you

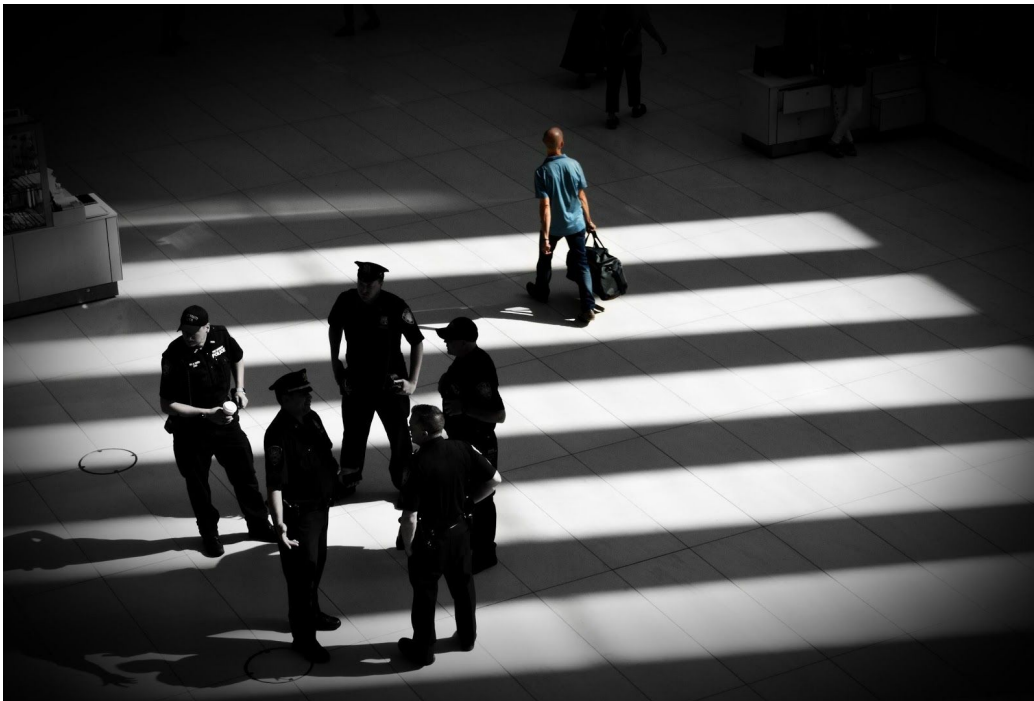
# Shanghai & Police Shadows

By Thomas Ng



“Shanghai”





**“Police Shadows”**

## 屋根裏の隅

### The Corner of the Attic

By Emily Knick

ほこりっぽい毛布の下に  
忘れられたぬいぐるみは座る。  
じっと見つめるボタンの目は  
セピア色の写真をちらっと見て、  
緩んだ糸が涙になる。

古新聞の束は  
ベルベットの毛皮に押し付けられ  
て、  
蛾が切れた電球に集まる。  
木綿の心臓はまだ動く。

クモの巣で覆われた箱には  
懐かしい電話機が入れてある。  
「もしもし、、、久しぶり」  
テディベア、旧友、  
また会えたらいいな。

Under a blanket of dust  
A forgotten stuffed animal sits.  
Staring button eyes  
Glance at a sepia-toned  
photograph,  
And loose threads become tears.

Stacks of old newspapers  
Press against velvet fur,  
And moths gather around a  
burnt-out lightbulb.  
A heart made of cotton still beats.

A box covered with cobwebs  
Contains a fondly remembered  
telephone.  
“Hello... it’s been a long time.”  
Teddy bear, old friend,  
I wish that I could see you again.

# 農村の嘆き

## An Agrarian Lamentation

By Emily Knick

カビで覆われた苺、  
鳩の卵、  
小麦粉でいっぱい編み籠、  
都会を去った私が持ってきたもの。

女であることは  
生き残り続けること。  
袋に入れた牛乳瓶、  
汚水を置き去りにした。

あたしの情夫は  
抜け殻のように見えた。  
林道を歩きながら  
夏のセミが悲しんで鳴いていた。

田舎びた女として  
泣き声がまだ聞こえる。

Moldy strawberries,  
Pigeon eggs,  
A wicker basket full of wheat  
flour,  
The things I brought when I left  
the city.

To be a woman is  
To stay alive.  
A bottle of milk placed in a bag,  
I left the sewage behind.

My lover  
Looked like a cast-off shell.  
While I walked along the  
woodland path,  
The summer cicadas were  
chirping in sorrow.

As a rustic woman,  
I can still hear the crying.

# Spring

By Carol Liu



# **Vous ai-je déjà dit combien vous êtes belle?**

**By Emily Adj**

I. Les yeux s'illuminent aux chaudes teintes canari  
d'un éclat de tournesol qui apaise la nervosité de mes doigts.  
Le soleil fait fleurir ces œufs  
alors que la poêle est encore chaude  
et comme elle grésille, n'ayez pas peur,  
le jaune sera quand même bien cuit.  
Souriant comme du beurre fondant  
sur une peau brûlée pour créer un miel doré  
pour parfaire à la façon dont nos corps s'emboîtent  
comme deux pièces de puzzle errantes.

II. Des pissenlits brûlant au mois de juillet,  
ce qui volait alors  
devenait fumée de mèches brunes.



Les étoiles réfléchies depuis mes côtes  
à un frisson d'excitation sous ma peau  
sans une boule dans ma gorge ou deux,  
chéri c'est doux ma mère t'aime vraiment.  
Puis je me demande si les étoiles sont censées être dans le ciel.

III. Les rayons du soleil chuchotent ton nom  
alors qu'ils embrassent doucement ma joue.  
Et avec cela,  
je me souviens du vent soufflant  
directement dans mes veines,  
sur l'absence de toi dans mon cœur.  
Nous aspirons à la présence de certaines personnes et  
voulons qu'elles soient le plus près possible afin de nous soulager.  
Mais on m'a dit une fois que tu  
restes toi sans elles,  
et même si elles partent,  
les choses qu'elles t'ont données demeurent.

# Have I ever told you how beautiful you are?

I.

Eyes light up to warm canary hues  
of a sunflower sparkle that soothes  
my fingertips' antsiness.

The sun makes those eggs bloom  
while the frying pan's still hot  
and as it sizzles don't be afraid,  
the yolk will still be well done.

Smiling like butter as it melts across  
burnt skin to create a golden honey  
to perfect the way our bodies fit together  
like two stray puzzle pieces.

II.

Burning dandelions in the month of July  
what used to fly  
became the smoke of brunette strands.

The stars reflect from my ribs to

shivering excitement under my skin  
without a lump in my throat or two,  
sugar it's sweet  
my mother really likes you.  
Then I wonder if stars are meant to be in the sky.

III.

The rays of sunshine whisper your name  
as they gently kiss my cheek.  
And at that,  
I'm reminded of the wind blowing  
straight through my veins,  
with absence of you in my heart.  
We crave some people's presence and  
want them as close as possible to find relief.  
But I was once told that you  
are still you without them,  
and even if they leave,  
the things they gave you will remain.

# Ireland

By Lily Tang



“These photos were taken at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland. I studied abroad this semester in Ireland and got the chance to explore the country. Ireland is gorgeous and these photos represent the beauty of nature.”

# దేవతలకు దీపములు

By Srija Nagireddy

నా తల్లి భ్రమలు అని తనకు తెలిసిన దేవతల పాదాల వద్ద పువ్వులు వేస్తుంది.  
ఆమె ప్రతిరోజూ తప్పకుండా వారికి దీపాలను వెలిగిస్తుంది.

ద్రవ జ్వాల నుండి పొగ రిబ్బన్లు ఆమె నైవేద్యాలు,  
గౌరవించటానికి, భక్తి చూపించడానికి ఒక మార్గం.

ఏడు లైట్లు ఇంటిని చెదరగొట్టాయి, ఒక్కొక్కటి వేరే దేవునికి నెయ్యి,  
ఆమెకు తెలిసిన దేవుడు ఒక భావోద్వేగానికి పేరు మరియు ముఖాన్ని కేటాయించాల్సిన మానవుని  
యొక్క కొంత గుర్తు మాత్రమే  
మనం అర్థం చేసుకోలేని ప్రపంచంలో మన అద్భుతాన్ని నియంత్రించే మార్గం.  
కాబట్టి మన జీవిత స్థిరాంకాలను అర్థమయ్యే రూపంలోకి మార్చాము, ఏదో,  
మేము గుర్తించగలము మరియు ప్రేమించగలము,  
ఎరుపు మరియు పసుపు రంగులలో ప్రతిమా,  
మేము వారి కోసం పాడతాము,  
మేము వారి కోసం ఏడుస్తాము,  
మోక్షానికి కొంత కొలత కోసం వేడుకోవడం మరియు విజ్ఞప్తి చేయడం మరియు ప్రార్థించడం,  
ఉపశమనం.

నా తల్లి వారు భ్రమలు అని తెలుసు,  
మరియు మా అందరి వెనుక ఉన్న నిశ్శబ్ద శక్తి గురించి స్పష్టమైన కళ్ళతో నాకు చెబుతుంది,  
పురుషుల మెదడులను ప్రభావితం చేసే ఈ శక్తి,  
వారి స్వంత అజ్ఞానం యొక్క తప్పుడు దిష్టిబొమ్మలను నిర్మించటానికి దారితీస్తుంది.



## Lamps for the gods

My mother puts flowers at the feet of the gods she knows are delusions.  
She lights lamps for them every day without fail.

The ribbons of smoke from the liquid flame are her offerings,  
A way to honor, to show reverence.

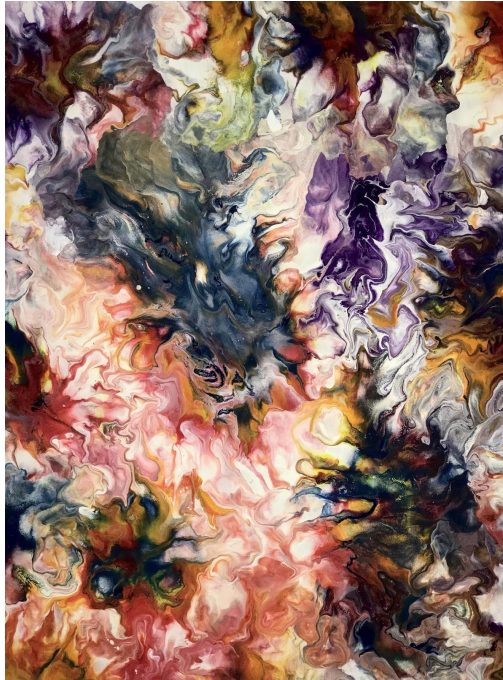
Seven lights litter the house, each burning ghee for a different god,  
a god she knows is only some marker of the human need to assign a  
name and face to an emotion,  
a way to take control of our breathless wonder at the unfathomable  
world.

So we fashioned the constants of our lives into an understandable form,  
something  
we could recognize and love,  
idols to paint in red and yellow,  
we sing for them,  
we weep for them,  
we beg and plead and pray to them for some measure of salvation,  
relief.

My mother knows they are delusions though,  
and tells me with clear eyes about the quiet power behind us all,  
that spark which infests the brains of men,  
leading them to construct false effigies in the face of their own  
ignorance.

# The Disease

By Nour Assaf



“As mythical living organisms once saw the day, they walked among us,  
deserted the streets, and proliferated deaths into a substantial  
extinction.”

