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mOthertongue 2021 (Full Issue)

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UMass mOthertongue 2021

a multilingual
journal of the arts

UMass Amherst Comparative Literature

mOthertongue

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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.

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A Message to the Reader:

As we near the end of a tough cycle in all of our lives, the *mOthertongue* Editorial Board would like to wish you well, and we hope these words of many languages bring you feelings of joy, hope, resilience, or make you feel seen and heard through shared pain and troubles. With the rise of COVID-19 and the resurgence of anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, transphobic turmoil, and overall lapses in humanity's true nature of being beautiful, we hope that the end of such a tough time marks a newfound sense of restored faith in humanity.

We are writing to highlight the experiences of those with voices that are typically silenced or not taken seriously. Our journal strives to show the mere beginnings of the infinite possibilities available to us due to the way languages are interconnected with people's identity and cultures, and the widened scope we as readers and writers have access to due to the art and practice of translation. The three editors of *mOthertongue* strive to show that literary creation is not limited to the English language—with its dominance in and outside the US-American sphere—just as goodwill is not limited to any group of people over another.

If there is anything this year has taught us, it's that social and cultural norms will never be the same. We've been restricted from giving our loved ones a kiss on each cheek, a hug, or even from letting a stranger see our smiles; our traditions—the very things that bind us together—had to be put on hold. In order to reflect these changes in traditions, we have decided to change a few things with this year's issue. As this year's political upheaval has made us more aware of how racism and other forms of bigotry still govern our society on a micro and macro level, we hope that this year's issue of *mOthertongue* works against this as a force for good.

For this purpose of being an agent for positive change in a world of troubled health and overall conflict, we at *mOthertongue* are proud to feature work this year whose vulnerability begs readers to see beyond themselves and

their own limited spheres of perception or understanding of the world. In this issue, we have included poetry and prose that deeply explores natural human emotions through languages other than English. We've also included other works that are in English from nonnative speakers. Hence, pieces like these are a deviation from one's "mOthertongue." This year we are featuring texts and visual art that push against the norms of the various languages and cultures they are associated with. The work we as editors of *mOthertongue* are presenting to you is as heterogeneous as you, our audience.

We are all cut from the same cloth, each individual embroidered with flower petals or white skulls or jewel-toned fruits with special care from whomever, whatever, whichever culture, higher power, collective power, or upbringing. We are ready to celebrate similarities and appreciate differences. After all, who is truly human without our differences and imperfections?

-The Editorial Board

a skeleton y his topo chico

by ckc

Latinidad is white supremacy with sazón,
there, i said it.
all of the adobo, cilantro, chili, annatto
in the world cannot save us from this.
“pero, this is all we have,” says that foo, you know the one.
pero, topo chico and hard work doesn’t have enough
to cleanse us of our sins, our skin
off our backs is not enough to win

the waspy hearts of the temp workers
who decide our fates and fares.
we should have known better

than to convince ourselves of the sweet lie white
Americans tell us. that we are different, somehow.
like our countries weren’t also born and built off

of chattel slavery and anti-Blackness.
like our presidents and dictators don’t look the same, don’t play the same games.
like we weren’t told to not go out into the sun by our tías, only for white girls to
go
to our homelands to vacation and come back with cornrows done by one of your
aunties
and tell you, smugly, that she’s darker than you.
órale, tell me, this isn’t the same lie
fed to us by our brown-skinned aunties and our white history teachers.

my blanqueamiento was not an accident. it was designed
with threads of mejorar la raza, of survival
my father secured whiteness for me but now,
it backfires, soot inking his swarthy face, my proximity
to whiteness, to my mother
only pushes him farther away

from me. my father secured whiteness
for me, but now we are strangers in skin
color, and when i tan he rejoices, remembering
the summer days where i looked like his
daughter. back when his claim on me was undisputed,
when my whiteness was an asset, and not
a border he could not cross.

the colors of blasphemy

by ckc

i am a Twister
master.

i will bend

my body

making sure i sandwich my existence
with please and thank you, por favor
y muchas muchas gracias,
stitch together a permanent smile, and
coat my tongue with candy before
becoming your personal sofía vergara,
speak loudly and passionately pero
never in front of your parents, papi,
i know how to behave

left hand red
right hand blue
left foot blue
right foot yellow

primary colors
are your favorite,
something about

purity
&

voy a ceder

mi cuerpo

until i know every biggie or grand-
master flash reference to claim
brooklyn and the bronx; make
enough white people jokes, like how
gringos pronounce words like
estadounidense y vergüenza pero
keepin consistent and mentioning how
i have only been able to count to siete
so everyone knows
i know my place

left hand blue
right hand red
left foot yellow
right foot red

एक दिन ऐसा फिर आसगा,
जोया हुआ तुझे सब मिल जायगा
कुछ न मिलने का दुख मन मनाता
हैसा खेलता आगे निकल जाना
वो तूझे इन बातों से चुसायगा, रुलायगा
दोऊँगा लेलिन मही बानों से तूझे कहीर बनायगा
मन में मुस्कुराना चेहरा देख,
दुख्यर वाला कैभी तो शर्मायगा
जोया हुआ तुझे सब कुछ मिल जायगा



“Khoya hua tujhe sab mil jaega”
“You are going to get everything you have lost”
by Mihir Thakur
Artwork by Sarthak Shukla

“A friend never leave Compton for profit” - Kendrick Lamar

In the song ‘u’, Kendrick Lamar uses his lyrical wit to portray a friend. A friend who has left Compton, Kendrick’s hometown, in order to pursue wealth. Kendrick describes how in doing this the friend has chosen wealth over an opportunity to be around people who had loved him and trusted him. To Kendrick, this is an act of betrayal, which makes him call out the phony nature of the care that the friend shows through phone calls.

Kendrick Lamar held a very important place in my teenage life. He was one of the many figures that helped me fill the vacuum for a male role model left by my dad. I admired a young man like him, who had strong morals. A young man, who had a direction in life and confidence in his abilities. Then, I moved to the U.S. in order to pursue my passions and, of course, money. In doing this, I had done the very thing that Kendrick condemned.

Realizing this put me into a reflective state about my decision to come to the U.S. Even the support of my friends back in India was not enough for me to completely put off the weight of the fact that I had left my city and that I had left it in order to pursue personal success. For the most part, I have dealt with this emotional burden by having a lot of reflective time and the company of this great painting by my high school friend from back in India.

This painting, like any other good painting, has no perfect translation to English. However, I will try my best to translate the essence of this painting. At its core, this painting is about the suffering that comes with pursuing your passions in life. Sarthak, the artist behind this masterpiece, beautifully portrays how at many points in a passionate person’s life, they are gonna lose things that they like. One might have a hard time dealing with such losses, even cry over them. However, such losses are not to be pondered for too long. In order to live life to its potential, one must harvest everything that one can learn from these losses and

move on with life. One must not let life's occasional punch in the face ruin the whole experience. Such a perspective was hard for me to see all the pressure of losing everyone close to me and coming to a new country, and this poem has certainly helped me see it.

I believe that there are people going through the same thing, and I believe a few of them are reading this right now. I would love for them to see the man on the cloud. Notice his relaxed shoulders. If you have any tension in your shoulders while reading this, I would like you to take a moment and get rid of all the burdens you have for a second and breathe in. I would like you to realize that the people you knew and grew up with still care about you, even if you are currently far away from them.

When Will it Be Enough?

by Jemma Kepner

Cur, virī divites, vultis omnia capere conspecta?
Quid dē vitās hominum animaliumque et naturārum?
Ubi contentī rēbus habitīs eritis?
Oramus ut vōs desinatis.
Liberemus vestrā avaritiā.
Vidimus Romam in exitium ruere.
Vestrum fatum profectō est clārum...

Why, rich men, do you all desire to take everything you see?
What about people and animals and nature?
When will you all be happy with the things you have?
We beg you all to stop.
What about life?
What about Mother Earth?
Let us be free from your greed!
We saw Rome fall to ruin before.
Your fate is undoubtedly clear...

Rire

par Nicole Bates

Mauvais tours, sales tours
Ceci n'est pas un brouillon
d'un poème Beat
Seulement quelques pensées que
j'ai sur comment jeter des
Sorts pour les rires

Je ne suis pas poète Beat mais
Je peux danser au rythme
Je peux chanter au rythme
Mon cœur bat au rythme
Ma tête bat au rythme
Après de longues journées
Passées devant des écrans

Aujourd'hui j'ai appris au sujet du rire
Les rires bruyants, les rires aux éclats
Les gros rires, braiement d'ânes
Hi-han, hi-han, hi-han, hi-han

Nous avons parlé de rire
Avec de grands mots descriptifs
Mais nous n'avons pas ri
Et nous n'avons pas appris
Comment faire surgir les rires
Ou les faire durer
Passées leurs dates de péremption.

Laughter
by Nicole Bates

Witchcraft, bitchcraft
This is not a beat poem
Draft
But just some thoughts
I have about how to cast
Spells for laughs

I'm not a beat poet but
I can dance to the beat
I can sing to the beat
My heart beats
My head beats
After long days
On computer screens

Today I learned
about laughter
Horse laughs,
wolf laughs
Donkey brays,
witch cackles
Hee-haw-haw,
hee-haw-haw

We talked
about laughter
With big
descriptive
words But we
didn't laugh
And we didn't learn
How to conjure laughs
Or to make them last
Past their expiration.

The Rape of Souls

by Chini Lahoti

I wake up at the crack of dawn—well, noon—to my mother’s fifth call.
“What, mumma?”

“Mira, whatever you do, do *not* leave the house.” Her frail voice wobbles a bit more than usual. *Is she crying?* I deny it as quickly as I think of it. Why would she be crying?

“Mumma, kya hua ?”¹

I hear the dull buzz of the dial tone in response. When I try to call back, it goes straight to voicemail. *She would have told me if something was wrong, right?*

A bit confused by the conversation and dazed by my dreamless sleep, I venture out of the room I share with my sister into the cramped open space that hosts our living room, dining room, and kitchen. Mumma clearly isn’t home, but a cursory glance around the small apartment tells me that papa and Tara didi² aren’t either. Although my dad’s absence can be justified by his work schedule, I wonder where my sister went off to. She went to celebrate her birthday with her friends last night, but Tara isn’t the type to party all night. On any given day, she is up earlier than me, fooling our parents into believing she is the ideal daughter. I know her true intentions, though. She just wants to hog the TV so she can torture me by putting something boring on, just like her.

She’s probably at the temple. I’m sure there’s some sort of festival that I can’t bother remembering.

I rejoice in her absence on this fine morning and decide this is the perfect opportunity to binge all my soap operas. Situating myself on the vintage floral patterned sofa with the throw blanket, I reach for the AC remote set on the glass coffee table in front of me. The AC machine stirs and blasts me with a jet of

¹ Mom, what happened?

² Older sister

focused cool air, providing me an escape from the August heat. Once I'm completely comfortable, I turn the TV on. The screen opens to a news channel. *Papa must've been watching TV this morning before work.* I press the channel button as quickly as possible, trying to get as far from the loud and irritating news as I can, but a headshot appears on the screen before I can. I stop.

“एक और लड़क मृत पायी गयी हैदल के सड़क पे।³ According to sources, nineteen-year-old Tara Agarwal was headed home from a party when she was cornered by two men. Witnesses have identified one of the two alleged perpetrators as the son of the chief minister. या तारा को इंसाफ मल पायेगा⁴ —” The Times of India cuts off abruptly. My body is frozen in shock.

The timing of the daily power outage is in my favor for the first time. The TV—and air conditioning—is silenced, while I am frozen, left to listen to the bustle and the honking of the traffic below me.

Delhi isn't affected.

Only I feel her loss.

A shiver crawls through my skin, despite my sweaty clothes sticking to me like a second skin. I begin shaking uncontrollably and soon enough, hot tears are rolling down my cheeks, burning my eyes as they leave.

No, no. She's not dead. What am I thinking? Why am I crying? She's not dead.

I frantically search for my phone, tangled somewhere between my limbs and the haphazard folds of the blanket on my lap. As soon as I find it, I try calling both of my parents way more than the five calls I received this morning. After being defeated by the dull buzz of the dial tone for the twentieth time, the realization hits.

³ Another girl has been found dead on the streets of Delhi.

⁴ Will Tara be able to get justice?

Those sick, privileged bastards.

They killed my sister.

How *dare* they? She swore that *I* would be the death of her.

I resent them. I resent her. *How dare she leave me like this? Who is going to fight with me over everything? Who is going to scream at me for stealing her clothes? Who is going to go out with me on girls' nights?*

I hate her.

But more than that, I miss her. What was her fault? Was it her fault that she was pressured by her friends to celebrate her birthday with them? Was it her fault for living in Delhi? Was it her fault that the chief minister could not teach his son to respect women? It must've been—that's why she was punished.

I love her.

I want her back. I want her back. I want her back. I... want... her... back... I want... I don't know how long I chanted this between my sobs. Could've been a few minutes. Could've been hours. I don't remember as I fall into a restless slumber.

...

"Mira, wake up. Kitna soyi gi⁵?" I am being violently shaken by the enemy of my peace.

"Let me sleep, didi. Why do you have to force me to get up so early?" I throw one of my pillows at her, while I sandwich my head between the other and the bed. Suddenly, realization sinks in and I sit up. *Tara didi isn't here. She died.* I rub my eyes to break the illusion of her.

She returns the pillow to me as graciously as she had received it; it hit me

⁵How much will you sleep?

in the face harder than I had thrown it. “No, no, no. Don’t fall back asleep on me. We need to go to the temple.” She dictates. *Fuck. That hurt like a bitch.*

“Didi, why are we going to the temple?” Though I like to believe I’m a good devotee, I don’t like to frequent the temple too many times—especially at the crack of dawn.

“It’s Teej, dumbass. We’ve got to go pray for good husbands.” *Teej? Was it Teej today?* “Now go take a shower. You stink.” She teases, scrunching her nose in distaste.

As I shower, I wave off the horrible nightmare I had. Obviously, I’ve been watching too many soap operas. This is a way of my subconscious reprimanding me. We set off for the temple after I shower.

“How was your birthday party last night?” I ask as we make the ten-minute walk to the temple. Not always observant of my surroundings, I trip over a pothole, catching my balance.

“Mira, how many times have I told you *ki dekh kar chala karo*⁶?” Tara scolds me, and the few people surrounding us stop to see if I am okay. I notice the keechad⁷ that had splashed onto Tara’s dress. I apologize profusely, but Tara seems pretty mad at me. I try to wipe off as much of the mud as I can but it won’t come off. A guy offers us a handkerchief but Tara responds with a curt no.

Tara ignores me as we continue the path to the mandir. I know if she could have it her way she would’ve gone back home and taken another shower before entering the holy place but we were on a time crunch.

When we reach the temple, I don’t pray for a good husband. I don’t care. I thank god for giving me my sister back, even if she’s mad at me right now. I am just grateful that the night before was all just a bad dream.

⁶ To watch where you’re walking

⁷ Dirt

When we reach home, Tara has lost the energy to remain mad and we continue on with our day. It's an endless cycle of us pestering one another, bickering over who's more annoying and then making up like nothing happened.

As we get ready for bed, I turn to her. "I love you, didi."

She rolls her eyes. "Ew, keep your sentiments to yourself." I pout in response. "Just kidding, rothalu⁸. I love you, too. Now go to bed. Or you'll blame me for not getting enough sleep."

And so I sleep.

• • •

I come to to the incessant chatter of the news reporter, and a blast of chilled air hits me. *Why am I on the sofa?* "Didi? Tara? Where *are* you?"

"In other news, the Chief Minister is planning to run for Prime Minister..."

Anger and astonishment coursing through me, I throw the remote towards the TV, shattering it into pieces. I shiver, unsure if it's due to the air conditioning or the eerie scene in front of me. A layer of dust and glass float around in the evening golden light as the world around me comes to a standstill.

Eventually, my parents walk in to find me staring at the settled ruins of my former favorite piece of technology, concern and resignation evident in their eyes. In normal circumstances, I would have to explain myself to them. But seeing as they didn't bother to give me an explanation or involve me, I could at least return the favor. I deserved to hear it from them this morning, not from the news headlines. *Why didn't they tell me?* Why was I forced to stay home alone and cope with the loss of my sister all by myself? Why am I being jailed in my home when that criminal—that rapist—is roaming the streets, proud of his accomplishment? Why can't I leave? Why do I have to be scared? Why can't he be?

⁸ Cry baby

But I can't voice any of these questions. Not when I see my mother's eyes lined with sleeplessness and frozen tears. Not when I see the broken shell of my father standing in front of me, replacing the tall, proud man he was. Not when I realize that nothing was ever going to be the same.

Fuck—I need to leave.

But I can't.

• • •

White. It used to be my favorite color. But even though I am dressed in the color I used to adore, I can't help but loathe it. White will never not mean Tara's funeral. It is no longer pure.

Tara's dress matches the shade of orange that her pyre turns as my father performs her antam sanskar⁹. He walks around her burning, lifeless body in circles. Circles that she would've taken years down the line around a different fire had she gotten the chance to get married. I can see the dreams she had of her wedding so vividly.

• • •

Her groom stares into her eyes, knowing how lucky he is to marry her. I barf in my mouth. My sister rolls her eyes while my to-be jiju¹⁰ acknowledges me with a goofy grin and a warm hug. Despite my exaggerated displays of disgust, I am so happy to welcome him to our family. He has his flaws, but he balances my sister out perfectly. I guess her Teej prayers really paid off.

The wedding rituals begin, but I'm not paying attention. I'm too busy strategizing how to steal my jiju's shoes without his family intervening. If all goes according to plan, we can get a hefty amount of money from him in exchange. Each move must be planned very carefully.

⁹ Final rites

¹⁰ Brother-in-law

The final few rituals are completed and my sister is married. I return the shoes to—although not without the shagun¹¹ —the newest member of my little family. And as we bid my sister goodbye, I don't shed anything but happy tears.

• • •

As I stare at the collated ashes of the body that remains no more, I sense a bit of a relief to know that she didn't survive. All she ever did was be an ideal daughter and dream of being an ideal wife and daughter-in-law. She dreamed of having a caring and loving husband who supported her through all the big and small things in her life.

Had she lived and chosen to fight her injustice, though, she probably would have ended up married to her offender. I would never even meet that monster's pleased eyes, much less attempt to steal his shoes covered in keechad. Even if she remained quiet, no one would marry her. She had the audacity to be the unwilling volunteer to those rich bastards. Regardless, her dreams would remain incomplete. *That's how fucked up the system is.* A victim can't become a survivor if she's treated like dust. So it's better that that's what she is now.

I try to carefully transfer her remains into the urn but when the sob that was stuck in my throat finds its escape, her ashes disseminate into the wind. And as I bid my sister goodbye, I shed anything but happy tears.

Nothing's changed.

Except that Tara is gone.

¹¹ A gift for good fortune

dale boca
por Phoebe Michel

han vuelto algunos demonios
a mi puerta—
entre ellos tú,
y el alcohol;

pájaros en cuerpos de hombres,
hombres en cuerpos de pájaros.

miradas cortantes
mientras duermo.

tengo 21 años y en las noches
uso crema antiarrugas—

no me creas si no quieres.
no me quieras si no quieres.

tengo 21 años y a veces me quejo
de no sentir más,
y me olvido que estoy más viva que las malditas nubes,
y he amado tanto como
para que me dure tres vidas más.

y más, y más, y todo,
pero igual
un poco más.

vacío azul, tus manos, este cuerpo
tragándote—bebé deja ya
de negarte
la vida.

te recuerdo, y me recuerdas, y te
muerdes la lengua y la mía

se desliza por el cielo con elegancia
porque soy la lluvia que te limpió, porque
no puedes olvidarme, porque en mi piel
fuiste un fuego más puro

que tu propia revolución.

mouth
by Phoebe Michel

some demons have come back
to my door—
among them you,
and alcohol;

birds in the bodies of men,
men in the bodies of birds.

cutting glances
when i sleep.

i'm 21 years old and at night
i use anti-ageing cream—

don't believe me if you don't want to.
don't want me if you don't want to.

i'm 21 years old and
sometimes i complain about
not feeling more,
and i forget that i'm more alive than the damned clouds,
and i've loved enough
for it to last me three more lifetimes.

and more, and more, and everything,
but still
a little more.

empty blue, your hands, this body
swallowing you—baby stop
denying yourself
a life.

i remember you, and you
remember me, and you bite your
tongue and mine
slides along the sky with elegance
because i'm a rain that cleaned
you, because you can't forget
me, because on my skin
you were a fire more pure

than your own revolution.

velocida'
por Phoebe Michel

se me ocurre que quizás
lo que querías era el caos que yo cargaba,
y que fui para ti lo mismo que fuiste para mi.

erotismo, escape, una fuerza

que movió tu cuerpo bajo la lluvia
y sanó con talco los rincones de ti
donde sangrabas y te perdías.

speed
by Phoebe Michel

it occurs to me that maybe
what you wanted was the chaos that i carried,
and i was for you just what you were to me.

eroticism, escape, a strength

that moved your body under rain
and healed with talcum the corners of you
where you bled out and were lost.

curva
por Phoebe Michel

me abandonas porque no puedes
cargar la deslumbrante gravedad
de reconocerte en mí, encendido.

te vas porque te derrites
en presencias de diosas,
y soy una mami espiritual,

matadora que
te come cálido;
se derrama,
agua, en las
raíces de tus
pies, que son
tierra—

el terror absoluto

de haber
estado
vivo.

curve
by Phoebe Michel

you abandon me
because you can't
carry the dazzling
gravity
of recognizing yourself in me, ignited.

you leave because you melt
in presences of goddesses,
and i am a spiritual mama,

killer who eats you warm;
pours herself, water,
over the roots of
your feet, which are
earth—

the absolute terror

of having
been
alive



“un viaje al faro” Bermeo, Biscay, España por Anna Shahbazyan

আমি তোমায় ভালবাসি
by Anisah Sahibu

"আমার সোনার বাংলা
আমি তোমায় ভালবাসি।"
সেই দেশ যেখানে
আমার বাবা-মা বড় হয়েছে,
সেই দেশ যেখানে স্বাধীনতা
এসেছে রক্তের বিনিময়ে,
সেই দেশ যেটা এক কালে
ছিল ব্রিটিশের কবলে,
সেই দেশ ছেড়ে এসেছে
আমার বাবা-মা এই দেশে।
এই যুক্তরাষ্ট্র দেশে,
এই স্বাধীন গল্পের দেশে,
এই মিথ্যা কথার দেশে।
এই দেশ যেটা অন্য দেশকে
হেন করে বলে "third world," "developing."
acting as if the West is the almighty standard,
as if their way of living is the one and only,
as if their wealth came not from stealing that of others,
as if they didn't pry open unsuspecting mouths
and force the poison of white supremacy
down captive colonized throats.

"আমার সোনার বাংলা
আমি তোমায় ভালবাসি"
you're forging your own path,
working through your pitfalls and pains,
fighting through the issues
that need caring change.

but
no matter what,
you
will never
be lesser.
“Great” Britain
and the U.S.
are not greater.
they are not “first world,”
not “developed.”
these colonizers,
they cut you off at the knees,
exploited you,
so you couldn’t breathe.
and yet here you still stand and move forward.

আমার সোনার বাংলা
তোমার শরীরে এত শক্তি।
you’re not perfect,
but you’re not “third world,”
not “developing.”
"আমার সোনার বাংলা

আমি তোমায় ভালবাসি।"

“ami tomai bhalobashi”

by Anisah Sahibu

“amar shonar bangla,
ami tomai bhalobashi.”
shei desh jekhane
amar baba ma boro hoyeche.
shei desh jekhane shadinota
aashecche rokte binimoye.

shei desh jeta ak kale
cchilo Britisher kobole.
shei desh cchere aashecche,
amar baba ma ay deshe.
ay jukto rashtro deshe.
ay shadhin golper deshe.
ay mittha kotthar deshe.
ay desh jeta onno deshke
heno kore bole “third world,” “developing.”
acting as if the West is the almighty standard,
as if their way of living is the one and only,
as if their wealth came not from stealing that of others,
as if they didn't pry open unsuspecting mouths
and force the poison of white supremacy
down captive colonized throats.

“amar shonar bangla,
ami tomai bhalobashi.”
you're forging your own path,
working through your pitfalls and pains,
fighting through the issues
that need caring change.
but
no matter what,
you
will never
be lesser.
“Great” Britain
and the U.S.
are not greater.
they are not “first world,”
not “developed.”
these colonizers,

they cut you off at the knees,
exploited you,
so you couldn't breathe.
and yet here you still stand and move forward.
amar shonar bangla,
tomar shorire ato shokti.
you're not perfect,
but you're not "third world,"
not "developing."
"amar shonar bangla,

ami tomai bhalobashi."

"i cherish you"

by Anisah Sahibu

"my beloved Bengal,
i cherish you."
the country where
my parents grew up.
the country where freedom
came in exchange for blood.
the country that once
was under British control.
the country that my parents left,
to come to this country.
this country of the United States.
this freedom-fabled country.
this country of lies.
this country that looks down on others,
calling them 'third world,' 'developing.'
acting as if the West is the almighty standard,
as if their way of living is the one and only,
as if their wealth came not from stealing that of others,

as if they didn't pry open unsuspecting mouths
and force the poison of white supremacy
down captive colonized throats.

"my beloved Bengal,
i cherish you."

you're forging your own path,
working through your pitfalls and pains,
fighting through the issues
that need caring change.

but

no matter what,

you

will never

be lesser.

"Great" Britain

and the U.S.

are not greater.

they are not "first world,"

not "developed."

these colonizers,

they cut you off at the knees,

exploited you,

so you couldn't breathe.

and yet here you still stand and move forward.

my beloved Bengal,

you are so strong.

you're not perfect,

but you're not "third world,"

not "developing."

"my beloved Bengal,

i cherish you."

Los Bosques de Escocia

por Alexander Wurl

Una vez fui a los bosques
De Escocia del norte
Un sitio sin leyes
Solo escuchando al viento

Yo comí lo que podía
Encontrar en la tierra
No es tierra firme
Sino tierra mía

Fui a los bosques de Escocia
Para encontrar quien soy
Fui sin compañeros
El día de librarme es hoy

Cabalgué en el lomo de una mula
Desde Londres hasta aquí
No recuerdo cuánto tiempo tuvo
Solo que me divertí

Encontré dos brujas
Viviendo en una choza
Me dieron una poción
De fuerza de voluntad

Fui a los bosques de Escocia
Con niebla por todas partes
Las hadas estaban bailando
Y creando hermosos artes

Ahora voy a sentarme
En una nube de musgo
Me olvido de mis problemas
Nunca seré retenido

The Scottish Woods
by Alexander Wurl

One time I went to the
Northern Scottish Woods
A place without laws
Only listening to the wind

I ate what I could find
On the wooded mossy floor
This isn't dry land
Only my land

I went to the Scottish Woods
to find my state of mind
I went without friends
The day to liberate myself is today

I rode on the back of a mule
From London to this place
I don't remember for how long,
only that I enjoyed the trip

I found two witches
Living in a hut
They gave me a potion
Of unrelenting willpower

I went to the Scottish Woods
With fog all around
The fairies were dancing
and creating beautiful art

Now I'm going to sit myself
On a cloud of moss
I'll forget all my problems
I will never be held down

Poem of Poem Titles

by Helen Rahman

I try to write a poem but all I end up doing is coming up with titles

“Confessions of an immigrant prom queen”

“Moments in multicultural”

“Cat in distress”

“When we live in hiding”

“Errors in translation”

“Oops! I did it again”

“Queer as day”

“Bi by night”

“Learning how to count beyond 69”

“Small person with Big Dick Energy”

“Drag queen trapped in a woman’s body”

“Everywhere and nowhere”

“Sexy alien”

“Pick one: dork, geek, or nerd”

“Choosing is capitalism”

“And this bitch shining”

“brown people think I’m white, white people think I’m weird”

50 Shades of Helen

“Walmart version of Harley Quinn”

“Boxed wine version of Nicki Minaj”

“Kinda hot, mostly strange though”

“Chronicles of the chronically self-aware”

“A hot potato”

“Dressed to impress”

“Salt and paprika”

“The Frisky Bunny”

“The Teddy Bear”

“Putting the GRIT in INTEGRITY”

“The Dirty Chai you got on your way to class”

“An idiot who is accidentally poetic for 21 years straight”

“An actual threat to stubborn authority”

I don't have time for you to make your mistakes on me.

“Japanese curry”

