

UVic Diversity Writing Contest 2016, First-Place Poetry Winner

By Alex Kung

With Apologies to Du Fu

*"...a lone moon slowly turns in the waves
A line of cranes flies past in a silent hunt;
a pack of wolves howls around its prey.
I cannot sleep, plagued by thoughts of war
and powerless to spare the world its fate."*

-from "Overnight in the Pavilion by the River" by Du Fu (712-770)

It's the clarity that hurts, the dimpled pearl
vener of the moon hung above every *then*, above now,
the naked contrast between seen
and unseen, heard
and unheard, the stone
of Yasukuni, the timber
of Chinreisha; between knowledge
and not having known: the simultaneous
sunrise over Tokyo Bay and
sunset over Victoria's Chinatown bleed
from the same corona.

When glass broken by boots and rifle butts
washes to the river, what's tragic isn't
spider-thread scars, blood beads, the reduction
to sharp edges and crystalline dust, but how
the huddled shards float, as if this time
they'll flow downstream, gouge feet on
foreign beaches, glimmer of
once whole selves,

before they sink.

As the rubble of Aleppo falls
over the fragments of Sarajevo,
over the sand of Nanjing,
ash, root, and bone dust of Chang'an,
still no rest for the poet
who slices his palm on the pieces
searching for beauty in what broke.
Every ballpoint, boot, backpack,
every blueprint, bookend, boy thrown overboard
and let sink silts
our coronary waterways;
one day they will shatter
the surface, alter flow, spare the world
its fate. Until then,
apologies to Du Fu,
for the pearl moon
still falls.