

## Minying Huang Safe Passage

Taken by the resonance of currency,  
I come to you full in the mouth, having lifted the skin of  
the water. Creating a spherical absence, though not the last ditch of earth  
or sky, I formed a bowl with my hands, as if they were clay. Lifting the moon off  
the water, I found it round as a coin, then crushed into a leather fist its glut of  
rock, its blood beneath the mantle, until then thrumming in the ear. It became  
a handful of shells, a sift or shift in the sand, that clamour of change in the pocket.  
A smother of pearls. I balled my fist into a leather moon, then formed a crater on  
its surface with my hands, which I had conditioned against breakage, kissing their knuckles  
to the grain. I keep picking up the gauntlet and lashing at the wound's tender surface,  
clock-ice bearing the freighted movement of time, bussed close to breaking, cracking,  
to open. Coming to want what you want, I have been collecting moons by the bucket,  
but they wane wet to the touch, as if they were pearls of the imagination  
beneath the fingers. How many times have I offered you these, mindful imitations  
of the objects of desire, grasping at the negative. Like sand through the fingers,  
a fistful of air, silence of shells, that hush of change in the pocket. An asphyxiation  
of pearls. I choke on the looking glass of your eyes, having pressed my mouth to the  
brim, before knocking back the image, swallowing out of sight the inevitable  
pearl, laboured desire. Small as nothing and large as the moon. A drop of the  
ocean in the stomach, transfigured—the rawness of it all. How many times  
have I offered you this, no doubt poorer than metal, yet lush as life.  
Something immeasurable hanging gloved in the balance. And all this business  
from a dent in the sky, suddenly small as a coin, then two, then three—  
a clinking of change in the bucket, an echo in the shell, was it a delusion  
of the ear, or did we catch the ocean in the offing, dredging up its wares,  
to find ourselves torrid and thirsty. Emptying the bucket, we have kicked it  
a thousand times over, as if to drink ourselves hollow. Having ripped  
the skin off the water, how did it happen that I found a face in  
your likeness, displacing the moon. Pressing my mouth to the shore  
of you, and all the parched mouths of the dead, I beg for the water to  
take. Transfixed by the containment of currency, I stare into the  
flay, stripping the infinite down to the shapes of desire, the unsalted hides  
of living things, everything primed to unravel in decay before  
a stitch in time, a preservation of its use. How long can  
I hold you here, under my skin, assuming the weight of it  
all, to derive the shape of myself.

**Minying Huang** is an Oxford-based poet and doctoral student. Their work appears in *fourteen poems, wildness, Palette Poetry, Articulations for Keeping the Light In* (eds. Rachel Long and Jacob Sam-La Rose, flipped eye publishing, 2022), and elsewhere.

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