**In search of the perfect rhythm**

*Sammi Wang*

You’re tugging at your lingerie straps and mumbling

Bloodshot, swollen eyes

Flickering like traffic lights.

You stride across the room

Where white, fetid takeout bags

Cluster on the kitchen floor

And the washing machine screams like a plane taking off.

You’re in search of the

perfect rhythm

like sex,

like math,

like frogs

sitting stern on a lotus leaf

in a small pond in a park,

and when it comes through you your veins

will be frizzy like currents through a cable

Explode.

You put on your trench coat and let yourself wander in a neighborhood where you’re a stranger

And you write in your little yellow notebook, as usual

Of orange apartment buildings, humid trees

Covered under green construction linens

Of red doorways leading to hollow doors

Of wooden benches on a wrinkled meadow where lovers hide

Of garbage collection stations

Where two street sweepers walk past and ask whatcha doin’ and you tell them you’re

writing a poem about a wasted life

but it never comes to you

the rhythm, the song

the palette spills

over your heart, atrium and ventricle, an empty vase —

You blood runs warm and still.

So you stray into a bar nearby, grab a beer and hide behind the counter

To eavesdrop on people talking

About love, disease, and mother’s old refrigerator

That she’s kept for twenty years

Before crashing it into pieces, plastic and metal

About the ten things you’ve lost in the past

And the sudden taste

of murder

but nothing interests you really

and your eardrum is drenched by the noise

your vision dims

and you think “not again” –

You’re twenty-five and you already feel old.

It’s 2 AM and you decide to leave the bar

And go uphill

Where the road narrows and turns left at the corner

And a river

flows over the open field.

Besides you, office and hotel windows

secretly glint across the street

Reflections on the glass buildings blur the traffic

so you cannot see the car

that rushes into the stream of time

There, you stand

Overlooking the river

And the pulse of

This polluted earth

Resonant with your blood

And you remember how the river flows

To your hometown, to your mother

Her blue kitchen spoon flips in the great free waves

And you remember before you’ve

become a failed poet

Before you are drinking and taking pills

Before you are trapped in between coffee and cardigans between gym and therapists between deep talks and subways between late-night TVs and American politics

you are small and fragile

and the world roars and questions and threatens you

As the car crushes into your spine

Flocks of geese take off from your chest

And you float above

your body, like the moon above

its amethyst, grim

shadows

your thoughts fall

into golden ginkgo leaves into

a sick bag – your mouth –

And you’ve found it – the rhythm –

The pounding –

Of your heart –

Perfect in seconds

Before the eternal

silence lands.