

## *Pomegranate Memories*

my lips are prone to dry spells  
    require daily replenishment  
so a tube of beeswax tinged red  
was made my last purchase  
before I left for shanghai.

I applied a fresh layer,  
sat down next to a hong kong mother  
who spoke to me in her native tongue,  
the language that felt clumsy  
coming out of my mouth.

I applied another,  
this time surrounded  
by foreign signs and  
characters unknown,  
a filtered mask doing little  
for my throat.

another  
as I pushed my backpack  
through security machines,  
a routine inspection of  
metro etiquette and unease.

again another,  
as I stood atop the skywalk  
bathed under indigo lights,  
those famed french  
buildings on the river side.

another  
as I waited in line for  
my usual order of  
udon noodles  
sesame sauce  
and one shredded pork bun.

another  
as we squeezed together  
during rush hour, automated  
recordings of station names  
filling through the gaps.

another  
as I joined the crowd  
around those elders  
keeping young to synchronized  
dance and static tunes.

another  
as I perused the alleys of M50  
tech infused art discarded  
film strips, a place  
I wish I could bring home.

I'm back now  
but I'm afraid  
to take it out  
the one whose pomegranate scent  
always deceives my common sense  
for a half second before  
I exhale the fleeting fumes  
and realize that the  
construction outside badly dupes  
the calls of street vendors  
the shuffling of mahjong tiles  
the yelps of children catching  
tadpoles from the local pond,  
now only images in my head.

a victim  
to pavlov's theory,  
I don't want to  
lose my way  
back to shanghai

but my lip balm's running out.