台灣 (Taiwan)

There’s a sense of magic in a place I can only half remember.

Where the faces and names are delicate leaves of my youth, falling in late September

And the neon signs with the squiggly lines glow dimly somewhere in my memory

But the falling leaves are hard to see and evade my grasp in an act of treachery.

The magic of the minute yet colossal differences, the bathrooms, the ads, and the subway.

My young eyes like a camera, spinning and capturing the scene of my beloved Taipei.

From my grandmother and my family came the knowledge of a culture I had amassed

When I could enchant in a language that rolled off my tongue like a spell I cast.

The brutal heat of London these days tugs at a memory in the back of my mind,

Of waiting by the food stall for seconds stretched to hours, pleasant and unkind.

I dream of a return where every piece falls into place

When I’ll feel the heat and humidity wrap me in a soft embrace.

There’s a tugging, restless longing in my heart

For a place I now understand as much as abstract art,

But I know its smells like the lines of my hand

And the sounds of the motorcycles revving were my favorite band.

There’s a chasm in my core when I return to the place I only half remember

Because the night markets are weary and bored and feel like a misnomer.

The dumplings taste all the same and the plane ride was too expensive,

And the disillusioned neon signs reveal the grime that feels incomprehensive.

There’s a suppressed sense that I wish I had never returned,

So it would remain the same golden red forever,

Only half remembered.