

## At International House

after the egg rolls, after the shangas,  
Jade and Emilia fell to discussing  
their lives as parallel universes.  
That border dispute between their countries?  
Jade knew it well—a factory worker,  
she was handed a rifle; she lay on a hill  
of wheat tossing in thin sunlight  
and aimed it at her counterparts across the river.  
Emilia (the enemy) ruefully shook her head.  
Inside, a continent was swaying.

Upstairs were maps brought from home  
on opposite walls of the study. Across her border,  
Jade sounded names in Chinese characters:  
*Belegorsk, Blagoveshchensk, Svobodny;*  
Emilia, in Cyrillic: *Mo-ho, Man-kuei, Kulien,*  
the charts incommensurate until one spoke  
and light lifted the other's face.  
Back and forth they paced,  
following their recognitions  
till the miracle stood on its feet.  
Within these maps, 10000 miles away,  
one tiny woman aimed a rifle at another;  
to consider it made them dizzy  
in this room where flowers traced the wallpaper.  
They held on by the warmth of their flesh,  
a peasant's daughter, a peasant's daughter.

—LEE SHARKEY

*Note: shangas—round flatcakes filled with  
farmer's cheese, mildly sweetened, a traditional  
food in the Komi Republic of Russia.*

