

UMA MENON

We Play Charades

My first instinct is to translate
the word. Make it easier to understand
without saying the word itself.
I feel guilt for this mistake—
for changing languages instead
of describing. Isn't this an easy way out?
My mother and I are playing charades
alone. We make this mistake over &
over, our tongues
too quick to learn. After all,
isn't this what we are used to?
When one language fails,
we try the next & the next
until someone understands.
A syllable escapes like a captured cricket,
singing for its love of freedom. It is too late
to go back now, to jar the language
we first learned. We do not want to,
either, so in this game, we swallow first.
Card, swallow, describe, flip.
Card, swallow, describe, flip.