ôm Bà Cố cái đi\_Vivian Van

It was a perfectly normal year

there was no pandemic

no quarantine

no toilet paper shortage

no rise in asiaphobia

It was a normal year

George Floyd kept breathing

Breonna Taylor celebrated her degree

the world went on

and airplanes still flew—

so two years before she disappeared without having ever been Here

I flew to Việt Nam

and I met

my great-grandmother

my last

Cố

Con thưa Bà Cố,

I say politely

and I bow.

Physical or not,

I would’ve regretted the distance either way

I guess

Mmm, she hums, and she smiles at me

Does she smile at me now?

Does she hug me

now free from the confines of physicality?

Đi ôm Bà Cố cái đi

my grandma says as she lightly pushes me forward

Our hug is ghostly

But can I call it that

when our hugs are so much ghostlier now?

I don’t want to think of my visit anymore

Sorry to leave you wondering about our little greetings

our little meals

our little notversations

I can’t tell you much more than you can figure anyway

All I know is that my great-grandma hums

and she smiles

at me.