

Smile 😊

Alice JL Pierre



*Smile :)* is a collection of photopoetry connecting pictures of people smiling under their masks with poems of their testimonies, as well as my own experience, of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. The pictures were taken in both Brighton and Paris, which is reflected in the bilingualism of the poems, which approach themes of mental health, togetherness, separation, absence, and relationships in a time when frontiers seem more important than before and most of our conversations and lives happen behind a screen.

*Creation is the antidote for despair.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Gilbert, from her Ted interview on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018





she never knew what to do  
with her hands

so she lied down  
limbs extended

étoile de mer dans le  
coton de mes rêves éveillés

tu es nue dans le néant  
de quatre murs

strings are pulling you  
back in the darkness

peut-on avoir froid  
dans un océan de rien ?





perdue espérance

craving strangers  
are scribbling

un dégradé triste de jaune

les moustaches frémissent  
sur une joue de papier

mornings in the grass  
smell like almonds and warmth







memory of the sun  
on the other side of the water

le temps est paralysé  
and yet minutes still walk by slowly

quelle forme de bonheur faudra-t-il  
pour te casser à nouveau?

*une libellule plane sur la rivière  
engonçant l'herbe du jardin*

*and i steam on the carpet  
tectonic of a storm quivering inside*





un chant dans le vent s'éloigne

j'ouvre une boîte  
à laquelle appartenait

la lune

and i listen to the seasons  
beating in the wings of gulls

ephemeral composition on your  
bedroom door

florilège de textures  
infusées par l'enfermement







year less

the derelict garden on the side  
of your ears is an inevitable fever

drops of dust dancing on the ceiling  
tinkle on your back

year more

*gardien de la canicule*

*the vervain sky reflects  
in the lips of a newcomer*

*le soleil est son regard*





isn't it wonderful  
to only have a few steps between  
restaurant bedroom office and library

but you are  
still silenced by your wardrobe  
still cancelled by your linens

*le silence de ton pas  
résonne sur le gravier*

*as i float away  
on the waves of a tapestry*







the crowds on the pavement  
the sound of the rush

regarder les gens

me manque

*your hair grows from the memories  
of your dreams*

*but mine only wither from  
sleepless nights and subtle afternoons*

*dans le gribouillage d'une  
vie forcée*





le mouvement de tes bras dans mes  
jambes

the screams from down below  
have a certain rhythm you can follow

le mouvement de mes jambes dans tes  
bras

i wrap myself up in your voice  
and the trees outside rejoice

*you longed to taste*

*les coquillages dans leur vase  
et la saveur du sel sur sa peau*

*creature emerging from the pebbles*







muted by the distance and  
warmed by the dust and

what?

les peintures que tu avais choisies  
désormais t'ennuient

are you still there?

summer is the sound of  
trumpets outside in the streets

mais l'odeur du bleu dans  
tes mains n'est plus la mienne





i remember  
not far from the door

j'ai oublié ce qu'il y avait

all my secrets were  
shoved in a crowd

la seule qui me tenait compagnie

aurevoir solitaire

you embrace the buildings  
where kimonos rest

et t'en vas nager sous la pluie







did you murder me or  
was i asleep?

ton sourire a disparu derrière  
ta peau et je me suis égarée

dans la dimension de  
ton instinct

*one shoe points to the door  
the other one to your bed*

*a bowl sits in your cupboard  
lunchtime regular*

*attendant de toi une prise de décision  
qui ne peut rien changer*





il vit sans air orange et noir  
bleu sur ta peau chauffée à blanc

noose and fire tie and ice

would it be an acceptable game?

behind the screen  
the noise of another life

and in the screen  
pairs of faceless eyes

you look tired she said

ou est-ce brouillard technique?







windowsill disappearing  
behind the leaves stems petals

a jungle you collected  
a collection you juggle with

semblant d'extérieur  
sous un verre embrumé

did she die of not dying

ou

est-elle morte de ne pas avoir vécu  
emptiness is heavy when

you can only be

une île entre quatre murs





*you were created for  
grandiose rooms and blinding lights*

*you were created for  
the applause and the adrenaline*

*mais il n'y a plus qu'un plafond bas  
et le silence de ta respiration estropiée*

you want to live  
nowhere and everywhere

somewhere

et la rumeur tranquille de  
la ville t'éveille

peut-être







an automaton with  
feelings just like a feather

tu as le vertige au sol  
dans un tourbillon de soleil

sinking in the still-life of  
a constantly escaping core

anonymous grace

beauté sans ancre  
elle est dans la vie

the center of the  
scene and yet

invisible





i write the splashes of  
the sea trembling in my skin

plein de petites choses se  
rassemblent en moi

dans le chaos

slowly flying afar

la nausée de l'arrêt t'emporte

do you believe  
in the blooming cherry trees

or does your laughter lay

dans le lierre grim pant  
effleuré par des trains pressés







prédestinée au rire  
l'histoire se raconte sur ta peau  
you're just a blip  
or maybe predestined to tears

you opened the velux window  
letting in the sounds of an early night

comme le papier s'ouvre sur un monde  
et la fleur sur l'obscurité de tes mains





you stumble on stars  
contemplations of  
a myriad possible life as

you reach for socks  
sad and unused

or was it a pair of shoes?

i can see my footsteps  
i can touch the transient life of a

bird

i can taste the humming of a screen  
i can hear the invisibility of a

face

je voudrais bien être le ciel  
m'a dit mon petit cousin



## Translation

p.5 Marie

starfish in the  
cotton of my woken dreams

p.6 Eloïse

i am naked in the void  
of four walls  
can one be cold  
in an ocean of nothing?

p.7 Sofia

lost hope  
a sad gradient of yellow

p.8 Victoria

whiskers shudder  
on a paper cheek

p.9 Ntina

time is paralyzed  
what form of happiness will it take  
to break you again?

p.10 Holly

a dragonfly hovers on the river  
tying up the grass in my garden

p.11 Esme

selection of textures  
infused by imprisonment

p.12 Lucy

a song in the wind pulls away  
i open a box from which the moon arises

p.14 Tom M.

guardian of the heatwave  
their sun is their gaze

p.16 Rafaela

the silence of your step  
reverberates on the gravel

p.17 Mimmi

i miss  
looking at people



p.18 Katherine  
in the scribbling of a  
forced life

p.19 Sophie  
the movement of your arms in my legs  
the movement of my legs in your arms

p.20 Pranoti  
the seashells in their vase  
and the taste of salt on my skin

p.21 Chloé  
the paintings i had chosen  
now bore me

p.22 Klaudia  
but the smell of blue  
in your hands doesn't belong to me anymore

p.23 Romane & Jesus  
i forget what there is  
the only one keeping me company

p.24 Chloë  
solitary goodbye  
and leave to swim under the rain

p.25 Toby  
your smile disappeared behind  
your skin and i derailed myself  
in the dimension of  
your instinct

p.26 Tom H.  
pending a decision from me  
one that won't change anything

p.27 Duncan  
it lives without air orange and black  
blue on my white-hot skin

p.28 Papa & Maman  
or is it just a technical fog?

p.29 Lizzy  
pretence of the outside  
behind a foggy window

p.30 Piper

or  
did she die of not living  
an island in-between four walls

p.31 India

but there is only a low ceiling left  
and the silence of your crippled breath

p.33 Marjolaine

and the tranquil rumour of  
the city wakes me up  
maybe

p.33 Anouk

i feel dizzy on the floor  
in a whirlwind of sun

p.34 Anna

beauty without anchor  
she is in the life

p.35 Georgie

lots of little things  
congregate inside of me  
in the chaos

p.36 Mané

the nausea of the halt sweeps you away  
in the creeping ivy  
brushed by hurried trains

p.37 Esther

predestined to laughter  
the story tells itself on your skin

p.38 Côme

as paper opens onto a world  
and the flower onto the darkness of your hands

p.40 Mask

i'd like to be the sky  
said my little cousin to me

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to the models for lending their smiles to the camera and inspiring my words with their talks of lockdown lives.

Thank you for posing with your masks on, even though we always dream of taking them off and they were fogging up your glasses.

|            |             |            |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| Aimee      |             | Marjolaine |
| Anna       | Fabrice     | Mimmi      |
| Arnauld    | Georgie     | Piper      |
| Anouk      | Holly       | Pranoti    |
| Bernadette | India       | Rafaela    |
| Chloë      | Jesus       | Romane     |
| Chloé      | Katherine   | Sofia      |
| Côme       | Klaudia     | Sophie     |
| David      | Konstantina | Toby       |
| Duncan     | Lizzy       | Tom H.     |
| Eloïse     | Lucy        | Tom M.     |
| Esme       | Marie       | Véronique  |
| Esther     |             | Victoria   |

# Table of contents

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....      | 3  |
| Photopoetry .....       | 5  |
| Translation .....       | 41 |
| Acknowledgments .....   | 44 |
| Table of contents ..... | 45 |