

thanks

a small pyramid of Sunkist oranges and a sharp pear hug
on a red plastic lotus
stout stemmed, painted gold edges

a borrowed vase half full of government water and yellow purple
chrysanthemums

a styrofoam box of beancurd & wheat gluten
salt/curry/sweetandsour white/yellow/red
lying to the dead chicken abalone pork goose

three bows, in unison

sandalwood in six twigs

we are the
only living here, we negotiate terrifying details
under our breaths, only the dead
to witness the scraping efficiency of our thanks giving
they look at us with eyes our nerves
race to interpret
from the damp depths
of the inadequacies we were so relieved to find
names for
they offer these again, if the nerves might disrupt
or
they press their tongues soft into flesh, against
others

my mother cries, kneels to be eye level to her father's mother, her father's father
wipes their lacquered photos with toilet paper damp

yaya Yao

top to bottom
their faces
the name of their hometowns,
their names,
the names of their children.
top to bottom
with toilet paper wetted with boiled water from a
plastic coke bottle.

we are back, she tells them,
 after forty years imagine you here.
the dust of your bodies sits in vases, in separate concrete cubes
a low corner of a room tiled ancestors
this is your rest
she introduces me to you both
this is our meeting place

how do i give thanks
how many boxes of food
how many farmed flowers from Colombia
how many dyed fruit from california
 for the tightness in your muscles built to give me better than i might
 Teach Native English for 250 hong kong dollars an hour that i
 might
come here to touch your cool stone

the woman does not know we are here, we hear
her in the next room clearing away our offerings
the shush of fruit into bags, the slinking of plate against marble table
we come to her and she starts, apologises
we are closing
the incense is fallen
as we leave we see the women bring
the fruit to the elderly
the vegetarian food to the dogs. clench
ma's eyes, mine
ma says, next time just fruit
why, i ask, you like dogs
the women are happy
the dogs are happy
we laugh, dyed ripe
rush to come away from
their easy
togetherness.