

**yaya Yao**

**turned**

*with thanks to Langston Hughes*

in this place where the girl was loved into soft laziness her Ahma's dreams  
are the translucent shells of deep fried fava beans  
crashing around her feet.

immigrant nightmares come  
to teeth, at Ahma's throat  
the granddaughter has become them wanting  
a job she's never heard of  
a lover with no standing  
an apartment.

keep warm and eat more  
are how she loves the flesh the girl is open to it,  
grateful

whispering yesterday she weaves a fine net of her disappointment.  
the girl is to cast it into Ahma's ambitions, the possibilities of this promise-  
place  
the glistening of this frozen path.

to struggle so long and far,  
the absurdity of her obstacles now make her laugh, almost  
the granddaughter's desires: space, voice, mannish clothing  
they slice up her sleep

*yaya Yao*

she confronts them with prayer

realised in the girl's monthly fever  
is a current of words nothing seems able to press back  
more betrayal  
it is all in english  
even in the unconscious, it is all

it is simply confirmation  
the girl is a browning fruit, nestled in the humid folds of her weaving  
smooth skin bursts with liquid apology too  
heavy to fly from turning dreams

in these moments when the girl is lying with the sun out  
Ahma pauses to examine the shades of her turning, browns and yellows,  
the patterns mold flowers  
to embrace  
her legacy will be jewelled with no stone she honours

for her fever, she  
feeds the child soup  
feeds herself and in  
ginger heat, they sweat.



*Photo of Wilhelmina Cullen, circa 1949. From the collection of K. Krasny.*