

1992

## Mandarin

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# Mandarin

Orange pachydermal skins,  
thick with white fibers  
lie scattered on the floor.  
My bare toes wander through  
their oily, pitted textures  
and I lick dried juices from  
my yellow-skinned fingers, pick  
whitish half-moons from  
under my fingernails.

I press the spongy white  
to my lips, cradle it on  
my tongue. As my teeth's  
slow grinding releases  
its bitter oils, my mouth  
savours the passages of  
other similar fruits,  
hand-peeled and quartered,  
shared between us.

In the ceremonies of Kyoto,  
nimble-fingered Geisha carve  
the beauty of the fruit into the  
blossom of its mother, scenting  
tea-house rooms orange in  
afternoon, silent willow-women  
kneeling beyond rice paper walls,  
slight shadows in lantern-glow.

The final crescent, soft and seedless,  
waits, warming in my palm.  
Cautious, my hand closes over it,  
ginger-list pressing dark pulp.  
My nails puncture clear membranes,  
rupture tiny oblong chambers  
of juice. The pale liquid drips into  
the thirsting carpet, quenching  
tribute to momentary ghosts.

New friction against dark yarns,  
my bare heels rub out the stains.

– K. Lynn Rogers '94