

Death of the Immigrant Language

First, I went to get some dim sum.
I was so hungry. Goodbyes and tears and watching
the mortuary van pull away
will do that to a person. And when I walked in to order, *mm-goi*,
yut gob ha gow, facing the usual lady with her streaky grays
across the stainless steel counter, that's when I realized
no one will say my name again.

I will not use these words again, except to *obdab* food.
The counters are kept clean of grease and rust.
I wish my mouth could do the same.

I will not hear you say my name. I will not hear,
except in passing, a few words here
and there—the bus, the market,
the shapes and sounds that could fit
on one postcard: all I knew how to say
to you, anymore, and even that makes no damn sense:
goodbye-see-you-again