

AUGUST MORNING, UPPER BROADWAY

As the body of the beloved is a window
through which we behold the blackness and vastness of space
pulsing with stars, and as the man

on the corner with his fruit stand is a window,
and the cherries, blackberries, raspberries
avocados and carrots are a rose window

like the one in Chartres, yes, or the one in Paris
through which light floods from the other world, the pure one
stabbing tourists with malicious abundant joy

though the man is tired in the summer heat
and reads his newspaper listlessly, without passion
and people pass his stand buying nothing

let us call this scene a window looking out
not at a paradise but as a paradise
might be, if we had eyes to see

the women in their swaying dresses, the season's fruit
the babies in their strollers infinitely soft: clear window
after clear window

THE LIGHT

What is the birthplace of the light that stabs me with joy
and what is the difference between avocados sold on the street
by a young man conceived in Delhi and avocados sold

in the West Side Market by cornrow girls, I am anyhow afloat
in tides of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, West Indian Spanish, wavelets of Urdu
swelling like oceans, sweating like jackhammers, rasping like crows, calling out

in the West Side Market, the Rite Aid, and every other shop on the street
Porque no comprendes, you don't own this city anymore
the city belongs and has always belonged to its shoals of exiles

crashing ashore in foaming salty droplets, *como no, gringita*—
with their dances and their grandmothers, with their drinking and their violence
and their burning yearning for dignity, and smelling money, what, what is the joy

is it those lamps of light those babies in their strollers
those avocados with their dark-green pebbled rinds, shining from inside
two for four dollars in the West Side Market, and three for four dollars from the cart

joy like white light between the dollar bills, is it these volleys of light fired
by ancestors who remember tenements, the sweatshops, the war
who supposed their children's children would be rich and free?

HOW FORTUNATE THE BOY

How fortunate the boy
holding his father's hand
crossing the street

coming home from a movie
they let him stay
up late to see

in the night and the rain
the taxi making a left
pulling him under its wheels

injuring the father
instantly almost painlessly
killing the boy so that he will never

suffer the disappointment
of being a man
lucky boy

child of our neighborhood vigil
mourned by candlelight
and news cameras

hero of our petition to the mayor
about this bad intersection
but the father is unfortunate

whose screams my neighbor says
curdled her blood
and the taxi driver is unfortunate

a man who will go on living
making his living
driving