Saigon Market, 1998

A cautious sun steals into the open market
puddled from afternoon's shower. Pyramids
of melon, warm, and mango, where grenades
once slept.

Honeyed air skirts the memory: tangerines, napalm.
Out of place
we zigzag through tomatoes and magenta-skinned
dragon fruit. Envy aubergine, carnelian and shimmer of a plum

the camera bankrupts. Who'd guess a clutch of pearls hides
inside unripe papaya? We eat its fruit grated,
strands of rain. Maidenhair. How naturally Eve lost her cool

in a garden . . . out of ease. On a bamboo mat grandmas jest
in Vietnamese. Their black *aodai*. Beside ginger root
and hawkers, they shuffle cards. Between her toes, one woman

slips a folded bill, a *dong's* worth of betel leaves to hush
the past. They stain her smile indelibly. On the sidewalk
a man without legs extends his hand, my face shining
twice in his eyes.