

HERA NAGUIB

Cilantro

—*Yonkers, New York*

I wheel my cart through the vegetable aisle.
The leaves awaken a familiar tingling, of mint
and pepper, pungent in my throat's wall.

I remember Lahore: the humid jostle of aisles
in a shop tucked in its neighborhood.
Cartons stacked up front. The shopkeepers

squatting in the shade beside a host of flies
dizzied by heat. Shalwars folded over knees.
I shake the limp stems, spraying my hand.

I remember the trickle, the lick
of sweat loosened on my mother's back
as the pot over the stove fire spat and sizzled

through the afternoon. Her hair frizzed,
as if piqued by her temper. I stayed away,
skirted the kitchen door and lined mats,

plates, and cups on the table, listening
to her fingers snip the leaves
over the rice, heaped and steaming,

the pulp lazing in a pool of lemon,
and her song, soft and low,
easing into the afternoon.