

## Rainbow

Sometime not so long after the summer of love  
at the corner of Sanchez and Clipper in the Mission District  
across the street from the Hearthshire freeschool

our '52 International 60-passenger  
Bluebird named Zuli for the blue goddess Erzulie,  
caution-yellow painted over with white and signs of the times,

waited patiently while we tried to figure out  
what paint to use for the finishing touch: a rainbow  
circled into a mandala on the back but inverted,

the darkest hues at the center — looking for weeks with no luck  
for something that wouldn't just coat the surface with dense colors  
flat as the steel underneath, but luminous,

diaphanous, made not of pigments and viscous fluids  
but of light itself, translucent, spectral, evanescent,  
each hue blending into the ones next to it.

Finally gave up and used what the stores had for sale —  
hardly a rainbow at all except for the bright colors  
and maybe, we half-hoped, something of our intent.

As the finishing strokes were being brushed on, a middle-aged man  
in black topcoat, suit and tie stopped to look.  
Tall and slim with a trim black beard and unscuffed shoes,

noticeably polite and a bit formal, he said  
when asked his name was Malik, he came from the East and was drawn  
to the unusual design, mandala or bullseye

he wasn't sure which. Invited, in the spirit of the times, he joined us  
for dinner at the school, made small talk awhile then bowed goodbye.  
Later we all agreed where he was was a cold spot.