

The Under Voice

I saw streaming up out of the sidewalk the homeless women and men
the East side of Broadway fruit and flowers and bourbon
the homeless men like dull knives gray-lipped the homeless women
connected to no one streaming no one to no one
more like light than people, blue neon,
blue the most fugitive of all the colors

Then I looked and saw our bodies
not near but not far out,
lying together, our whiteness

And the under voice said, Stars you are mine,
you have always been mine; I remember the minute on the birth table
when you were born, I riding with my feet up in the wide silver-blue stirrups,
I came and came and came, little baby and woman, where were you taking me?
Everyone else may leave you, I will never leave you, fugitive.

—Jean Valentine