

INCIDENT AT RIDER'S LAKE

Behind me is home, a city
of asphalt tinted crimson
with wounds. *Kompas* and *bachatta*
rhythms rain down from bedrooms
above storefronts and on the first
of each month, single mothers
budget state allotments
for laundry, milk and canned corn.
Here, under a harvest moon and muted lanterns,
I languish with the narcissistic willow
watching itself in a mirror of water.
Duck matrons gaggle lullabies
to their children among stray dandelions,
and Nova Scotia geese gorge on night-crawlers
as they resettle campus grasslands.
The lake, abundant with catfish gray as clay,
trickles to nowhere as I walk,
considering language and economics,
believing I could be safe, free
to roam whatever ocean. Rumbblings
of a two-seater muscle car and the question,

"Is a nigger chick pink inside?"

slice open the calm sky.
Did Emmett Till wither too
with sudden hummingbird heart,
with this wildfire consuming viscera,
before they deafened him with a .45 bullet,
barb-wired that gin fan to his neck
and capsized his battered vessel? I bite down

retort as one blonde head, a mouth
tense with sneer, leans out of the passenger side.
Steel-belted tires halt
before skid marks on tar inform
that journeys for equal chances and degrees
would not secure protection
within, without collegiate grounds
because white men can claim
history's proclivities,
make this lakeside acre a plantation, my body, chattel
and aroused with violent curiosity
satisfy desire to cavern me from vulva to psyche.