



# Shreveport

Every fence is an infinite line, a weave  
Of intersections, a geometry workbook covered

With badly-drawn circles. Note to self: I  
Hate this class. Staring out the louvered window,

Terra cotta tiles, the rooftop of a church  
Across the street, green-speckled trees

By the sidewalk, the fried chicken sign,  
Colonel Sanders also across the street—

I was too young even to drive, but I wanted to  
Leave more than anything. A bottle of formaldehyde

Had smashed on the staircase. We all tried  
To hold our breaths, walking from one class to another.

Every fence leads me back to that one by the  
Football field and the track. There was a Chinese

Restaurant that stayed open late downtown.  
I planned to go there for chow mein and won-tons

After my parents had fallen asleep. No one could  
Convince me geometry was anything but a way

To build prisons. I wanted to be Jean-Paul Sartre,  
But I was born on the wrong side of the Atlantic

And didn't speak French. We watched Vietnam  
During breakfast on a black and white television,

Soldiers, rifle fire, narrow streets and motorcycles,  
Newscasters' gray-white faces, black-rimmed glasses.

The fences reached there too.