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.