

Faculty Colloquium at the Country Club

I take my seat and look over the sunlight room.
Fourteen tables draped with white
privilege. Four speakers: two white men,
one black man, one woman.
Each scrupulously earnest,
as they circle the wild dogs and boars
of critical race theory, social construction,
white privilege, power and prejudice, oppression.

I glance around the room.
Eurocentric Christian whiteness.
Doctrine of Discovery whiteness.
The faculty and administrators
are mostly men, white men. Two black men.
Few women. Most, like me, white.
No black women, one Latino woman, one Asian woman.
Gay? Trans? Bisexual? No one knows.

It makes me want to spell out words with pills:
headache tablets, antidepressants,
whatever I can gather: try harder and inclusion,
and most of all What The F--.

These hours are a calendar of loss.
I drift away to where I'm sprawled on the grass
reading poetry, then walking in the rain,
floating on water, dancing barefoot
on the beach, drinking coffee in Paris.
I wonder if it's true that blue eyes are a genetic mutation,

that all people with blue eyes can be traced back to one man.

I see the man leaning in to see if I am listening,
hear the woman uhm-hmming the speaker's points.

It is an undertow that sucks me back into myself.

I return to sift through words, searching
for something to nourish me.

Their words are bruised like ripe fruit,
handled too much, the juices running.

Soaked in the blood-dyed skin of young black men,
I find: Signifier: dark skin; Signified: criminal

My sons are young men, but they are not black.

They do not walk the streets shadowed by death

They still have fire in their souls.

I don't have enough words

to both rage and weep.