Textbook and Breakfast

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Apartheid is the vague sting of salivary activation when I am told “they suffered.”

A great river. All the sad black faces watch it heave slowly by.

Blue music rose out of some field and landed, electrified, in the round brass beak of a pressure valve, trembling.

In chapter seven a woman stares at me in sepia from a photo laid flat. (A father’s blond hand pressed into a mother’s dark, racing heart mixed a fine sepia for printing.) She, with the word “slave” punched beneath her on slick paper, remains brown above black and white.
v.
Margin not to pale children bent on fame:
steam and bloody cotton
are all it takes to get a great river
into your instrument.

vi.
I find that my morning grapefruit, too,
elicits a salivary ache not so different from the ache
one would get in one’s calves
during a midnight
river crossing.

vii.
Hound sounds
mean the paper boy is here.