

WHITE FLIGHT

by Lauren Ladner

downtown Jackson plays host
to towers filled with ghosts, these
empty buildings now gravestones
for the businesses ferried
down the river of I-55
to some suburb—gone.

left behind are vast parking lots,
untilled asphalt fields for dandelions
and other determined weeds
to claim for their own,
their yellow, white, and purple
flower flags of victory
sway in the feeble breeze
that somehow finds its way through
Mississippi's only urban maze.

at dusk, a woman crosses
these rolling pavement fields,
ankles swollen in her worn-out
high-heels; her forehead glistens
in the late-July afternoon heat.
she stops at the corner
of Lamar and West, waits
for the traffic light to flash green.

it's a wild corner—the ragweed
stretches sunward despite the heat,
torpedo grass splits old concrete.
as the automated light lingers
on red, the woman leans over
to pick a plush dandelion at her feet.
she purses her lips—
make a wish
and blows, scattering those
drifting seeds across the four
empty lanes of Lamar street
like snow.