**The Waffle House in East Atlanta**

The waffle machines

Melodically slap

A reliable rhythm,

A steady beat

Among the loud laughs

And redundant shakes

Of far-off blenders.

Tired boys

In dirty dress shirts

Sloppily harrass

Their coke bottles

And scarf down hash browns with ketchup.

At the next booth over,

A boy laughs,

A daring and spontaneous shriek

That falls readily in line

With the strange song

Of midnight workers

There for the extra pay.

Cheerleaders fix their skirts as

Makeup smears and laughter dies,

Flecks of mascara strewn across

Pale cheeks like flutters of black snow.

As the windows become cold with late night air,

The boys filter out in small groups,

Strutting through the yellow door

In their untamed shirts

And red Georgia caps.

They climb into their second-hand

Pickup trucks

And Jeeps

Painted with

The sloppy emblems

Of Senior Year.

The cars give

A shake of uncertainty,

And each boy goes home alone,

Praying on the way to get good

News from his dad’s alma mater

In a small sealed delivery,

A white envelope in a sea of red.