For seven dollars an hour, I cut slapdash squares, dipped them in oil, prayed they would pillow up and crust. Alicia’s hand on the small of my back as she shimmied by, bobbing her body to the hip-hop spouting from a speaker she’d clipped, oh-so-precariously, to the ceiling of the shabby truck. I watched the beignets as they bathed, puffed up. Laid them bare on hatched wire. Alicia placed their collapsing backs inside thin paper cradles then laced them with powdered sugar. That whole summer, I wanted to work past exhaustion. To be excused from feeling. To leave my body stooped in labor. I wanted each hour exactly as expected—attractive families still in church shoes, tipping generously, slathering Nutella on their toddlers’ desserts while Alicia played her part and snapped their pictures. Yes, I simply wanted. The wet breath of the truck growing thick with salt and cinnamon as the sun broke brighter and hotter against the aluminum siding. When no one was watching, I licked batter from the blade. I stayed for spare change because Alicia laughed and peeled stray strawberry strands from her neck as she pled, *Smack the beignet harder, like your lover’s ass,*
over and over again as I watched

the dough’s gentle drowning,
     my shame a sinking that would not ask for air.

In this town it seemed

only Alicia was out, and I would have let her say nearly anything
just to hear that kind of want aloud.