

I am eight

dutch-braiding my hair,
queuing for the dining hall
behind [REDACTED]

We have a conversation
that goes like this

[REDACTED]: I'm ranking girls in our class in order of how much I'd go out with them.

Me: Okay.

[REDACTED]: You wanna hear it?

Me: Okay.

[REDACTED]: So Becky, Laura, Alice, Amy, Zoe, Katie, Brittany, Sarah, Beth.

A shifting a silence.

[REDACTED]: You're not in it...cos you know.

Me: Yeah, no...I get you.

I am eight, choked.

Too ready to defend
the thing that destroys me.

[REDACTED]: Protect whiteness

empathise with

their revulsion

the possibilities

of this body

feed it

a colonial shape

desire.

At what age do we learn to give up
ourselves? Mum, why have you
let this happen? When even did this
begin?