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Arlington

Gary Jackson

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Arlington

It's spring, it's fiction, it's fact, it's scores of women who left
their homes and families by coercion or force or desperation,

survival or love, and if you squint hard enough
they all feel the same. It's 1961, it's Fort Belvoir, Virginia,

it's built on a plantation, it's Dukie Oh promising
to stay in touch with other Korean brides

while she packs to move to Kansas to live
with her husband's family. It's one seat, it's two foreign

bodies, it's her baby girl in her lap. It's 2018,
it's Arlington, it's the obituary calling her 80,

it's no one knows, it's my mother's loving
her mother's last lie. How she knew the years

could be used against you. Sex. And Color too
Dukie realized too late. It's none of us

stepping up when the pastor asks, *Who wants to share
some of the good times they had?* It's how there's so few

of us left. It's the terrible truth, it's my mother
purchasing her own plot the day her daughter died.

It's one last drink before lift-off, it's the little girl
on her mother's lap, it's my mother

who looks forward, looks back
to a place she'll never return: says, *Kansas*

is death. And fuck death. It's a promise
she knows she'll break.