

WILLIAM BURNS

WESTLAKE PARK

At water's edge, around the long,
Slow bank, in summer, when clouds
Whitened like swans, smoother than lilies,
Through duck drowse and fern shadow,
Our laughter curved like an afternoon.

Tan as corks, we bobbed in bird calls,
Followed where the soft gull unhinged,
Hid like crickets; we entered the owl's
Stare, a nest's surprise, each other.

When we were private and seventeen.
Before a war, before it was named
For a general, fouled like a statue.
The lake in fashion, the look of wet rubber,
Thicker than spit. Its heart halved
By a boulevard, cars like corpuscles,
Bumpy as cells. Before the humming
Benches, heavy as hives, the honey-
Less swarm, hungry as India.