

The Lynching of Frank Embree
After the *Without Sanctuary* Photographs

1.

I've come to watch like all of the rest—
leaning-in-or-away our way through the museum.
Or watching you like the ones gathered around—pale,

gray-eyed, ghost-eyed (yes, white). They are watching me
watching you. But to watch means that you are still alive

and it's too late for that isn't it?
Object: you have become artifact: a thing I lean in or
away from. Thing, thing, thing. You are a thing. No,

your body is a sculpture made of skin, vein, and muscle.
Muscle. (So much muscle.)

If it were not for your hands, cupped together, I could see
the thing that makes you a man. Instead, a folded lozenge,
an opening to stick my mind inside

2.

of a mouth This is not history but pornography I've pressed
play I've come to watch your mouth move or

rather watch it beg the men (yes, white) to fill it
on camera Your mouth It's black and big It's a mouth

connected to an even blacker body *Black nigger* they say
and I reach for my body

dark and big as history Our bodies are museums
Our bodies are objects in a museum A thing

3.

a thing. But you can't move in the photograph. Still life
moves in and out of you—

reflections leaning in or away. I've come to watch,
but I'm staring with an erection. My hands whisper the glass.
My thumb tip as wide as the whipper's brim. I'm grinning

as if I chased you down; tied you up
for show. My mouth spreads wide enough

4.

to swallow you I rewind and press play again To go back and watch
each man (yes, white) force you to swallow them

like a new language a new country a new gag It's funny
They mean to end you Or at least break you not like a horse

but glass in a museum encasing the past
so that I can't touch it

5.

I want to touch it, but it's too late. I've come to see
what has already happened. Looking back
like a lover being taken from behind. Falling

over my eyes, a dark hood. They mean to destroy
you. I'm afraid of your big black body,

so I too worship it when I mean to
destroy it. By "it" I'm speaking of my body too.
You with the dumb look of hope. But how

dare you look at me that way?
As if I have come to save you.

6.

This is all your fault. You should have run faster.