

EQUALITY

I came up on Ketchel making
his way to the stadium.
His motorcar looked like a skeleton

if it meant for driving: steering
wheel & all its turning mechanisms
like a man's ribs once they've

been broken. I could tell by how
he was sitting, his seats weren't soft
like mine. & even though he

was sporting a tasty pink suit,
his automobile was painted the same
color as a bruise. I had mine painted

lipstick red to match one of my boxing
costumes. Ain't that something?
When I pulled next to him, I gave

a kindly nod & passed on—
we'd have time to chat in the ring.
I planned on carrying him

at least six rounds. But old Ketchel,
he had other ideas sitting on
that church pew of a seat. He sped up

to pass me. So I sped up to, too.
The day Jack Johnson don't go faster
than another man is the day

you best plug your ears & bet
your last copper because the trumpets
are coming directly. Me & Ketchel

took a left together on Main, then
a quick right. We were going near
70 miles an hour in the middle of Colma,

Ketchel gritting his teeth & checking
to see who's leading. We passed
two police officers leaning on bicycles.

They didn't bother trying stop us.
There isn't that much
pedaling in this world.

Finally, I let my engine go.
As I passed him—his glasses all dusty,
his scarf twisting in the wind

like a hopscotcher's braids—
I had to laugh: even operating the same
machine, I'm still faster than Ketchel.