

cocoa m. williams

LEDA ON A STOOP IN ST. BERNARD PROJECTS (1974)

New Orleans

The night Leda, hot from frying
chicken, leaves the kitchen window

open, a white fowl lands on the table.
Her father watches *Good Times* in the next

room while cleaning his rifle. When she
came to, her parents shook their heads

at her white dress spoiled by blood.
“I told you about leaving that window

open,” her mother said. But her father
said nothing, went to his room, closed

the door and she never set eyes on him
again. When Leda got big, everyone said

what a shame that her mother even let
her leave the house. Pushing that belly

in all our faces like that, forcing us to act
kind. We sniggered behind her back.

“It must be this year’s Thanksgiving
turkey, as big as she is.” Besides, Leda

didn’t know; she never went to the doctor —
was too afraid to let another white-coated bird

touch her down there, so she delivered twin boys:
Warrior and Wisdom on the kitchen floor.

They grew up as ordinary as their infamy
would allow them, plucking through youth.

One started a bank, the other lived out his
days on the kill line in a chicken factory.