

Spring 1978

Somewhere in Ohio

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SOMEWHERE IN OHIO

12 years away and you go back to it—
that proud and middling heart
pragmatic as rock
sieved through steel and stadiums,
the windflower way of a people
taken hold where they land forever.

You were thinking of crocheted quilts,
the doilies sewn around bottle caps,
and not the mill grist sinking
to your grandfather's insides
or choking up the river's craw.

Like a sudden gust that nudges
the tired-hard tongues of shoes
left on a porch, you go among
relatives, their very minds
drifting absently like dust
taken off high above the earth—
the incidental mote sifting down
to land on an iced tea or
pint of rye hidden in the garage.

A sliver of sunlight through the awning
brushes the hands of aunts who touch
about your cheeks with fingers
cold as dough and who whisper
of apricots, ripe persimmon moons.

At the table where your mother sat
pouring canned milk in coffee,
you count the coupons into piles
which discount your grandmother's
Postum, margarine, and salts—
the repeating list repeating years.

Up early on a drive to Akron or Warren.
You see them line up in a grey dawn
to take their places, stone-faced,
under the grinding wheel;
or filing off swing-shift
blank from the blast furnace,
take the concrete turnpike home
where someone irons or washes-out
the soiled cotton-twill, bakes Perohis
for the Christening or Engagement.

Each thing you've ever seen
you see one more time,
and you write that you marry lucky
from this place or die
out the back door,
and no life like this . . .