

Winter 1992

Family, Easter Portrait, 1952

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Family, Easter Portrait, 1952

1.

Looked at one way,
it's as though someone took his hand
and rubbed it across us

while the print was still wet.
We blur into one another, into
the redemptive sky, into both

memory and belief. We squint
into spring sun, grouped like
reflections in a department store

window, squeezed together and tentative,
brash, but not ready for
what we're in the middle of.

2.

The gals wear corsages, the guys
their clean shirts and forced smiles
like Sunday next-to-best.

There, leaning out of the picture,
someone's dog. Here, leaning in,
a grandchild or slow cousin, birds

on a wire, fields of chicory,
a brand-new Pontiac with a wooden heart
dangling from the rear view mirror:

Forever is carved there. And
Always. I was seven years old.
Abstractions amazed me.

3.
Looked at another,
this is what I have to offer up, where
I come from, what I prize.

My friends and lovers
see me in all the noses and postures
and visions, the personality.

But especially they see
the long holiday stretching
out, and the weedy grins,

and the small space that seems
to separate each and every one
in the photo, that little gray patch

that serves as edge.