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Kate's Place

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KATE'S PLACE

I have looked at her now
two years at lunch wearing
the pale yellow uniform.
On certain days I change
her clothes. She's better off
not knowing how it feels
to own one smart tweed.
The picture I want would shatter
space between us. It is better
to paint her at home, forget
the professors, the students
waiting in line. She is the wife
of a streetcar conductor
or a sheepherder. She covers
her head with black silk
for mass. She doesn't smile
but I would give her strong teeth
at night, shadow deep veins
for making love. She doesn't know
I exist. I sketch in the shape
of things and leave. I eat
at other counters. I compare notes.
There is no one else like her.
A man orders apple pie. His eye
is too pale to work in her face.
I search for good lines at coffee
breaks, study texture and color
like maps that direct me to the end
of day where the canvas stretches
and only the outline is sure.