

## A Portion for Foxes

When we was little there was ten of us  
fish and loaves the shoes for Sundays  
even then the shoes would wear the look  
of elder sisters' feet run  
down the line so far the cow  
ate grass in clear another century.  
If there weren't work mama turned  
us out to keep the buttermilk from spilling  
which was fair as we was like a band of jays  
was busking gossip for the devil  
not the type to turn up drowned  
or crushed beneath a barn beam  
like some *other* mother's kit.  
Wilma was the meanest and the best of us  
she told us gullibles of dragonflies thin  
and blue they sewed your fingers up together  
and she taught us necessary things  
like how to borrow dogs' dreams  
using Pop's old holed-up hat.  
She told us you could catch a thief  
by driving nails up in his footprints  
waiting good to see a man  
who just now caught a limp.  
Which we all thought was strange  
on account of Wilma taught us no one  
here in Dycusburg would lock their doors  
besides of course the bootleggers and bank.

When a house was empty  
she would take us calling where we knew  
there lived the billowingest church hats in their nests.  
Which was how we learned the touch  
of shoes still had their color  
and of rings we didn't tie ourselves  
from junegrass and clover.  
Wilma hushed up Fay the littlest  
with her finest words of murder  
and the rest of us she bribed with wisps of  
perfume was the only thing  
we stole from them the smell of owning  
something better than  
the hard bones of our feet.

*Dycusburg, Kentucky*