I am from strip-mined hills,

From rocky, rushing fish-filled streams

I am from the drafty old farmhouse on the edge of Hell’s Hollow,

From coal fires in the fireplaces and soot on fresh snow

I am from the march of seven maples, flaring torches in the fall

The old Northern Spy apple tree

That we picnicked under

In the months before we picked pie fruit

I’m from teachers and reading aloud,

From faith healers and needlewomen,

I’m from falling asleep to Mom practicing her Sunday solo on the upright piano

And hunting for fossils in the limestone pit near the waterfall with Dad

I’m from ten verses a day from the King James Bible read in one-room public schools

From memorized poems from *A Child’s Garden of Verses* and quotations from Shakespeare

I’m from Mayflower and Massachusetts Bay ancestors

And from Great-great Grandfather Lovell wounded at Hatcher’s Run

Who lived another forty years with shrapnel in his head

I’m from Mennonites and Pennsylvania Dutch cooking

From potatoes in the root cellar and our chickens on the Sunday dinner table,

From bearded Sam Trupe and a sulky young Aunt Ella in gilt frames on the wall

And from Girl Scout badges, a rock collection, and a chemistry set

I’m from frost feathers and flowers on the windows

And early sunlight waking up the wallpaper flowers with the promise

Of a new day