

the granite,
trout clamped
in its jaws
so quiet you
can hear the
bones crunch

NEBRASKA THEN

sod houses

no trees the
land hard

as the men the
women who

came here
had to be

COLORADO

one man went in
to the mountains
ate all his friends
now there's a
grill named
after him

NORTH DAKOTA

geese in the
black holes

prairie marsh
the stretch

from up there
like black swiss

cheese wetlands
sticks a cross

the water huge
nests in them

THE WOMAN WHO LOVED HER HOUSE

because it was wood
and admitted it
because it didn't yell
back except nights
with the black walnuts
banging on the window
it wasn't jealous
of her mother it wasn't
pissed off by the
new cat she could
go to sleep in flannel
and be sure it would
be there in the morning

THE LIFSHIN MUSEUM

this is where she
slept and smelled
rats under the
purple. the water
was loudest in
march. now the
room is smaller
the purple orchid
peels to grey.
these sags in the
bed the yellow
dress letters
coins from a
country that
never was

HOUSE

no door fits
holes in the floor

night comes thru a
hole in the window

the cat runs in and
out the moon the

only furniture a
huge bed covered

with blue dust
red juice tiger

hairs and a
little come

CHOPPED LIVER

bad feelings were heaped
as high as that hill
on my father's plate
when we went to
visit aunt sophia

she didn't like the way
we called him ben and
not father she didn't
like the christmas
trees in our head

the mole on her cheek
seemed to glow when
we said we hung up
our stockings my

mother grew the chopped
liver story for years
on main street how my
father's sister treated

him like a king while
we were starving
each year she told
it the liver on his
plate grew closer
to the ceiling

THE EAST IS UNDER A DARK CLOUD

the mad girl is pacing
in her room her head
full of the darkest
weather there's

a hurricane under
her skin that old
going in different
directions blues

she can't read her
own lines on the page
the wind is increasing
it's freakishly cold

for this time of year
someone in ohio
is uncertain the
new york lover

knows something's
threatening feels
the shutters rattling
down his backbone

-- Lyn Lifshin

Niskayuna NY