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

- 30 -