Where I’m From

by George Ella Lyons

I am from clothespins,

from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.

I am from the dirt under the back porch.

(Black, glistening,

it tasted like beets.)

I am from the forsythia bush

the Dutch elm

whose long-gone limbs I remember

as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
          from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
          and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
          with a cottonball lamb
          and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
          to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box

spilling old pictures,

a sift of lost faces

to drift beneath my dreams.

I am from those moments--

snapped before I budded --

leaf-fall from the family tree.