

Jay Carson

Bloomfield, Pittsburgh

Not much is really blooming
except on the one flower bed
under the signature sign
just over the bridge. And the fields
are mostly on the TV screens
neck-stretching above bars where sports
hypnotize their Pittsburgh lovers.

Everybody who moves to preppy Shadyside
eventually ends up happier in bluer collar Bloomfield. My con-
version
came through my son and his rock band, The Little Wretches,
who asked me to open with my poetry
for their Bloomfield Bridge Tavern gig.

What a place! Tiny and smoky in those days
as if to say this is a corner off the mill floor
where the iron-bending world-builders
can rest with their own.
The food: big, bold commas of Kielbasa
and a standing bet-you-can't-finish this perogi and haluski serving.
How delicious, opening for my son's rock band.

They were all so cool in their unbelievable twenties
and I wasn't—but I invited all my friends,
not sure I'd have another chance,
foolishly remembering that Elvis
used to open for the Louvin Brothers
and Bloomfield is all about trying.

I did OK; my son's band brought down the house:
And we bridged to my friends. But my memory
was stolen by a childhood woman friend with MS
who made me understand Bloomfield, even Pittsburgh,
as on that miserably cold night
she negotiated her motorized wheelchair through
a slog of snow and ice—I nearly hit her when parking.

She was dead a year later,
but not to her friends, not to me.