

Meadowlark (Nicole)

We moved from the little pink house
dwarfed by high tension wires
to rolling hills
with a view of Catalina.
On rare days we'd ride double
on a small motorbike to the tar pits,
not yet known as The McCaull Dump Site,
or a "Super Fund" project,
removed after I left home.

A sun-bleached sprig poked out
a foot above the yellow mustard.
A meadowlark
balanced on its tip,
amidst purple lupine spires readied to bloom.
I smiled in agreement when a teacher taught us
that purple and yellow
are complimentary colors.

The dirt path ran up and down and up,
and with my paper and pen
I followed it. The surface was smoothed
by spring rain, but the low spots would be
thick dried flakes by summer's end.

The Fullerton News Tribune charmed
its readership with four line poems
of school children
like my, "Once I was a Worm,"
but that was behind me.
I imagined myself
writing less childish things.

I hoped the moist new grass wouldn't mind
mashing down for an hour or two.
I knew there were garter snakes,
but had no fear of them.
The skirt of my white dress
felt cool on my legs and made
a small fan upon the earth.

We found the sundress one summer
in a trunk in the Ohio farmhouse.
Had it been my mother's?
Or had they all worn it?

I wonder which of the sisters had been in it
when the crop duster flew low
over the field and let go its blanket of DDT.
Aunt Mary had called it "snow"
and had lain face up to watch the powder float
over her, coating her delicate frame,
preparing its host for tumors to war with,
small in size, but not in number.

I went into the California fields free
from thoughts of carcinogens
and the word 'ominous' escaped me.

Instead, I coated my lungs
with the scent of new growth,
mellowed in the softness of worn cotton
and was christened by the meadowlark
as it lay its song across the hills.
I wrote next to nothing.