

## *Tante Annel's Scrapbook*

For sixty years, she kept her scrapbook,  
this record that bites and scalds my hands.  
She took it with her, house to house.  
All those delighted revelers, *heiling*.  
And the prized clipping—a visit from Göring  
to Ludwigshafen—the sky aswarm with flags.  
Each new page a body dragged from hiding.  
“Why?” I ask my uncle, who won’t reply.  
None of them will, still silent after so long.  
“Why do you want to know this *Scheisse?*”  
is all my mother says, putting away knives.  
In fifth grade, I lay in her lap once, sobbing,  
ashamed of my first, guttural tongue.  
She smoothed away the past like she smoothed  
my hair, plaiting it so it hung down my back.  
Now, too, the uniformed photograph  
of Uncle Fritz, sent on Easter to the *Heimat*,  
and the shots of children posed on rubble,  
climbing over what once were houses,  
draw no remark, all the hatreds history,  
artifacts merely, of a gone world, speechless.  
And the impatience at my questions,  
as if desire for knowledge were accusation:  
as if I were blaming the great-aunt I loved,  
who saved, also, the telegram inviting her  
to join the circus (a dream she kept secret),  
who willed me the bloody garnets at my throat,  
who left rolls of cash, brand new Euros—  
hidden in the pockets of never-worn coats.