

# Pennsylvania by Highway

Nava Etshalom

1

Lining the turnpike are fast-food complexes  
and narrow towns, mourning their steel heydays.  
Only by virtue of dynamite do we pass the valleys  
where cows stand in disappointed rows, invisible indoors,  
plugged into milking machines and bottling plants.

2

The secret truth, despite the sharp highway that gets us  
there  
and the ugly truck stops that sustain us, is

that out of the plain of eastern Ohio, Pennsylvania swells,  
sexy, ripe and deep. Secret valleys open themselves  
only to those who round highway curves with open eyes.  
Roll the window down and let spring in, watch  
the green unwrinkle.

3

Ascending into winter, the mountains are soft with snow.  
The Pennsylvania flower is the mountain laurel.  
She has yet to show herself, but the Appalachians  
hold their breath, cradle her seeds tenderly.