



## THE PHOTO ALBUM

*Look, Dad, here's a photo of your mother,  
painting by the river. And here's your father  
with a rabbit on his lap. Did he really have a rabbit?*

Golly, he always had lots of animals, as a kind of avocation.  
When he and Mother met, he'd been bummin' around the West—  
he punched cattle in Nevada, that's why  
we never had sheep on the farm—

he was strictly a cattle man. During the courtship  
Mother's parents offered her a trip to Europe. Dad said,  
if you go to Europe the engagement is off. She went anyway

then she came back and married him.  
He had a friend who'd written all about  
the wonders of the Eastern Shore. So Dad hired  
a railroad car and they loaded all their possessions on,  
including his Russian wolfhound

and gee—at least one horse. That's how they came to Chestertown,  
in 1911. They bought a farm, it had silver poplars in the yard.  
That's where I was born. Every year

Mother traveled back to Chicago by rail  
to paint miniature portraits for the rich society folk.  
She painted these on ivory, she'd hold a magnifying glass  
in one hand for guidance,  
and this very fine camel's hair brush in the other—

she'd lick that brush to point it, then get a bit o' paint on it to apply.  
It always bothered us that she would maybe  
ingest some paint  
but we never did get her to change.

You children of course never knew her.  
She died of cancer before your mother and I met.