

CAROLYNE WRIGHT

“This dream the world is having about itself...”

—William Stafford

won't let us go. The western sky gathers
its thunderclouds. It has no urgent need
of us. That summer in our late teens we
walked all evening through town—let's say Cheyenne—
we were sisters at the prairie's edge: I
who dreamed between sage-green pages, and you
a girl who feared you'd die in your twenties.
Both of us barefoot, wearing light summer
dresses from the Thirties, our mother's good
old days, when she still believed she could live
anywhere, before her generation
won the War and moved on through the Forties.
As we walked, a riderless tricycle
rolled out slowly from a carport, fathers
watered lawns along the subdivisions'
treeless streets. We walked past the last houses
and out of the Fifties, the Oregon
Trail opened beneath our feet like the dream
of a furrow turned over by plough blades
and watered by Sacajawea's tears.
What did the fathers think by then, dropping
their hoses without protest as we girls
disappeared into the Sixties? We walked
all night, skirting the hurricane-force winds

in our frontier skirts so that the weather
forecasts for the Seventies could come true,

the Arapahoe's final treaties for
the inland ranges could fulfill themselves

ahead of the building sprees. We walked on
but where was our mother by then? Your lungs

were filling with summer storms, and my eyes
blurred before unrefracted glacial lakes.

Limousines started out from country inns
at the center of town, they meant to drive

our grandparents deep into their eighties.
Our mother in her remodeled kitchen

whispered our names into her cordless phone
but before the Nineties were over, both

of you were gone. Mother's breath was shadow
but her heart beat strong all the way in to

the cloud wall. You carried your final thoughts
almost to the millennium's edge, where

the westward-leaning sky might have told us
our vocation: in open fields, we would

watch the trail deepen in brilliant shadow
and dream all the decades ahead of us.

In memory of my sister