

1943

We learned that men dump stuff
the color of the stains
under the bathroom faucet
into hoppers to purify our water
The stuff made *gas*

We considered that
as we skirted the pumping station
on the way to fish from the iron bridge
throbbing slightly
from the nearby dynamos

It was a strange word
like Grandfather coughing
or the stoveburner turning on

That same year we learned *immunity*
and guessed that's what the men had
who worked behind the high fence
without masks
or wives or children