

MARIANN HOFER

Fall in Reily, Ohio

The maples glow with the yellow
of a carnival tent at the county fair,
and drop their leaves just as the farmer's son
drops the cornsilk cigarette from his fingers,
choking behind the barn, the ground
littered with cornsilk and husks.

Three miles outside town, bark peels
from the scarred branches of the beech,
creamy white beside the barn
that kneels in the weeds, thistles banging
swollen heads against the wall
like children throwing tantrums.

Old men, their farms divided
and sold for a good price, collecting
Social Security and war pensions, sit
on tilted porches in metal rockers, the paint
flaking as they rock, cordwood stacked
to the second-floor window.

At night the wind gusts through town, the leaves
swirl like small bones in a whirlpool, and the old men
turn over under their blankets and keep on dreaming
in black-and-white.