

White Shoes

*For a long time she had wanted
white shoes.*

*She was twelve then — small for her age
but big enough to wash and dry the dishes
help with the cooking
peel potatoes string beans shuck corn
and help make up the beds for the
gentlemen lodgers.*

*One day she complained of a pain
in her side.*

*The doctor operated
but the pain turned poison.*

*There was no medicine then for
such things.
It went very fast.*

*They hardly realized it
when she turned her face to the wall—*

*When they dressed her for her funeral
her mother said*

*for so long she'd wanted white shoes.
She never had them when she was alive
She's going to get them now.
Oh, yes.*

*When they buried her she was wearing
white shoes.*

*Her mother said
maybe the shoes will be like wings
to carry her right to Heaven's gates.*

*Her mother said
maybe the angels will be jealous
when they see her standing there
wearing those white shoes
waiting to get in.*

*Her mother said
maybe Heaven's the right place
for white shoes
that never walked on earth.*