Refugees

We came with heavy suitcases
made from wooden boards by brothers
we left behind, came from Buchenwald
and Katowice and before that
Lwów, our mother's true home,

came with our tongues
in tatters, our teeth in our pockets,
hugging only ourselves, our bodies
stiff like frightened ostriches.

We were the children in ragged wool
who shuffled in line to eat or pray
or beg anyone for charity.

Remembering the air and the trees,
the sky above the Polish fields,
we dreamt only of the lives waiting
for us in Chicago and St. Louis
and Superior, Wisconsin

like pennies
in our mouths.

Excerpt from Echoes of Tattered Tongues Audiobook, narrated by Jon Brandi:

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