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## Alabama

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*Hannah Aizenman*

## Alabama

We ate barbecue served on white bread,  
paper plates, sauce dripping out our  
small mouths. Carnivores, you said, but I heard  
carnivals; a festival of flesh, a tenderness to it.  
Beneath Vulcan's likeness on Red Mountain,  
a man told you he would leave you.  
O cuckold god, you said, whose big iron ass  
shone bare and shameless over our city,  
through which we drove stoned on Sundays  
while everyone else stood in church. I kept  
only one tape in my car then—a recording  
of Ginsberg reading "America." We're the cold  
mean Americans, you said; we're punks,  
we're poets. O sweet nothing, we wore  
bandit masks to high-school dances,  
drowned our heartbreaks in Old Granddad,  
came home to play board games  
with my parents while your mother was  
in Amsterdam, or Arkansas, or jail.  
When you found out your estranged father  
was not, after all, your father, your mother  
sent you red roses, which we burned  
in my cul-de-sac. You said I was like the girls  
from Godard's films, but you were like  
somebody's sirens. Where are you now, where  
are you going? I want to write you a letter  
but I don't know where to begin.