The Dark Angels
To the sidewalk in front of my father’s
Razed bakery I return. To the patch
Of burdock where the stacked ovens deep-browned
The crusts of a million loaves of rolls.
To the cinderblock cracked like the soot-pocked
Windows where I watched, in Etna, the dark
Angels escape the coal smoke as if they
Wanted to swoop back to chimers. To shards
and splinters where I hated the sauerkraut
In the cramped, next-door kitchen, the boiled
Shank end of pork which clustered files against
The latched screen door. To the steep, shale downslope
Where the walls of the bakery are landfill,
Where the first bulldozed soil coats wallboard
And lumber as if coal were refueling
Industry’s return, covering the spot
Where I was careless, once, with Saturday’s
Trash fire. Where it followed the easy weeds
To the brittle boards of the bakery.
Where that neighbor shook free the tiles and sprayed
His hose and a set of obscenities
Keyed to my foolish name. Where my father
Thanked him and led me to the last eclair,
Settled me on the work room’s folding chair
And said nothing except “think,” and I thought
That the neighbor was listening at the window
While I held chocolate and custard until
My father said, “You eat that,” and I did.

Decorative Cooking
My mother repeated the story
of St. Julitta, whose shed blood
spelled the name of God. My father
insisted the name of God was work,
half or more of each day but Sunday.
There was time for food, God’s bounty,
reinforced, from the radio,
by Betty Crocker, who explained
The New Design for Happiness, meals
that showed love for the families
in America’s homes by working
canned soup and cake mixes into
the miracles of ready-to-eat.
In her cookbook, in full color,
she probed the pictorial charm
of food by stuffing pie shells
and peppers, filling tomato halves
and sculpted pastry, creating,
on my father’s favorite page,
mock steak from ground beef and Wheaties,
a strip of carrot for the bone.
So pretty, yet economical,
and on our table, each Sunday,
were decorative dinners prepared
the night before: the shimmering,
shaped Jellos, the rank and file
of peeled and sliced apples.
Yearly, the amuse Magi cookies,

TWO POEMS
Gary Finke

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