

Picnics

by [Yehiel E. Poupko](#) in the [February 27, 2019](#) issue

I remember my mother's room
and the windows overlooking the river
and the steel mills of my Pittsburgh childhood,
Bessemer furnaces stoked with coke and coal
and iron ore, boats and barges floating up
and down the river.

Yeshiva school children took day trips
to white hot molten rivers ladled into casts.
Pittsburgh is big shouldered we were told
and innocently thought this the original
while picnicking lunches on benches
by the river in the glow of iron coke and coal.

And now the mills and furnaces are empty,
orange rusty and skeletal against the green
wooded mountains that fall into the river
on whose banks is the room the nurse enters
with bottles and bags and needles and tubes
and pumps filled with molten pouring
into my mother who lies in the bed in the room
whose windows look out on the river
and its skeletons.

Once a month we picnic for lunch,
Blessed are You Lord our God
Who in His goodness nourishes the world . . .
in the room by the window on the green wooded
banks of the river our monthly chemo picnic
on the bank by the river, my mother's bed
shadowing the mills.