

While Waiting in the Cafeteria Of Bradshaw Public School for A Meeting, I Check My Watch Once More Before Allowing Myself to Become Distracted

It's a very small cafeteria, I'm thinking,
but it's a small town---
These must be kindergartners in here
doing their Art,
they're so small.

One boy talks loudest--- he is bigger
than all the rest.
He is coloring a map of the U.S.
and now I think these may not be
kindergartners and maybe this is Social Studies,
not Art.

My country's purple... he's saying
and his country fits neatly on the 8 1/2 X 11
dittoed sheet he pinches proudly
in his raised hand---
his country looks good in purple.

Now the children have left me
with my cup of coffee and watching
one of the cafeteria ladies place
the ketchup dispensers, spacing them evenly
across the fold-out tables,
preparing for lunch
and the squeeze bottle she sets beside me
has a picture of a 1950's housewife
dancing, the brand name,
SQUEEZE-Ezy
in box-letters beneath.

I haven't seen a Squeeze-Ezy bottle
since I was 5 and with my parents
at Ideal Cafe' back home---

and suddenly I am 5
and thinking my world might fit
on an 8 1/2 X 11 sheet
and somehow maybe I do
have the power in one hand

to pull out of the box the best color
for the whole place;
and maybe if I had a hairnet like
this cafeteria lady's, her slate curls pulled,
contained, held tightly in place, maybe
one that keeps my head
inside the lines,
keeps me from always hurling myself
to the far ends of the universe---
holds me focused,
wraps the whole complicated mess
into a clearly labeled Crayola wrapper,
then I could make some kind of Art with it.