

Ruth Goring

Syllables

Men behind me on the bus
speak the language of my grandfather
—clean and sharp-edged, it veers me
southeast overland to Akron,
to Albert
with daily smell of rubber in his pants
and shirt, opening his beermouth
in the men's choir: *In München steht
ein Hofbräuhaus*. Hops on his tongue,
yeast in his stomach, his daughters'
quiet skin, cabbage from the garden.

Sigrid and Inge, his cabbages,
at hand for picking and
pleasingly round. When Ida
is away, brooding and glowering
against the fence, and his other
woman Doris is thorny,
unfruitful, why not their leaves,
one by one, plucked and falling
around their pale crisp stems?

