

## Altoona to Marin

Go ahead, aspire to transcend  
your hardscrabble roots, bootstrap  
the life you dream on,  
escape the small-minded tyranny  
of your small-minded Midwestern  
coalmining town.

But when you've left it behind, you  
may find it still there, in your dreams,  
your syntax, the smell of your hair,  
its real smell, under the shampoo.  
Beware DNA; it will out or be outed,  
and you'll find yourself back  
where you started, back home,  
unable to refute the logic of blood and bone  
you'll slip, and pick up Velveeta  
instead of brie. It's inexorable.  
Kansas one day will turn out to be Oz  
and Oz Kansas,

with the same back porch weeping,  
the same husbands sleeping around,  
addiction, cancer, babies born wrong;  
the same siren nights pierced  
with stars seeping light, all that  
gorgeous, pitiless song.