



### **Monon Memories**

In the dark we wound up and down  
around the hills toward the small town

where the train stopped. Still in the dark,  
I said goodbye to my parents for another

few months, boarded the train in Paoli,  
with a suitcase full of fresh laundry

and partially underlined books, and lurched  
north. Some towns like Mitchell and Orleans

I was awake for, others I dozed through,  
even when I half heard their names,

as if being re-introduced to cousins  
I'd met but didn't see often enough

to remember. And then I would be sitting

by myself in full daylight, wondering where

I was going, even though I knew the day's  
destination. I wondered how a rolling

landscape I loved could turn so easily  
into a monotony of windy flatness.

Would I ever wake up to where  
I'd come from and what that means?

At a stop in Rensselaer, I knew it was  
my place to get off. Aware that I was

the first to go to college since those  
whose names I did not yet know

had come down the Ohio River  
a long time ago, I lifted my suitcase

of books and clothes and started the long  
walk back to the Catholic campus the other

side of town. It never occurred to me to call  
a cab, if there was a cab to call in a town

so small. Lugging the suitcase, I turned  
in the right direction and put down one

foot at a time, just as they had done  
when they stepped off the big boat

and began the long journey into the interior  
which led to the walk I was taking.