

## PETER DESY

*Leaving Columbus, Ohio*  
*November, 1982*

In this midwest of the world, don't  
calculate the odds or think about your job.  
Forget luggage and head west  
on 70, toward the tall buildings.  
then north on 71, away from the city,  
past all exits. Fasten your eyes  
on the white stitching and believe  
you can escape. Have no plans that can  
defeat you, or chances are you will return  
to coffee brewing on the counter-top,  
the dog scratching at the door,  
the sun illumining the kitchen table.  
This is the time to leave, when  
cornfields are dead and trees  
have quit their lives, stem and leaf.  
Drive as if your body were an old thing  
the weather will soon slough off and believe  
with all your heart the distance  
that you cross is real; the new skin  
that itches under your dead cells  
will glisten then grow tough. A waitress  
you knew in '76 and other dark figures  
from your past will stand beside  
the road to flag you down, but drive  
into the night until the glacial stars  
are thick and Columbus is a map's small  
point on a meridian you've sailed beyond.