

Sojourn

When I was nine, my mother and I knit
3,000 miles of American togetherness
from southern California to coastal Carolina,

knotting sixteen days between freedom
and marriage through our national middle.
We crawled over red rock canyonland

and gawked palm to palm beneath
soaring arches through the windows
of heaven. It was a season of firsts:

moose and marmots in the Rockies,
tallgrass, Eisenhower, and a jumbo
stuffed white tiger in Kansas.

She had been to St. Louis, seen the arch.
Together we splurged for the tram, gloried
in expansion. After meeting Abraham Lincoln

in Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky,
I dropped into the slipstream of migration
for the final descent to my new home.

Looking back across the divide
between my formative, fatherless years
and these variegated working years,

I see the journey began before our sojourn
to Ranchito Alegre, before Grandmommy
struck me, before I sold my mother's

push reel mower in a spontaneous
yard sale at the end of our driveway.
Even before I fisted the bathroom window.

The journey began when my mother stood tall
in the face of abandonment, oftentimes
prostrate.