Exodus

We drift apart like continents.  
Our shores rearrange  
themselves in awkward lines,  
successive drafts in  
the revision of the world  
we made for ourselves.  
My mother drew maps  
for sixteen years, holding  
a magnifying glass in one hand  
and with the other tracing  
the signatures of the planet,  
rivers and railroads,  
highways and city limits.  
Now I can only imagine her hand  
brushing the erasures of  
our landscape, smoothing  
the fault lines between us  
just as she smoothed the pages  
of her bible every night,  
leafing through them by  
the moon at her nightstand.  
I think she would understand  
when I say that this parting  
is our Red Sea, the open gate  
to a wilderness we might walk  
fifty years without a map,  
every inch at least a mile.  
Like Israelites we will wander  
the counties just outside  
the promised land, all the while  
asking what pillar of smoke led us here,  
how a rose can blossom into desert,  
or why we must be chosen  
but still lost.

—Michael Hicks

This poem won third place in the BYU Studies  
2001 poetry contest.