

## Heath Bowen

### Dakota

I was broke down holding a bottle of burgundy  
sitting atop some rusted old  
Pontiac in the South Dakota plains  
when I first heard the song “Loretta.”  
Some west Texas drawl sounding  
through worn-out speakers on some  
static AM radio station echoing  
the rattling hum of a beat up guitar.

The magnetic movement  
of melody and words  
had me whispering  
to the winds of a Midwestern sun  
that I’d soon be,  
“coming home.”

That was almost fifteen years ago.  
The song always serves  
as a reminder to stay within the boundaries  
of my own individuality  
or else I might end right back on  
some dust covered road holding  
a bottle of daydreams  
chasing sunshine silhouettes.

It was the first song  
my daughter heard  
as it played in the car  
the day we took her  
home from the hospital.

It will be the first song  
I play  
as a husband  
at my wedding reception.

I have no need for lyrical  
sentimentalities, but Loretta  
really has “been on my mind a while.”  
I never hope to return  
to those Dakota plains  
and the prairie sun, if I do  
find myself rubbing dust

from my eyes and shaking  
dirt off my feet, however,  
then I will always remember Loretta  
as the first of three names  
that keep me wanting  
to come back home.

Heath Bowen and is an MFA student at Spalding University.  
He currently resides in New Albany, Indiana with his wife and little girl.