

GAMES IN THE ATTIC, 1943

To get from Uniow to San Francisco,
this is what you do, mammi; first
you walk out to the road that ends

near the church, you wait a while
for a peasant to give you a ride,
for a few kopeks, to the main road,

the one where you said father
built the bridges. There you wait
for the bus. In Zloczow you catch

a train (maybe we could visit
Grandma Sabina, when the Nazis go)
to Lemberg, wait a few hours, on

to Warszawa, still by train to Gdansk.
Then you get on a boat, go out into
the Bay of Danzig, the Baltic,

through Öresund, Kattegat, and...
I forgot the third one, around
Denmark, but maybe you can cut

across by the Kiel Canal. Out
to the North Sea, the English Channel,
out to the Atlantic. Then, because

we have time, like here in the attic,
we can sail the longer way (do you
want me to tell you all the names

of the islands we pass, mammi?) around
South America, through the straits
of Magellan, near Tierra del Fuego, up

the long coast of Chile and this island
of Robinson Crusoe — please, I want you
to read that story again — up further

past Panama, where there's a canal
that could have saved us time, up
this long chicken leg that sticks out

of Mexico, to California. Here's a bay,
here's San Francisco. How did I do,
mammi, did I get it right, mammi?

near San Francisco, 1989