

Growing Old Young in Missouri

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At times he felt he was wrought from a thin veneer
–Midwestern, fundamental, culturally sheer,
with so few streets, and museums, on the recent frontier.

Thinly rooted, his heart was like the prairie grass.
Now, ghosts and history reflected in the glass
as neolithic buffalo filed past.

Unmarked ages piled outside the window
as his thoughts and stares locked on the falling snow.
He laid plans, secrets, contrived on ways to go.

He was never told there was once a prairie wind,
and the prairie was a sea the buffalo swam in.
New cities rose, and broke their rolling in.

He didn't know the prairie was once a stage
where cultures devoured themselves, page after page.
It could fill a history, and interesting, this rage.

But mostly there was the problem of the Bible,
looming linguistic, archaic, and tribal.
One false move brought certain slander, or libel.

And the mystery of sin, Jesus, and the Fall
echoed, resounded up and down the hall.
Such great deeds, and him so very small.

Books gave hints but no sustained direction.
On what was he to graft this disaffection?
Was there choice, or was this a rigged election?

With the European in him watered down
and not enough Indian to sanctify the ground,
these echoes weakened, hardly chasing sound.

So, nettled by these thoughts it could not know,
his heart was burnished in the counter flow.
He could only wait. Make plans to go.