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Reverie

The original prairies are gone—
over 250 million acres—we must dream them now,
dream them vast, dream them buffalo and elk,
dream them filled with kettle holes, wallows,
and deer beds, with sharp-tailed
grouse and whooping cranes, with wings.

Trills, pipings, whistles—
I do not know the singer—
a flash of yellow!

Everything that shines sees, Bachelard wrote,
*and there is nothing in the world which shines
more than a look*. I walk out across the prairie
to see and be seen by bluestem and indigo,
by that black shining sod that gazes
on my darker dust. I am silt
and drift. I am black and comely.

I have wandered prairies, walked through
space that speaks of thunder-gusts, tornadoes,
downbursts, dust devils, straight-line winds,
and thermal heat, of bones left to bleach
after their meat is stripped away by hunger, but of nothing
human, or maybe human, yes, of the human also.

The prairie breathes me, *es atmet mich*—it breathes
me—breathes as I breathe, the grass sighing its long breath
into faraway and solitude. But no, the stands of bluestem,

switch, side-oats grama, the prairie dropseed—
they do not sigh, and neither does the wind. I sigh.
I sigh and tip my tongue with dirt, as farmers do,
soil that tastes of roots and forgotten losses—
under prairie sod: crockery, old buttons, broken
bottles, pipe stems, rusting nails, similar
to time: same graininess, same sweet rot.