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I Hear This Once Was Prairie

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Elizabeth Walden

I Hear this Once was Prairie

The genius of the place was run off ages ago.

The bank foreclosed.

The house burned.

The tractor rusted.

This land has gone wild

with the best intentions of farmers and conservation plans.

Meadows of Smooth Brome, tangles of Rose, ditches of Vetch and Trefoil.

Not a native among them, least of all me.

This is no home where the buffalo roam.

There is no whole in these parts. (That's erosion.)

Yet, still,

“spontaneous beauties all around advance”

clamoring a raucous life.ⁱ

I hold my ground and listen.

ⁱ From “Epistles to Several Persons: Epistle IV To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington,” by Alexander Pope.