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Narene

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Narene

Mike Vanden Bosch

I was an out-of-towner who came to teach your sons and daughters the dative case in Latin, your daughters how to use their rounded rumps to rebound—to box-out in a non-contact sport. I taught English too: Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn” to girls two hours from milking cows by hand and boys an hour and a whiff from the sty. But one Saturday evening in January, I said to a local businessman, “I do,” and the school board said to me, “You don’t teach in our school after this school year. A married woman, burdened with babies or barren [as I was to be], belongs in the home.” So I managed the dry goods side of my husband’s store for 30 years, keeping my mind alive by serving on the library board and reading novels about lives I might have lived—novels by Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather, Thomas Hardy, and stories by Ruth Suchow—to see if these were fit for the sons and daughters of men who “regretfully” stoned my teaching. In life I never found time to be bitter but in death I wonder, small town, if you know what a mother your children missed.