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nonresident alien

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nonresident alien*

by John Van Rys

here the land
is locked;
(land-locked) i am
im/pressed by the black-eyed sky's swell.

earth stayed beneath decaying snow
frozen still
holds fast prints,
vestiges of forgotten motives,
raw as viscera, blunt,
waiting for warm
dog and bird feces, perhaps
a carcass to feed
its cancer-riddled bones.

(walking) road sand grates
through my soles. a grain globe
blossoms, a thorn bush in my flesh; roots
worm through crimson tunnels
into white-ash bone.

the blunt snouts of houses
turn up and aside as i pass
pacing the grid-lock streets
of this plotted and pieced prairie
town, gowned with white-
washed linen, stiff on lines,
lips pegged tight.

the trees pass me, measured
dark arches whispering
pat answers to pat questions.
listening, my bones root
in late winter rubble while flesh
branches splinter cubic air and hair
vibrates, the stranger i am knocking
at the gate:

o Lord, is this your dwelling place?

*A title given by INS to individuals working and living
in the United States on a temporary visa.