

AYERS RATLIFF

The Prairie

I see —

A tin, white washed windmill overseeing the prairie
And is next to a sign.
Sign, made by man, in a prairie made by man.
Sign, in the not natural prairie.

Wind blows through this prairie without song
mimicking rattlesnakes by blowing raspy leaves,
moving highest limb that man cannot touch,
Causing change, but noticeable change, to the sensitive eye.

Dry air,
Air so dry like cotton —
moves me to old, stable crooked trunks protruding from pasture.
Alone, unmoved, except for themselves.
Home of the bats, like Dracula hanging movie
Ashamed, with a cover.

Small tree in the prairie stands by a woodpile
Not wanting to grow,
Forever funeraling from far within this young tree.
But the enforcer, rebel spring, is making it.
Maybe it should grow so it can understand.

Pond is in the prairie.
Grey and brown, but blue prairie pond has masquerading sticks.
home to the painters and gardeners, it is important to the prairie,
Giver of live — hidden in green grass bushes.

Big blue Lobelia, absent — Canada Tick Trefoil, absent.
Both are absent, but surrounded.
Surrounded by rock, little rocks, rock, little rocks — babies of rocks.
They are supposed to be here, but *I* would not have known,
I know more by the presence of their sign, than if *they* were here.

Or, what would I know if the absent flowers were here —
 And the signs were not?
I would not know the names of the flowers,
Or, maybe, if they were even flowers.
If they were here, I might think they were a weed —
Or, weedlike, and would only be important if they had a sign.

Signs give weeds importance.
If weeds are not weeds — signs give flowers importance.
Do flowers need importance?
Does everything with a sign demand respect?

Beautiful flowers standing by themselves are not as important as a beautiful
 flower standing next to a sign.
Beautiful flowers are not as important as a sign standing alone in a bed of
 mulch.

Signs should be changed,
Signs should change to change us.
Us as people should read all signs.
Read these signs, and flow naturally, like we are in a prairie.

Perhaps: we need to look at the flower standing next to the sign —
Or if he has been standing too long this flower will be sitting.
He must be told that he is important,
He must be watered and nurtured,
Every beautiful flower could end up with a sign, and mimic a weed.

Everything is important which has a sign —
If a man has a sign, then he is important —
 Homeless — Will work for food.