

Until You Showed Me Kansas

I did not know you
Until you showed me Kansas;
Now I see your face
Carved into the old stone walls of its churches,
While your eyes gleam in its silent lakes.
Your fortitude and endurance
Reside inside its staunch brick homes,
And I see in its grazing cattle
Your forehead furrowed
In the deliberate contemplation of your art.

I did not know you
Until you showed me Kansas;
Now I realize that
Its cities are your yearning and ambition,
Its small towns, your hideaways,
Its wild flowers open to your creative hand,
As the dead grasses belie all those things
You have forsaken and left behind,
Left behind with the tumbleweed that skitters
And bounces across the prairie,
Nervously awaiting your return.

I did not know you
Until you showed me Kansas;
Now I hear your voice rising over
The sculptured slope of the Flint Hills
And feel your proud resolution
Blowing in on a cold Rocky Mountain wind.
As the highways mark your movement forward
And the dirt roads, your glances back,
The weatherworn barns shelter you
While your heart races with the rabbits in the field.

No, I did not know you
Until I met your Kansas
And saw the wheat-sheeted bed
That is your resting place
And the startled horizon
That is your waking dream.

Jane Ellen Stock