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Vachel Lindsay Considers Kansas

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VACHEL LINDSAY CONSIDERS KANSAS

In a small window
at the soft lip of the prairie,
Vachel Lindsay in a torn undershirt
looks out on the long brown grass
of Emporia Kansas,
his beautiful head bowed.
The knotted legs that bore him
from Illinois to New Mexico
in that scorcher of 1912,
hang like two eels
from a frayed line.

That afternoon he read
from the gymnasium floor,
rows of future teachers
bobbing to every line,
booming out the choruses
of populism and pentecost.
The portentous words
swaying through stalks
of their youthful crop.

Sitting on the edge of the bed,
Vachel Lindsay holds out his hands
toward the faint light of a field
harvesting some five miles away.
He can not sleep
for the gathering of locusts outside,
but waits for their wings
to bear him away
through the dark whistling air.