Holy Ghost

Peter Wild

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HOLY GHOST

The man who compiles dictionaries
or writes travel pieces
likes to see a farmer out mowing or pitching hay in his shirtsleeves
while behind him his bonneted wife is upstairs
in the wavering candle of the farmhouse slashing mattresses,
yelling like a searchlight, throwing
saucers and pictures out the window
in a rage because she can't be the Holy Ghost.

To that man he's the baseball player of the plains,
a preacher who through his labors
all day is his own best sermon,

And while he proceeds into town
          bearing his future history, swatches
of newspaper clippings stuffed in his pockets,

He dreams of the clodhopper coming around the door of the barn
with an armload of martingales,
          as usual his face forlorn at the prospect,
to confront the wondering, bulbous horses
who look at him disappointed,
          about to think of the answer to a crossword puzzle,
of him reaching over to pinch his wife at night
and making her really scream
          like a marsh entering the turmoil of sunset.

Nevertheless it's too late as he rolls out the plans,
      gathered above the tavern with the obsequious county com-
    missioners.
In his head he doesn't see the farmer joined behind the corncrib

by his six stalwart sons,
    all chewing tobacco and looking just like him,
new planets that wobble out of the pine trees
armed to strangle their sisters.