This Dream the World Is Having about Itself...

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“This dream the world is having about itself…”

—William Stafford

won’t let us go. The western sky gathers
its thunderclouds. It has no urgent need

of us. That summer in our late teens we
walked all evening through town—let’s say Cheyenne—

we were sisters at the prairie’s edge: I
who dreamed between sage-green pages, and you

a girl who feared you’d die in your twenties.
Both of us barefoot, wearing light summer

dresses from the Thirties, our mother’s good
old days, when she still believed she could live

anywhere, before her generation
won the War and moved on through the Forties.

As we walked, a riderless tricycle
rolled out slowly from a carport, fathers

watered lawns along the subdivisions’
treeless streets. We walked past the last houses

and out of the Fifties, the Oregon
Trail opened beneath our feet like the dream

of a furrow turned over by plough blades
and watered by Sacajawea’s tears.

What did the fathers think by then, dropping
their hoses without protest as we girls

disappeared into the Sixties? We walked
all night, skirting the hurricane-force winds
in our frontier skirts so that the weather forecasts for the Seventies could come true,
the Arapahoe’s final treaties for the inland ranges could fulfill themselves
ahead of the building sprees. We walked on but where was our mother by then? Your lungs were filling with summer storms, and my eyes blurred before unrefracted glacial lakes.

Limousines started out from country inns at the center of town, they meant to drive our grandparents deep into their eighties. Our mother in her remodeled kitchen whispered our names into her cordless phone but before the Nineties were over, both of you were gone. Mother’s breath was shadow but her heart beat strong all the way in to the cloud wall. You carried your final thoughts almost to the millennium’s edge, where the westward-leaning sky might have told us our vocation: in open fields, we would watch the trail deepen in brilliant shadow and dream all the decades ahead of us.

_In memory of my sister_