

Winter's Last Act

Leslie Thomas

Inside swollen soil pores, dissolve is still
river destined, and sun bears down hotter
as enemy. The final seasonal showing

evaporates, land glaciers surrender to lake,
free-standing ice slivers have nothing left
to cleave, sink unconstrained into ocean.

Cargo ships redirect their course, further
north to brown earth cracks along shore lines.
A curtain draws, a sea of cell phones light

for an encore that's always come before.
I lie into melted remains, as water rises,
cold words will vanish from dictionaries.

On Forty Acres

Leslie Thomas

The engine followed oxen's heavy cue,
buffalo's buoyant prairie print,

the conveyor belt-grind of glacial ice.
Metal tines swirling on rubber tires

crush clod and clay. Disc chiseled
stalks mix with manure and NPK.

In a corner, red paint clings to heart pine,
the old barn sinks into switchgrass,

goldenrod and common buckthorn.
They followed the iron horse in 1868

from coast to coast, always a step behind.
Ghosts ring dinner bells, fling open doors,

dream inside this falling frame, against
rows and rows of corn, their voice remains.