

Remembering Max Wheat, Nature Walk

by Ellen Pober Rittberg

sparrow robin all song
red-winged blackbird rash percussive
a street band
ring necked pleasant tail long string of
a wind up toy: floating milkweed

I like the Russian olive tree
its leaves open penetrating my nostrils
combining with my lungs
but I like it closed
each pendulous bud a promise

tree swallow overhead close enough to touch
"a flicker of sardine light," I say
"that's a poet thinking, Max says
"write it down," he commands and I do
as I spy a wagon rut a century old

see pocked white stones shards of ancient columns
pet last year's grass now etiolated soft as puppy's fur
I must go must resolve to walk again where Whitman walked on
this last remaining prairie east of the Mississippi. Adieu!