

Leaving Tracks

-after Don Gayton

When Daddy's cement is sticky
he holds my wrists in his calloused hands
and presses my palms to leave a mark.

We are leaving impressions, he says,
to make sure the shape will hold.

He's got my name, too, carved blocked
into the split posts holding up the line
between our farm and the prairie margin.

We make these marks, Daddy says,
so we remember how to get back home.

It's like the slashes through these Dakotas—
great sweeps along ridges and river valleys,
trails where the buffalo walked heavy,

pushed their shaggy shoulders into the rock,
left their palms long across the land.

*Originally appeared in *Midwestern Gothic*