Kansas Mythos

Bored eyes glance The declaration of tumultuous histories Piqued interests breed charm of pride The life inside a cavum of cardboard boxes The gather-'round-sit-down tales That are duty of elder Kansans to polish-to-shine These dusty ghosts my child heart investigate In the haunted house of worn photos and sepia-page news clippings Stories of our collective childhood Tell us how our people are survivors.

Stories of silly settlers having faith in the land, That it be conquered and prosperous By the sheer cunning of deserving hands But Job knows the challenges of God's commands. The forces of nature will always prevail, Their footsteps of foundation lie in the rubble of ecreation.

Stories of John Brown's fool's gold holy grail Calculates the blood drops needed To flood the Kaw in Beecher Bible debris Forever be known as the land of liberation The home grown fear needed To birth a nation in war.

Stories of rag faced children starved But filled too full, Lungs bare bowls of precious Kansas earth When the clutch of their mother's rugged arms weren't good enough. There wakes a numbing roar beyond understanding, This air of the sky with the sun blot out. Stories of the burial at Burnett's Mound lies a chief and a curse. There are rules of the sacred, Of protection lest it be disturbed When dismissed then shall they learn Accustomed destruction invited by manifest construction See prairie gods of chaos with a modern flare.

Stories to defy the impossible, Midwestern mules Survivors root in the graveyard path of the American Dream Bread basket atop of nuclear missile silos and buffalo fossils. We, the special breed, the elders teach Connect in the battles of these boxes And listen as the prairies preach our fables

~ Tara Bartley

Tara Rhiannon Bartley is currently a Senior at Washburn University in Topeka, KS, majoring in History with a dual minor in English and Sociology. She has previously been published by Kansas Time + Place as well as the political zine Microburst. A lifelong resident of Topeka, Kansas, she is active in its ever-expanding poetry scene as a member and hocker of the Speak Easy Poets.