1968

Dakota Territory

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Years before I saw it
elevators jutted erect out of the grasslands
amazed and awkward banners announcing
a stand of poplars, a few frame houses
a dry goods store threaded by iron rails
a steam driven artery moving to the horizon
beyond the tip of your finger
safe in bushels and a new spur

Fargo grows like a wild weed
barbecues and patios past
the city limits / Sears sends credit cards
with the catalogue suits and overalls
walk side by side / the college has an idea
or two and West Fargo's the home of the 16th
largest stockyard in the world
and yet downtown—at the center
a few of the old pillared homes
are for sale and an unsavory crowd
frequents the bars near the tracks
last December another run of the Great Northern
Railway / Fargo to St. Paul
was discontinued

some cities like giant cedars
develop heart rot at maturity
Ottertail, Minnesota once had blood
in its veins 1600 people 3 grocery stores
stables for horses and a creamery
an important stop for the Fargo-St. Paul train