

Amy Sun
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Ents 210: Four Dimensions of Nature Writing
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Vignette #2

There is a patch of tall grasses and wildflowers between the Language and Dining Center and Mudd Hall of Science. It flourishes with abundance, riotous and unruly, oblivious to its decorous neighbors. It reminds me of Postage Stamp Prairie, the old-growth prairie so named because of its diminutive size. Postage Stamp Prairie is unimpressive, even unattractive, with its dry grasses and flowers, shrunken and sun-bleached to muted browns and yellows. The grasses, emaciated with dehydration, crack and fracture at the slightest touch. This infinitesimal prairie, this blemish on the landscape, once dominated the territory. But like everything else deemed “savage” by the settlers, the prairies were eradicated. Postage Stamp Prairie survived only by a stroke of luck. Like a relic left by thieves, undisturbed because of its apparent worthlessness, so Postage Stamp Prairie was preserved—it was too undesirable, even to the insatiable settlers.

There is a part of me that wonders if perhaps the settlers were right; if they were right in trying to force their towering trees and flowers into this grassy desert, trying to force the past into the future, or the future into the past. Then I catch sight of this indecorous patch of prairie between the LDC and Mudd, which has forced its own way into the midst of civilization. This patch of grasses and wildflowers, an aberration among straight lines and tidy brick, a strain on the eyes, is, in fact, one of the few tangible reminders we have of the past, of our past. These lands, which our ignorant eyes deem ugly, are the only links we have to the earth which once nurtured us.