

THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY

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1. Kamloops: Late Arrival

Searching for the mountain,
we found a shoe.

After the first drought
we dreamed a river.
After the forecast city
we listened for rain.

The fallen roof and fireweed
conspire.

Seeds too explode.

Iamb and jackhammer in duet:
silence, breaking the drum:
the city, climbing, climbing.

Two rivers, then, coming together.

2. *This Part of the Country*

In this part of the country, the horizon is a glacier.
One morning the horses of the sun lost all direction.

David Thompson, that very afternoon, found west. He saw
a man on a sandbar, sluicing for pieces of light.

I saw George Bowering riding a yellow horse, that high country poet
wearing no gun. His horse had eyes the color of bullets.

In this part of the country, sagebrush is a version of dance. You must
enter in slowly. This is where train robbers learn their moves.

I saw Roy Miki wading in Sheila Watson's river. He was fishing
with a line made of blue memory. The sky was tinder dry.

3. *Blue River: Checking In*

Somewhere west and south of Mt Robson
I forgot my name. This much I remember.
It was a long, white drive; I was alone.
The patient trees were shrouded in snow.

The woman behind the motel desk
said I would have to sign my name.
Snow had fallen, I explained, and it fell;
the road was not to be found.

We were both surprised by the dark.
Some days night is a voluntary silence.
Then one of us asked (was it she
or I?), So how did you get here?

4. This Part of the Country

Landscape is a diagram of the impossible. Why do we have to look at a tree to see the wind? How do we tell the frozen lake from future interrogations?

Today in Kamloops the snowline slid slowly all day long down into the valley of the North Thompson River. First my head turned a hummocky white. Then my shoulders became slopes for elegant white toboggans. Then all my fingers assumed the dignity of ice. It was a slow procedure. When I went to move my feet I couldn't find them.

Here in this part of the country the so-called visibility, from airplanes and avalanches alike, is the equivalent of zero. We measure our descent by exhalation, hoping to see each breath freeze as it escapes the mouth. Is that a question or an answer?

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