



DITCHES OF ALBERTA

we drive fast on long straight roads

I like the way zooming up the highway I keep passing the mouths of gravel roads
narrowing to the horizon

the land is giving color after color

unbounded miles through flowering margins

tall fireweed bloomed out, sweetclover diving past on the edge of the asphalt

in august the ditches of alberta

brome, fescue sweetclover, alsike, alfalfa
yarrow wild rose

and fields among trees, like ponds
those flat-bottomed blue-shadowed white copses of cloud sorted in order of size

the fine grass is timothy he said
a stand of it somewhat against the light

fine stalks each swaying apart,
blooming a layer afloat, a questing stir

small rabbit this morning quiet in its clover
smell of warm strawberries, that dry rustle of leaves

now there's a pause did a car door slam
across the road young aspens jiggling their leaves

look how the willow's moving. that one -

aspen leaves are quite hard as well as loosely hung
all catching glitter in their upper boughs

this word 'land', I realize, has a kind of shine

you start with the yard when you're little

particular, built into you as a kind of order

"I can show you the exact spot, actually"

a place where several springs came out of the ground, "a stream about this wide"

a feel for where you are, a sense of precinct
a grove, a spring, thunder, the household hearth
creek, poplar, willow
the lawful motion of the lifting dust
the ancients offered images and fragrant smoke
some peeled branches and fireweed, a ruby light
the gods are many and they like a voice
images and fragrant smoke, a splendid run of flame

charred kouros deep in leaves tender and blind
a concourse leading north from scorched hero to boreal forest's edge

scribed on the skins of aspens her vivid slit
long pointed ovals that may be ships or eyes

a woodshed, a garden, a desk, a studio window, a view

“my work is like this story that grows”

strong story, a force field

standing in work clothes with worker's hands wanting to know, wanting to tell

third son in tales, whose uncommon trust

yes, grateful

a force field, and it's familial
more than genetic, historic

a dark blue storm we saw a long way off
thunder sky, gold grass

but is painting too naked
such prohibition on love in art

what 'depth' means, the body open under a feeling, I think,
all the way down

not yearning or adoration
more like a weightless motion in an ether, a stepping

not the same thing as the moments that tower
those are the dark ones

what artists make of what they are

soul in the sense of being on a journey
faithful and mortal a ship that has set out and knows it will fail

blinded for a moment in a tanker's side-spray
so many of those doubled-up tankers that look like war

dear you, is it always going to be this bad
today I don't know how to live

defeat and despair set things in motion

sifting, having to sift
having to work to see

materials of the moment

do you want to say anything about the air
responsible balance of power and despair

a quilted overcast. it's a gentle day. the breeze is inconstant

spruce drifted pollen from its wide wing as I passed through what seemed
like a gate

it's the home of some self I'm not at this moment
those pages of notes, the lake house that's gone

the sky is delicately pale in its ordered directions

he read them perfectly. I was sitting on the floor at his knee. it was 35 years later

they are read lightly and not in sentences not the way they were written,
there's a kind of glide

what I like is the cadence

the sparse balanced flow of time noted

that's it isn't it

the air was perfect, moving just barely so the skin felt loved