

Canadian January Night
-Alden Nowlan

Ice storm; the hill
pyramid of black crystal
down which the cars
slide like phosphorescent beetles
while I, walking backwards in obedience
to the wind, am possessed
of the fearful knowledge
my compatriots share
but almost never utter:
this is a country
where a man can die
simply from being
caught outside.

Fear of the Landscape
IAN YOUNG

On a hot morning
walking through rough thicket,
bushes and rocks
close to the bluffs
I was uneasy and clung to things.
The sound of a cricket
or the calls of birds were shrill
lesions in the quiet air
around me, sweltering and still.
The leaves hung from the trees
dangling on thin stems.

I am walking quickly and the land
stops. The ground
drops to a beach of stones
where a silent boat leans at the shore
into a sandy mound,
its stiff poled oars
outstretched.
The lake gulls circling it
cry out in the heat.
The sound of dry breath clings to me.
I hear the sun's core burn.
Have I been too long in cities
that I have such fear
of the landscape?

Temagami
ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

Far in the grim Northwest beyond the lines
That turn the rivers eastward to the sea,
Set with a thousand islands, crowned with pines,
Lies the deep water, wild Temagami:
Wild for the hunter's roving, and the use
Of trappers in its dark and trackless vales,
Wild with the trampling of the giant moose,
And the weird magic of old Indian tales.
All day with steady paddles toward the west
Our heavy-laden long canoe we pressed:
All day we saw the thunder-travelled sky
Purpled with storm in many a trailing tress,
And saw at eve the broken sunset die
In crimson on the silent wilderness.

Heat

- Archibald Lampman

From plains that reel to southward,
dim,
The road runs by me white and bare;
Up the steep hill it seems to swim
Beyond, and melt into the glare.
Upward half-way, or it may be
Nearer the summit, slowly steals
A hay-cart, moving dustily
With idly clacking wheels.
By his cart's side the wagoner
Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
Of white dust puffing to his knees.
This wagon on the height above,
From sky to sky on either hand,
Is the sole thing that seems to move
In all the heat-held land.

Beyond me in the fields the sun
Soaks in the grass and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one;
Even the buttercups are still.
On the brook yonder not a breath
Disturbs the spider or the midge.
The water-bugs draw close beneath
The cool gloom of the bridge.

Where the far elm-tree shadows flood
Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
Lie waiting for the heat to pass.
From somewhere on the slope near by
Into the pale depth of the noon
A wandering thrush slides leisurely
His thin revolving tune.

In intervals of dreams I hear
The cricket from the drougty ground;
The grasshoppers spin into mine ear
A small innumerable sound.
I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
The burning sky-line blinds my sight:
The woods far off are blue with haze:

The hills are drenched in light.

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear.

The Camp of Souls
- Isabelle Crawford

1 My white canoe, like the silvery air
2 O'er the River of Death that darkly rolls
3 When the moons of the world are round and fair,
4 I paddle back from the 'Camp of Souls.'
5 When the wishton-wish in the low swamp grieves
6 Come the dark plumes of red 'Singing Leaves.'

7 Two hundred times have the moons of spring
8 Rolled over the bright bay's azure breath
9 Since they decked me with plumes of an eagle's wing,
10 And painted my face with the 'paint of death,'
11 And from their pipes o'er my corpse there broke
12 The solemn rings of the blue 'last smoke.'

13 Two hundred times have the wintry moons
14 Wrapped the dead earth in a blanket white;
15 Two hundred times have the wild sky loons
16 Shrieked in the flush of the golden light
17 Of the first sweet dawn, when the summer weaves
18 Her dusky wigwam of perfect leaves.

19 Two hundred moons of the falling leaf
20 Since they laid my bow in my dead right hand
21 And chanted above me the 'song of grief'
22 As I took my way to the spirit land;
23 Yet when the swallow the blue air cleaves
24 Come the dark plumes of red 'Singing Leaves.'

25 White are the wigwams in that far camp,
26 And the star-eyed deer on the plains are found;
27 No bitter marshes or tangled swamp
28 In the Manitou's happy hunting-ground!
29 And the moon of summer forever rolls
30 Above the red men in their 'Camp of Souls.'

31 Blue are its lakes as the wild dove's breast,
32 And their murmurs soft as her gentle note;
33 As the calm, large stars in the deep sky rest,
34 The yellow lilies upon them float;
35 And canoes, like flakes of the silvery snow,
36 Thro' the tall, rustling rice-beds come and go.

37 Green are its forests; no warrior wind
38 Rushes on war trail the dusk grove through,
39 With leaf-scalps of tall trees mourning behind;
40 But South Wind, heart friend of Great Manitou,
41 When ferns and leaves with cool dews are wet,
42 Bows flowery breaths from his red calumet.

43 Never upon them the white frosts lie,
44 Nor glow their green boughs with the 'paint of death';
45 Manitou smiles in the crystal sky,
46 Close breathing above them His life-strong breath;
47 And He speaks no more in fierce thunder sound,
48 So near is His happy hunting-ground.

49 Yet often I love, in my white canoe,
50 To come to the forests and camps of earth:
51 'Twas there death's black arrow pierced me through;
52 'Twas there my red-browed mother gave me birth;
53 There I, in the light of a young man's dawn,
54 Won the lily heart of dusk 'Springing Fawn.'

55 And love is a cord woven out of life,
56 And dyed in the red of the living heart;
57 And time is the hunter's rusty knife,
58 That cannot cut the red strands apart:
59 And I sail from the spirit shore to scan
60 Where the weaving of that strong cord began.

61 But I may not come with a giftless hand,
62 So richly I pile, in my white canoe,
63 Flowers that bloom in the spirit land,
64 Immortal smiles of Great Manitou.
65 When I paddle back to the shores of earth
66 I scatter them over the white man's hearth.

67 For love is the breath of the soul set free;
68 So I cross the river that darkly rolls,
69 That my spirit may whisper soft to thee
70 Of thine who wait in the 'Camp of Souls.'
71 When the bright day laughs, or the wan night grieves,
72 Come the dusky plumes of red 'Singing Leaves.'

Solitude

- Archibald Lampman

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
Even this little brook, that runs at ease,
Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
Seems but to deepen with its curling thread
Of sound the shadowy sun-pierced silences.

Sometimes a hawk screams or a woodpecker
Startles the stillness from its fixed mood
With his loud careless tap. Sometimes I hear
The dreamy white-throat from some far-off tree
Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
His five pure notes succeeding pensively.