

Notebook Entry: On a Flight Over Canada

Robert Powell

1.

This vast surface crumpled below us, at once careless and timeless, like morning bedding. The hills composing it dull-brown, dull-green, khaki – the colour of a uniform jettisoned in the snow by a young soldier in 1943 and found at dawn. Absent without leave, like this landscape.

2.

From the air, memory like a surface. Fast-moving cloudshadow articulating its shape, height from depth, depth from height. The prehistoric war-wounds packed with white --- strange hospitals, lake-shaped. Charges at you in broad day, light from night.

3.

He only wanted to see his mother. In his dream ran across the railway tracks, her hands surprised, drying themselves once again on the old apron of the past, the land. His face thrust into it and its shape filled with ice --- with distance, photography, and ice.

4.

And so we look for what was, its ever-changing certainties. Shaved seasons in their wilderness paled by snow. Ten million trees without leaves seen from on high and now. Beckoning, they stand in the middle of everywhere, like each of us.

---from *HARVEST OF LIGHT* (Stone Flower Press, Ottawa, 2007)