

Ode to the Great Bear (Arktos)
In Honour of the First Anchorage Arctic Research Day, 24 March 2017

I

Above 66° North—give or take, more or less—our world begins.
This is the land of too much light—days when the sun hangs around
Like a drunk at a bar telling stories until even the landlord cries
“Time!”
Yet there are days so dark the blackness wraps you around the throat
Tightly, so tight you cannot breathe out the wonder
Of a billion stars fanned out across the sky.
Long ago they thought the stars were holes punched
In a solid sphere.
“Fixed stars” they called them.
Perhaps they were right. Wonder doesn’t give a damn about the truth.
It just sucks up everything.

II

And everything is snow like top hats perched on the roofs of cars
And snow like cake mix
And snow that falls so slowly
 you could eat your lunch
 before
 one
 flake
 lands
And snow lighter than a soufflé whipped up a million times
By a fancy chef somewhere where they give a damn about such things.
Nature is a better chef.

III

People of this land have lived here for time outside memory.
They love the raven for its weird music and
Its cleverness.
Its siblings in less lucky lands would drop as if shot
At the first touch of that threatening cold we love—and learn to fear.
Our raven simply chuckles and gurgles and clonks, and says to itself:
“Ah! All the more for me!”

IV

This is a land where you don't know your neighbor
Because
You don't have one.
Horizon to horizon you can be alone. Truly. Totally. Till death.
Alone in tiny and utter insignificance.
This is a land where mountains punch us breathless
With
The savage, strange, grinding power of their making.
This is a land the people love beyond measure
Even as
(Or because)
Others want it tamed and brutalized
Raped and rapined
In the name of Progress
Under the banner of "More."
A word that rhymes with "death" and "decay" and "degradation."

V

This is a land of earth and sky and water
Of purest air
Of simplest Nature.
And that should always and ever be enough.
It never is; it never will be until *it* isn't or *we* aren't
Anymore.

More?

Nevermore!

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