BEVERLEY BIE BRAHIC

Going Back to Saskatchewan

Mother grew up in Saskatchewan. She moved to Vancouver at the end of the war, to a blue wall of mountains hanging over the barnacle city ready to scrape it back into the sea. Mother couldn't get used to the mountains. 'There's no sky here,' she would say, watching waves breaking.

She missed the Prairies, missed the wide angle of vision. When people said there was nothing to see, not a bump or wrinkle, barely a tree unless some farmer'd stuck in a row to stop the storms hurtling like curling stones down from the Arctic Circle, Mother said she liked to see weather coming: thunderheads mounding like soft ice cream in August, a first blizzard riding in.

Summers Mother went back to Saskatchewan: drove us inland through shadows of mountain ranges folding behind us like a stack of pressed sheets. Revelstoke, Golden—the road on a ledge above an abyss, Bridal Falls plunging to rock chaos—Medicine Hat, Swift Current and Moose Jaw.
where the telephone poles repeated
Like bar lines, the same three clouds
Drifted over the same weathered
Clapboard cabin whose pitched roof notched
The same faded sky
    where the grain elevators kept rising,
Rising with a name in lights, then nothing
Again, except the highway unreeling.

Sometimes Mother made us get out
On the shoulder to feast on a section of ripening wheat
Waving in an invisible wind—\textit{the reapers},
The gleaners, the burning of stubble
\textit{Before the earth could be turned again—}
World flat as a dial with us in the middle
Marking time, and only our shadows
Inching towards the horizon.