



A DIFFICULT BEAUTY DAVID GROULX

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DAVID A. GROULX



Wolsak and Wynn

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## WIDENING THE HIGHWAY ON THE REZ

The wind that winter  
threw up the highway  
its long tongue  
licking the houses and bony shore

Its teeth clamped down  
on the Indians, dogs and their houses

Its flayed skin  
heaped in front of *Our Lady of the Highway Church*

The fish scatter  
the moose flee  
silence escapes

and only crows and vultures gather  
on this brand new corpse

ii

My grandmother will not return home  
her fiddle is silent  
her guitar  
Jew's harp gather dust  
her squeezebox still

skunks and rabbits  
rummage through her garden

her yard will be severed for the highway  
so that people can get by faster

not see it  
not smell it  
not know it

like we did

iii

There was a glass tea kettle  
some scones  
and a warm wood stove in the kitchen

there were some postcards from somewhere  
from someone

there were some pictures of people  
I've never met

there was a can of gasoline  
for wounded and aching old bones

iv

now this land becomes Palestine  
broken off from torso and limb  
this long execution

*Lebensraum* is made  
from my grandmother's land

and the dead animals on the new  
highway gather

## MOVING DOWN

Frog Lake water in my veins  
we die now the same way Custer did  
by his hand

whither the wind  
come down to me brother  
Brother  
come down this way sisters

everyone's moving off the rez  
moving down to the city

we can kiss the sunset good night

while they build another highway through grandpa's  
trapline

We can dance here in the city

bring me down some sweetgrass  
bring me down some tobacco

it wont grow here, moving down  
to the city  
bring  
some whitefish  
some pickerel

nothing swims in this still water

some moose meat  
some stories  
some laughter  
bring  
slow this sunrise



## THE MAYFLOWER NEVER SAILED

I remember when I was  
young  
my mother gave me a plastic model of the Mayflower  
for Christmas  
I tried to put it together  
for weeks

I ended up smashing it and throwing it  
in the garbage

It just wasn't in me  
to put together  
the strange canoe  
with its little white Indians  
and their bedsheets  
like clouds tied down to broken  
white pine

## A ROOFER'S BOOTS (ARCHAEOLOGY)

When they find my boots  
What will they say?

*This man must have been 5'9"  
his weight we can only guess  
he lived in tar and gravel fused to the soul  
was better for traction  
that he must have been a mountain climber  
the steel toes worn from kneeling  
that he was a priest  
praying to the sun god  
that both laces broken, the language of his clan  
that the soles are worn  
that he must have been a medicine man warning of the rain  
his incantations worn on his heels*

## EMPTYING THE GRAVEYARD

The morning was still dark  
a few drunks following  
what was left of the moon  
home  
while a corner store is  
being robbed  
the cops  
busy  
their bellies full of donuts  
sweet downtime  
their trunks full of beer  
stolen from  
some underage kids  
earlier in the morning  
the hookers wander home  
their wallets full  
as their mouths were  
the barmaids follow them  
then the janitors and cleaners

we are like cockroaches  
scurrying before the sun

## WHITE NOISE

When I was young  
the world was silent  
my mouth  
would not open

now the world  
drowns it  
with its voices

its torches  
its Neanderthal eye  
staring down my throat

## PASSING BY YOUR PLACE

Indians live there  
with boarded up windows  
and mattresses on the floor

its always dark and quiet  
and the cops visit every once in a while

the landlord drops by on welfare day  
brings in some industrial lacquer  
he stole from the mill he works at

gives it to the Indians

he makes more money this way

on the day they  
will carry your body  
out of there Jimdadoikwe

and I will be quiet and dark  
while the smell  
of lacquer  
sinks into the walls

## AFTERNOON AT THE ADANAC HOTEL

Social Services took Wanda's  
kids away  
today they became wards  
of the state  
today she has a room  
at the Adanac hotel  
her old man is dying in a hospital somewhere  
cirrhosis of the liver  
she doesn't visit him anymore  
she doesn't give a shit

Today I shared a drink with her  
downstairs  
she offered me sex  
for more

we drank all afternoon

the sex would have been better  
if I hadn't known her  
at all

## MY NEIGHBOUR

The cops were here  
yesterday  
took George's five kids away  
I saw George in the window  
waving goodbye to his children

his 400-pound frame  
looked like rain

it's quiet and dark  
there now  
and sometimes  
I can hear George weeping

## I AM STILL

Frozen were  
these veins  
in my throat  
the blood  
like chains

My bones dropping  
into these rivers

I am being made  
into memory