

## Milepost 57

Together they squandered their seven ivory clouds  
at the sky's small edge — salted away a hundred  
landlocked sea swells of quarter mile rise — dug in  
where the thaw would oblige. They were up at all hours  
all summer, scavenging wildfire's garden for morels  
in moss triage, kindling in armless charred spruce —  
any standing to be gained out of struggling lushness  
knocked on its back. They flared against squirrels and strays  
and warrants and easements and their only neighbour —  
miles up the road — who dared to call them squatters,  
but ask around — the fact is, ambition and reclusiveness  
have been shacking up here for years. You think they've  
ever once held a deed to these tussocky slopes?  
Their sprawling, marginal claim? And now August gone,  
now facing fireweed silk and the sterile chill, the empty kettle,  
she tells him *to hell with it — eat your damned overburden,*  
*and your fine flour gold* — then bold again she storms  
the same gravel washboard to her dear desperate highlands —  
scorched over languid prickly crest beyond ridge beyond  
crest, scarred flanks cleft with cut banks, or scalloped  
in sluiced heaps of crumbled rock the ravens inspect.  
Those creeks ran clear of fundamental yearning long since.  
But hopelessly distant, north and west — *that's where the fabulous*  
*lode must lie!* where steeper faces part the headwinds —  
where dawn was conceived, and dusk will be buried  
a few inches more ...

In his old black truck  
with the star-shot doors and the crescent headlight,  
he'll find her shivering, halfway down the hill.