

Without Satellites

Poem by Elizabeth Albrecht

Have I ever been here? Yes, maybe, half asleep, through a car window. My eyes dance deep into the field. Run over a shallow hill. Neat rows of trees planted wherever they need be to provide shade for the reapers. I picture your child-self standing amongst this corn. Gripping husks, rough against your fingers, soil soft against your feet. I wonder if you miss it. But if you don't, I'll miss it for you. I carry nostalgia for a time I've never had.

Did you walk along the side of the road we drive on? Dance deep into the field? Run over a shallow hill? How do you reckon with this landscape? Do you feel it pulling you inside it once more? What do you do out here? How do you care for this land? How do you talk to it?

Corn, corn, corn, farmhouse, corn, corn, trees, trees, maximum 80 kilometres an hour.

Where on Earth are we? What would we do without satellites?

I count the number of lonely trees. The ones deep into the field. The ones open to the world for miles on all sides. Tree, my friend, do you know where the nearest gas station is? This tank is running low.

I count the number of cars with which we cross paths. Approximately one every two minutes... I estimate.

Flat, agricultural, flat, open, flat, desolate, flat, wooden barn, flat, haybales, flat, grain elevator older than me and my brother. Who knows where we are? Who recognizes this part of the road? How many of you are there?

I try to picture the borders of this terrain. That somewhere, far from here, there's a road with shops on one side and fields on the other. Or maybe there's a field that just melts into the forest.

Who lives under and inside? Who hides within? Where do they sleep? Should they fear the things that mow and plow? How do they avoid them? How often are they encountered by anything at all? Farm house, horses, wooden barn, grass, grass, grass, lonely tree, grass, grass, grass, grass.