

TWO POEMS BY E. D. BLODGETT

Totem for Emily Carr

She sits, autumn falling at her feet,
old season, old feet. She sits,
eyes fixed in autumn, leaf dust
sifting: I want to touch her death, to walk
through leaves decaying, the aura of dust
breathing the air almost giving voice.
She sits, her face of no end speaking

into dust, her face of slow inflection
about to become sign, forgetting, turned
back, place where words collapse. Where
is the death I had to touch, and where am I,
a place in autumn, my back against the sea
and friends lost on the strange shores walking
over sand, the huge wall of forest

shut before my eyes? What is it for,
this green abyss of speech, impossible
losing, mute raven compelling what
praise? Even my fingers refuse reply,
unwilling to touch the air, alphabets
and what they spelled adrift, to pass sign
after sign no sooner seen within the air

than gone, giving up, history lost
at sea. I fear to say "open", to ask
"where", to see direction disappear,
your face rifting from leaf to dust, to turn
unmoved, no north, the great sea I crossed
falling in, the earth dry, nowhere
left to move, all horizon turned

to sand. What kind of ending is all this,
the stories that we knew unravelled,
a face reversed, a language looking back
to find its letter *a*, to undeclare,
elegies losing, to exhale all,
the air breathing, about to say "ho-
liness" and stopped short of saying more

than o breath turning round itself,
fish almost appearing, nothing yet
revealed, the air unfathoming?
Who would be there to see the rain fall,
to read the terrible thrust of green, her face
of no outside, raven decaying, raven
become tree, taking breath away?

After A. J. Casson

What Ontario is this — alone
they all walk to our left, gazing
somewhere we have yet to see: a storm
falling through the north, someone gone,
perhaps at other yards to see still
others gazing left? How small to be

alone, Ontario squared, and someone out
of sight, gazing at us, puzzled that we
are not beneath a sky, no clouds
that stop against a frame, but somewhere enclosed,
not speaking, unconcerned with storms
we sit. Consider seasons into angles passing,

sides unseen so long that absence walks
beside them going nowhere — I forgot
their not being there, as storms without
wind. What did not pass is all they see —
absence of uncertain shape, surprised,
left behind the way pots of dead

flowers stand, giving no sign.
He tries to frame a question, the man I see,
to ask: 'What do you see that moves somewhere,
unconcerned with the edge of things, beyond
the censure of sky? Is it how flowers look,
the air turned to colour, some so blue

there is no end to where they are?' But what
absence speaks? Absence is an air to touch,
surrounding your hand with old dust, and gone
it is all over — something you might store
apart, Ontarios saying, 'No!' A shelf
closed in the sun, only corners left.