

Lawren Harris's  
Athabasca Valley, Jasper

*Expressing soul* claims the catalogue—  
and what is that but creating it?

In a single shattered tree  
that like a broken dart  
centres Athabasca's peaks—  
that old Romantic image,  
the single suffering tree,  
stubborn tree  
foregrounded . . .

Consigned to middle distance  
smooth complete firs  
cannot compete, none worthy  
to stand alone and apart:  
only a broken shaft  
fits a sense of soul.

So, standing before  
hard mountains' bland backdrop,  
we find soul-self in wood  
splintered by time and frost.

*Owens Art Gallery, 1992*

MICHAEL THORPE