

## Excerpt from *Siteseeing*

### Ariel Gordon and Brenda Schmidt

Between February 2021 and March 2022, Ariel Gordon and Brenda Schmidt wrote a collaborative poetry manuscript, formatted like a call and response. Ariel intended to write about urban Manitoba, the city and its trees, and Brenda was to write about rural Saskatchewan and birds. Over the course of the year, the matter of place took over and the intentions branched and flew apart. They both wrote birds and trees but also moose and mushrooms, pronghorns and wild turkeys, and people making their way through it all. They wrote climate as it was manifested in drought-stressed trees and stunted crops covered in grasshoppers, in wildfires and wildfire smoke hanging over the prairies. They wrote home as they found it.

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The goldenrod takes gold  
in the floor routine.  
I am floored

by how much it has spread  
in spite of the drought.  
Everything else is suffering.

Crickets cricket at my feet,  
cricket in the pasture  
where a cow lets out a moo.

A sad moo. No bull this year.  
The cow is a cull soon  
headed to market. I think

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it knows. The herd of culls  
grazes, their calves sucking,  
bunting. The cows look tired.

The pasture looks tired.  
I am too. I want the gold  
to mean something.

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I want it all to mean  
something, the flooding/drought  
of end times. On the mountain

yesterday, we heard people  
yippling like coyotes, the landscape  
otherwise empty,

& noticed how pristine  
our windshield was. Time  
was, a drive across

the prairies meant a wriggling  
horizon of horror.  
Strange, but I miss it. I miss

July thunderstorms like  
a diminishing aunt  
I haven't seen in two years.

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These poems appear in *Siteseeing: Writing nature & climate across the prairies*, published by At Bay Press in fall 2023.