

FENCE

Tim Cresswell was born in Cambridge in 1965 but didn't stay there long. Since then he has travelled, first as part of an Air Force family and then as a student and academic. As a geographer he is the author of five books on place, mobility and other key ideas in geographic thought. From 2006 to 2013 he was Professor of Human Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London, where he also completed a PhD in Creative Writing. Tim lives with his wife and three children in Boston where he is Professor of History and International Affairs at Northeastern University. His first collection, *Soil*, was published in 2013.

ALSO BY TIM CRESSWELL

POETRY

Soil (Penned in the Margins, 2013)

CRITICAL WORKS

Place: An Introduction (Blackwell, 2014)

Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction (Blackwell, 2013)

On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World
(Routledge, 2006)

The Tramp in America (Reaktion, 2001)

In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression
(University of Minnesota, 1996)

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'The North is one vast, massive, glorious corruption
of rock and language.'

Lorine Niedecker, *Lake Superior*

Fence

i

Post

Post

Post

Post

Post

Post

Post

ii

we stand semi-circled staring
at rust red metal poles spaced
in regular intervals
along an Arctic beach
hip-height unconnected
separating us from
the nothing-in-particular beyond
strewn rocks
 scattered
 haphazard
grey red black boulders in a shallow rise
80 degrees north
like Franz Joseph Land Nunavut
protecting what from us
or us from

iii

Spitzbergen north
further than the Samoieds
than Siberia Nova Sembla
the agitated sea bristling
mountains cracked split
waves spit fury against granite capes
islands of ice broke open
echoes of musket shot reports
wind-raised snow columns hoarse moanings
a choir from the old world
ushers in the new

July 31st 1838

iv

we arrived at the northernmost airport
with year round scheduled flights
strolled the northernmost settlement
with over a thousand souls
home of the northernmost blues festival
passed the northernmost church
took cash from the northernmost ATM
sent postcards from the northernmost post office
ate from the northernmost kebab van run by an
asylum seeker from Iran
in rolling seas
eighty degrees north
we held the northernmost disco
on the *Noorderlicht*
dancing to Talking Heads

now the northernmost fence

V

how did I get here
two flights touched

down in Tromsø a red boat
fore cabin fell

over and over
seasick travelworn

frayed at the edges
almost not moving

eighty degrees north
no land nor stars

I travelled
to the ends of the

vi

my dear brother
like everyone you wonder
how I undertake
this great project when you
see me start with such fear

the interest in my story will grow
as I reach the high latitudes of
Old Europe my arrival will benefit
from the merit of originality
being the only woman who
has undertaken such a journey

here's our route

Holland Hamburg Denmark Sweden
Western Norway Christiania Trondheim
the North Cape and finally Spitzbergen

if it please God

June (?) 1838