

A load of fence posts

by [Jane Zwart](#) in the [August 7, 2007](#) issue

In this painting, on a wagon's perch, a man,
reins invisible on his lap and his face a smudge
of umber, further tarnished by the turkey red
that day remains on dusk. And around him,
the hauler of fence posts, a dark outline, waxy
as the outline of a child's less practiced hand.
Through the body's black trace glows a little
of the background: the going sun, its rusty flare.

Where it all seems to be this way, a little insubstantial
around the edges, perhaps either will suffice
to weigh us down: a load of fence posts
to rut us into the snow and earth on the soft road home
or the knowledge that we are not beautiful—
at best our clothes hang on us like an angel costume
made out of bed sheets hangs on a girl in a pageant,
her tinsel halo letting through the dark
of the stage curtain drawn behind her as she bows.

A Load of Fence Posts is a painting by Lawren Harris, a member of the Canadian Group of Seven. The painting can be found in the McMichael Gallery, near Toronto.