

Senior Division, Literary Nonfiction

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Where do you belong? (An excerpt)

Where do you belong?

Snow is falling as I enter the rolling hills and steep turns of Gros Morne, travelling north to St. Anthony. It's Sunday and the plows are in no hurry to clear the accumulation.

Soon the road devolves into a twin strip of black pavement cleared by the passing tires of vehicles straddling lanes. I pass a south-bound plow, snow arcing from its blades in a perfect semi-circle, the only one I would see for hours. My driving strategy evolves, and I keep one set of tires in the plowed section of the other lane, countering the pull of slush on my steering from the unplowed northbound lane. Despite the challenging driving, I feel myself begin to lean into the concentration required to navigate the conditions, to enjoy the singular focus required.

... The communities slip by like hatchmarks as I draw closer, clusters of houses on one side, yawning ocean on the other, yellow centre line pulling me to the next hamlet and then the next. "What if I belonged here" I wonder sometimes while passing through a village, borrowing a Newfoundland phrase that asks in which community someone was born, "or, here?" I know where I am from, and where I have lived, I think--but it has taken me a lifetime to find where I belong.