

The Little Towns of Bethlehem

For unto us in Aklavik is born a child, in Attawapiskat,
Gaspé, Cornerbrook Newfoundland. And a son is
given, in Westaskiwin, Bella Coola, Flin Flon.

And the future of the whole earth is placed upon the
shoulders of the daughter of Tuktoyaktuk, Tignish,
Swan Lake.

And the place of their birth is called Vermilion,
Temiskaming, Nain, Picture Butte.

An angel of the Lord appears in the night sky over
Rankin Inlet, over Iqaluit, saying:

This shall be the sign: you will find the babe wrapped
in cast-off flannel, lying on a bed of straw, in Esther,
Alberta, in a winter feeding stall, an open boxcar,
outside Kindersley, Saskatchewan.

And sure, several hours north from Hogg's Hollow, just
this side of Englehart, you see one, sleeping in its
mother's arms on the soft shoulder, where their car
broke down.

And the dark highway shines imperishable life, while
helping them beneath these northern lights and driving
on, through Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Hearst, past
Nipigon, and on to the little town of Emo, Rainy River
Region,

and least among the little dots that lie scattered as
stars and litter the map of Northwest Ontario, where
they're expecting you, as in so many other of these
least likely dots this expectation also is; in Miniota,
Pickle Lake, Ohsweken, Glace Bay.

For unto us. For into all, this night is born a child, this
night bearing each, and the places of their birth, and
nativity is given every name.

—©John Terpstra, Excerpted from *Two or Three Guitars: Selected Poems*. Published by
Gaspereau Press, 2006.