

Winter Sonnets *by G. H. Mosson*

Winter Still Life

Leaves of grass slumber all day in ice.
Wood skeletons crackle atop rooftops.
Pines are stucco'd in cubes of crystal.
A willow is freighted with glass wires.
Nothing moves until twilight ignites
over and over this still-birth of ice,
as a boy walks his mutt and yearns
for unborn poetry he burns to forge.
Armored branches unleash ice-chinks;
pitch-black arrives to bursting chimes.
Only the breakage flashes this ice-world
is passage. Frigid winds will slacken,
releasing trees from their encasement
to rustle beneath January's low sun.

Hidden Sun

As earth slips this metal settlement
toward nuclear fire, its residents unclam
from dreams, while a dome of mucus
clings above the trees. People ping
to consciousness—sparks in darkness.
Houses globe yellow. Causeways dawn.
Cars slosh through tubulars of fog,
seeking commerce, spraying run-off,
sloughing last night to make it new.
Streets of mop water—world is wombed.
Yet the blocked sky is pregnant with
iridescence. Sun looms, strobes stronger.
The swaddling of gray shatters to
plates of puff. Now, behind white hills:
standing wave of blue slabs bluing.

First Snowfall

An old Victorian towers over
its court of evergreens, and a curved road
where cars blow through—so stately as wind
ushers leaves to dirt. But when the household
awoke to snowfall, pines were wreathed in
white staccato, overarched by blue ice.
In snow-clothed dawn, none could recall their world.
So in the white-out of sudden tundra,
driveways are culled, families forge snowmen.
Loners trek drifts. Crows gyre.
Low snow moves. And then—in the dusk quietude—
a million miniature pat-downs. By my door
are bird-prints where

stairs of ice boa around

a blade of grass

striving toward light.

Burial of Snow Storms

Snowstorms machine-gun humans into homes,
entomb them with just awareness of the world.
They rise to their tasks, but the bombardment
continues. At night, each recycles their blocked day,
and in dream, lives bloom. At 2 a.m., a sunflower
flops to earth, sowing secrets
people must forget. Storms shake walls,
swaying humans like the ocean mothers ferns.
On the third night, it just slurs. Early dawn risers
toe doorsteps, licking lips, tasting
a crisp cool core of cut quartz.
This exotic oxygen from afar
beads on the tongue like something clean.
Winds rise contrary. Houses are gardens.

Transformation at Night

Onslaught of ice storms sledge into evening,
shedding shards in scythe-sweeps slicing skins.
Trees squirrel essences to a still-point,
lining the streets—black calligraphies—
as whirls of white waterfall upon them,
and they are gone. A wind arcs, howls
hoarfrost: It spears the ground, geysering
upward, then hovers as snowy spinning fists,
but strands disband revealing a breeze.
Night withdraws to the level of houses,
releasing a black aerosol, which feathers onto
combs of barren trees smoking to color
out of the receding void. When it came to light,
people peeled back doors and smelt mint.

Ice and Light

Ice-sheathed streets catch the pre-dawn.
It flickers through like schools of minnows,
through the calculus of an industrial city,
houses so empty as people puddle in dream.
Nightwind had carved curbside snowdrifts
into icy cradles, which cup to brittle cliffs
splintered on top. A rising sun hits these tips,
vivifying pinnacles to constellation.
At the level of doorsteps is a light-web
tight as concentration, fine as guitar
notes. Then the city yearns into a vast
exhale of gold. Runners shoe-up. But
for one last instant, streets are pierced by
a god charioteering earth to the world.

February Melting

I was astonished by fat roles of mud,
black and fertile as slippery shit. Vines
of ivy threaded it. Spades of olive slit
the frosted, runny slope and surfaced
with the glow of fireflies. An exodus
of thriving life revealed passion beneath months
of mute, cold white. Each leaf unscrolled
a topography of that drive: burst from seed,
surging as vine, risen to testify
on a bed of black sludge, rich as genitals,
glinting like coin. What must steam beneath ice. . . .
We have been wrong about flowering and deflowering.
None have even glimpsed the precoming.
Astronomers have yet to see the beginning.

Winter Rainfall

As snowflakes slush to raindrops, people pause
on corners, watching liquid bullets puncture
miniature mountains of snow. Some listen to
succession of incisions ensue
secession of winter's chrysalis.
It busts. Cars wheel out and chomp it up.
Shoppers swarm and stomp the inky gunk.
We crush the world to recognize it.
Hillocks slacken to scaffolds of ice-bars;
water within gushes back and forth.
Ice pipes untaut—crash to puddles of
stacked shards. At dusk, jays brook
this glittering marsh, reinhabiting sunset;
they pause on platinum, cratered with diamonds.

The Larger World

Jason walks through a fine fuzz of spruces
on a membrane of slim aquatic explosions,
air a booze of dreaming amoebas misting
white and blue; and soon his lungs ingest
the svelte pelt of chilled oxygen, and he's
pulled into raindrops rushing. All around
arises a swift silent multitude, sounding
solely through collision—and he listens
to vast echoes of distance within this
brash clash of raining, wonders why
he's walking to anything, stops, then feels
so cold he's shivering. Wet oblongs crash
on a vegetable bed primed to attention as
Douglas Firs pant *Douglas Fir Douglas Fir*. . . .

About:

These nine winter sonnets were written in the middle 1990s and revised toward the end, then rested mostly, until publication in Season of Flowers and Dust (Goose River Press, 2008).

The book is currently out of print, yet available via used book stores and through the author's stash of copies. Goose River Press is based in Maine, and Mosson is grateful for their support of this book.

G. H. Mosson, author, has published five additional books through 2025, and has an online Web site at www.ghmosson.com. After leaving Oregon in 2000, followed by a stint in D.C., he moved to Baltimore City in 2003, and to date, lives in Maryland.