

CANTO 1

I was the shadow of the waxwing slain
By the false azure in the windowpane;
I was the smudge of ashen fluff--and I
Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.
And from the inside, too, I'd duplicate
Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate:
Uncurtaining the night, I'd let dark glass
Hang all the furniture above the grass,
And how delightful when a fall of snow
Covered my glimpse of lawn and reached up so
As to make chair and bed exactly stand
Upon that snow, out in that crystal land!

Retake the falling snow: each drifting flake
Shapeless and slow, unsteady and opaque,
A dull dark white against the day's pale white
And abstract larches in the neutral light.
And then the gradual and dual blue
As night unites the viewer and the view,
And in the morning, diamonds of frost
Express amazement: Whose spurred feet have crossed
From left to right the blank page of the road?
Reading from left to right in winter's code:
A dot, an arrow pointing back; repeat:
Dot, arrow pointing back...A pheasant's feet!
Torquated beauty, sublimated grouse,
Finding your China right behind my house.
Was he in Sherlock Holmes, the fellow whose
Tracks pointed back when he reversed his shoes?

All colors made me happy: even gray.
My eyes were such that literally they
Took photographs. Whenever I'd permit,
Or, with a silent shiver, order it,
Whatever in my field of vision dwelt--
An indoor scene, hickory leaves, the svelte
Stilettoes of a frozen stillicide--
Was printed on my eyelids' nether side
Where it would tarry for an hour or two,
And while this lasted all I had to do
Was close my eyes to reproduce the leaves,
Or indoor scene, or trophies of the eaves.

I cannot understand why from the lake
I could make out our front porch when I'd take
Lake Road to school, whilst now, although no tree
Has intervened, I look but fail to see
Even the roof. Maybe some quirk in space