

Snow Signs

by Charles Tomlinson



They say it is waiting for more, the snow
Shrunk up to the shadow-line of walls
In an arctic smouldering, an unclean salt,
And will not go until the frost returns
Sharpening the stars, and the fresh snow falls
Piling its drifts in scallops, furls. I say
Snow has left its own white geometry
To measure out for the eye the way
The land may lie where a too cursory reading
Discovers only dip and incline leading
To incline, dip, and misses the fortuitous
Full variety a hillside spreads for us:
It is written here in sign and exclamation,
Touched-in contour and chalk-followed fold,
Lines and circles finding their completion
In figures less certain, figures that yet take hold
On features that would stay hidden but for them:
Walking, we waken these at every turn,
Waken ourselves, so that our walking seems
To rouse some massive sleeper out of winter dreams
Whose stretching startles the whole land into life,
As if it were us the cold, keen signs were seeking
To pleasure and remeasure, repossess
With a sense in the gathered coldness of heat and height.
Well, if it's for more the snow is waiting
To claim back into disguise overnight,
As though it were promising a protection
From all it has transfigured, scored and bared,
Now we shall know the force of what resurrection
Outwaits the simplification of the snow.

