

NARRATIVE IN WHITE

Arctic people have hundreds of words for snow--
nuances of texture, depth, duration.

My middle America snow is deep chalk dust,
prairie pages of the she-wind's diary.
She doodles idly, sometimes erases her secrets,
terracing, pot-holing, building dunes.

An old metaphor, the snow as an open scroll
for a poet's musings. But this is not my tale.
A used quill lies on the river bank
where mallards write their journals
in precise graphics.
A raccoon's symmetrical syllables run bias
from pine margin to margin. Varied versions
of blue and gray underline each entry.

I trace fox printing half a mile. The fox
hunts and pecks, rhythmically punctuating
with his nose. The theme, ancient
as the mouse, is polished, proofed,
sentimental quotations deleted.

The next page bears elongated strokes,
emphatic periods of a cottontail.
Over here-- a sudden cursive shift,
then wider spaces between its dashes. I expect
the paragraph to be followed by the fox.

The plot changes. Hawk wings interject
a brief sweeping signature.
In an uneven indentation
the rabbit's sentence ends abruptly.

I retrace my rough scrawl
across February's broad shining sheets,
pondering how many small dramas my eyes missed.
Trying to recall the Inuit word for bloody snow.