**Midwinter poetry**

**Mel Holmes Feb 2012 five pm, midwinter**

five pm, mid-winter  
  
i thank Sky for taking sweet time.  
Sky sets her thumb on the light-switch of the land.  
she stands still, she waits.  
for the hour, she meditates   
on her day.   
Sky hopes her skin   
becomes verdigris the next day, not grey, but  
verdigris to clothe nude trees. Or perhaps she will   
hurt soon— Sky scars in   
rainbows. Her change of thought: the small folks who have traveled   
through her this day. She wonders where  
they all  
        go.   
  
Open your eyes,  
do you hear Sky’s mute call?  
in her meditation, hour of magic, all  
wakes.  
  
on the earth, photographers peer from their windows,   
then rush through their doors to catch Sky’s dancing gleams,  
beams flash through the tip-top’s of the Sugar Maple family,  
their shadows splatter onto pot-hole streets.   
Sky brushes her grass and her roads with paint of a gold hue,   
fresh Rorschach tests while her thoughts try to rest.  
  
i spot a leaf sleeping in the street, deep wine and apricot,   
twisted from months away from its Mother  
the wind levitates the leaf—lightly—and the sun   
creates a squirrel of it, he climbs the tree, and scrambles over  
to me. in short squeaks, he explains his political theory,  
“why do you let your people let a few rich folks control   
all others? why don’t you follow me   
into the woods?”

he grabs my skirt with his sweet little paws  
but i look up and notice the darkness,  
i look down and see only a leaf again.  
Sky’s savasana has ended,   
candles ignite in the houses, Sky and Sun crawl into bed.  
  
i’ll wait now for the selenian Sun, but i can’t rest my eyes. soon  
i will escape with my new friend.  
bittersweet magic: “the moment” lost in the sock drawer.   
  
five pm, midwinter  
  
the afternoon is reaching an end,  
Lady Sky decides when she wants to change for us.  
as the sun sets, she meditates.  
  
some call it the “magic hour”  
but how can you truly tell magic from reality?  
go outside and see.  
  
radiant beams do the tango on the trees  
(a leaf in the street becomes a squirrel as my eye blinks)  
a squirrel who runs straight up to me.  
  
“get outta the system while you can!”  
he squeaks, then nods at me to follow his path, another blink  
  
the sky darkens, the squirrel disappears.

**TinyATuin Nov 2016 Midwinter**

Melodies of frozen harp,  
                          Igniting the morning sky,  
         when the Day comes, cold and sharp,  
        played by Wind across the plains,  
               harsh, Incisive, angry, biting  
             like the Northern wolves fighting,  
desperate with Trembling hunger  
                snarls Echoing, blood on snow  
                           Red on white - the winter woe.

**T. S. Eliot - Four Quartets 4: Little Gidding (movements 1 & V)**

Midwinter spring is its own season  
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,  
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.  
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,  
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,  
In windless cold that is the heart’s heat,  
Reflecting in a watery mirror  
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.  
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,  
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire  
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing  
The soul’s sap quivers. There is no earth smell  
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time  
But not in time’s covenant. Now the hedgerow  
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom  
Of snow, a bloom more sudden  
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,  
Not in the scheme of generation.  
Where is the summer, the unimaginable  
Zero summer?  
  
              If you came this way,  
Taking the route you would be likely to take  
From the place you would be likely to come from,  
If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges  
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness.  
It would be the same at the end of the journey,  
If you came at night like a broken king,  
If you came by day not knowing what you came for,  
It would be the same, when you leave the rough road  
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull facade  
And the tombstone. And what you thought you came for  
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning  
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled  
If at all. Either you had no purpose  
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured  
And is altered in fulfilment. There are other places  
Which also are the world’s end, some at the sea jaws,  
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city—  
But this is the nearest, in place and time,  
Now and in England.  
  
              If you came this way,  
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,  
At any time or at any season,  
It would always be the same: you would have to put off  
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,  
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.  
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead: the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.  
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment  
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make and end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from. And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph. And any action  
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea’s throat  
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.  
We die with the dying:  
See, they depart, and we go with them.  
We are born with the dead:  
See, they return, and bring us with them.  
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
Are of equal duration. A people without history  
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
On a winter’s afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.  
  
With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling  
  
We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.