

Mother in New-Fallen Snow

Amid dusty realities
The good lady bundled up, sallied into the drift.
Look at her. Graceful agile
Bright soul in the business of making a parlor
Where other people can hear nothing, a part of the garden,
The very far corner, pure sweet half-trodden. The mother,
She listened to the bright-cheeked hum happy consent
Light wreaths of snow shining bits of ice.

You must understand
Never before would she catch a word.
All winter long warm milk, grave wholesome silence.
But this snow-kissed garden, the parlor, was about to summon
One voice that of a girl the runaway this lady
Once could have been.

That flimsy gown those thin slippers
Beau-ti-ful bleak her.
There is something in faith in what we call miracle
Clear as crystal wonderstruck an icicle in the moonlight
She was gazing at it shaking
Triumphing in the mischief.

The snow parlor was flesh blood
Nothing anything everything.
Oh possibility: come.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“Mother in New-Fallen Snow” was created from “The Snow-Image: A Childish Miracle” in *The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1852). About the poem and the process of composing it, Lesley Finn writes:

My poem arose from a sequential erasure of the full text of “The Snow-Image: A Childish Miracle.” The composition process was intuitive and willfully subversive: I read the piece, in which all characters except the mother leave the house and go into the snow; she seemed unnecessarily trapped to me. I read through again, choosing words that had a gravitational pull, and after a few passes a story of motherhood quite different from that of Hawthorne’s narrative took shape. From the start of the title through the last line I kept the words in the order they appear in the original text, only altering the punctuation and capitalization.

Lesley Finn’s work has appeared in *Atticus Review*, *Glint Literary Journal*, *CALYX*, *Jellyfish Review*, *phoebe*, and elsewhere. She lives in Connecticut and can be found online at lesleyfinn.com.

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