

Winter Paints Nelson County

by Swanson Tudor

It was more than just taste
more than a point of view
and oil and pigment
that painted a storefront church:
a box with a cross in a vacant lot
that welcomed desperation, faith
and imagination.

You wrote me about a memory
you sat in an unlit bedroom
in your grandmother's house
the snow falling
I could see your voice but
not into the buildings
you put down on rough cloth

The empty beer joint parking lots
and deserted clapboard houses
sagging into lonely lantern lit
shacks; a sign-post moon hanging
in the night sky lights the icy crystal
coat on a coal train parked upon a ridge.

On a quiet day, a cushion of soft snow
under your feet - that familiar darkness
gathered up around you as the sheet
tightened in the wooden frame.
A stretcher to carry what lingers
in cadmium doors and indigo windows.

Sometimes, cracking brittle and distant
down a phone line in the night
we can see them together.
An old tenderness grown coarse
like specks of cotton and hemp.

