

The Culture of Snowmen

from *Tokyo Butter*
by Thylas Moss

Obviously, they are frozen manna men

except that they don't come to earth
that way: famine relief

out of the sky like boxes of pure grain shot to pieces.

There are many metaphors useful
when avoiding confrontations with what blown up men are like

since avoiding blown up men is not allowed
by men, a rule of asserting possibility, in the range
of what becomes necessary.

So there is the totem of men of snow,
a sacred short life respected by great winds
like the Williwaw that can separate snow
men into billions of cold factors, lift each one
so that each cell flies like an insect, swarm-shroud
of white locusts ascending into the crop of clouds
either succeeding up there
or falling dead-white back to earth.

It's just that the Williwaw can pick those snow men apart

and seem to give them what men usually mean by grace,
the men who must be disassembled by insects and bacteria
or burned in order to rise from the factory of body.

Snowmen experience no reentry tussle
as did historic astronauts

whose reentry vessels were more like killer meteors
than like snowflakes that seem to favor matter transfer:

reduction to atoms reassembled into banks
and into men after arrival,

though of the available men
astronauts are the men snowmen most resemble,

though they're much more like Styrofoam insects:

three spheres: head, abdomen, thorax
also made by men mostly in their youth
wavering around the prime of life

science of making duplicates, substitutes, gods

of ourselves, Frosty the Snowman alive
then melting like any other immortal aspiration.
Vexation is much more solid, those stick arms
that are stakes crisscrossing the heart

of snow

only; had there been any other variety of heart, the arms
would have impaled it.

The melt of them, the puddles
that say *like you real men we too are mostly water*

though how little that uplifts and comforts

when men have watched their jealousies come
alive, the substance of snowmen each a particular

separate parachute at first
falling, then gathering into a billion-fold collection
that has common purpose, function:

scarecrows caught in personal avalanches
enlarging avalanches where

The fall of flesh has meant burnings, crimes
and sanctioned punishments.

The fall has not improved the men that fell
even though they arose

for it is nothing to get up from knees
to conclude contrition

to become human

and enter the caves, start fires, the industry
of making men

from animal experiments, the generosity
of pigs, even the pancreas

also of Chinese hamsters to which men are indebted
as men evidently are supposed to be
since most are in debt, sinking

except that since we sink in space,
the hell below is above earthly orientation too:

the squall of snow proceeds from that.

Snow drifts down
of geese, crazed ones devising ways to pluck with fervor

and madness, molt blizzards and hazards
yet for all the frenzy, nothing binds
the down that warms, handfuls

don't become molt-balls
and don't melt with the snowmen they may have decorated:
the down as fill, as patch when winter
misbehaves, runamuck temperature way up
when winter should remain authentic
down time:

t

emperature, snow, prices of revealing
swim suits falling, light falling back, dark's portion
larger, chopped wood going up in flame, distant
snowman with marshmallows on his arm-sticks,
blackening edges like paper early in its burn,
and it's all hickory air, the scent thick
in everything, almost a third dimension: new skin

as if to replace what burns away.

As if to supply the flavor of being involved.

Snow also fills gaps, ground extends whitely
to the windows, pitched roof covered with uneven blank pages
glistens while I wait for snow to fall solid, without space
between, interlocked plates, gear flakes

before the landing resolves into mishmash
that is shoveled, pushed, plowed, skied.

There are certain bears, certain snow leopards, cranes,
certain albinos and mutant colorless things
(clear as bells)
that could get lost in the substantial bellies

of gluttonous avalanches of snowmen

were it not for the evidence of hooves, eyes, tongues:

the rules of digestion, the rules of awareness,
the rules of entry and exit, rules of cohabitation,
rules of forensic investigation

that work because nothing is silent, everything has markers,
tracers, echoes as vestiges of vespers, existence is territorial

by nature

snowmen tend not to budge
once they become men:

They remain men until the melt
down or seemingly more cruel and deliberate demolition.

Though men are being made, no qualifications
are required of the makers,
and there are no requirements for the product
for which there is no quality control

except the motives of the maker
whose like or dislike of snow cones
could be either detriment or advantage
for either the maker or the snowman:

the making of anything includes the making of dilemma.

Is the universe parallel, curved, distorted
like a perfect arrow that doesn't exist beyond theory
trying to nip everything

so that truth can't ever meet folly, each traveling
uninterrupted in opposite directions, each claiming

to move from past to future, one flat, one inflating
and sagging like a saddle? Is it any of these?

The birth of snowmen is nearly always at home.
The death of snowmen is nearly always at home.

They usually don't live long enough to have birthday
parties. In places of permanent ice, men aren't made

with the gusto and necessity of makers who must handle
more radical temperature fluctuations

though men everywhere make angels often
called other things until metaphor makes angel possible
and anything else possible,

and there is really no other way
that anything can be possible,
especially astonishing reversals.

When they threw snowballs at me
before they were the men they would be,

assured by the throwing;

when in their gloved hands
snow became rounded cooperation,

in sun seemed polished
as the palmed asteroid-ettes arced toward me
full of trajectory,

I was in the middle of the making of universe
yet could not grab

planets, comets, whizzing by, a snowball
becoming spiral galaxy when it flattened

when it encountered my face, and adjusted
to the curvature of that space

that genius had to understand, before anyone else could,

the theoretical being,
the snowmen out cold

warming up to an idea.