**The Snow Man**

One must have a mind of winter

To regard the frost and the boughs

Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time

To behold the junipers shagged with ice,

The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think

Of any misery in the sound of the wind,

In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land

Full of the same wind

That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,

And, nothing himself, beholds

Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

—Wallace Stevens

**Moorland**

It is beautiful and still;  
 the air rarefied  
as the interior of a cathedral

expecting a presence. It is where, also,  
 the harrier occurs,  
materialising from nothing, snow-

soft, but with claws of fire,  
 quartering the bare earth  
for the prey that escapes it;

hovering over the incipient  
 scream, here a moment, then  
not here, like my belief in God.

—R. S. Thomas

**Euridice Saved**

I am filled with all things seen

for the last time. He lays with me gently

in the unfamiliar house and kisses me. When he holds

my head in his hands and arms, I dream of the real world.

I look from the mirror to the light on the floor.

I am happy with him eating bread and coffee.

This morning when I took off my shirt to bathe,

I noticed I held it in the air before me

for some time. I looked at it without perception.

When I let it fall, it did not make a noise.

Art, I was thinking, is the imitation of what

we called nothing when we lived on the earth.

—Linda Gregg

**Nothing Getting Past**

If life is a

thin film

sandwiched

between twin

immensities

of nothing,

you get the best

taste of this

out west in

the open country

where a keen

could mean the

double scrape

of nothing almost

touching nothing

or the wind

coming through

dry grass. In

either case it’s

pretty close

to nothing

getting past.

—Kay Ryan

**Nothing For It**

Your glassy wind breaks on a shoutless shore and stirs around  
                                                                                  the rose.

   Lo how  
         before a great snow,  
before the gliding emptiness of the night coming on us,  
   our lanterns throw  
         shapes of old companions  
and  
   a cold pause after.  
         What knife skinned off  
            that hour.

            Sank the buoys.  
         Blows on what was our house.  
Nothing for it just row.

—Anne Carson

**That Greater Than Which Nothing**

Even the plenitude is tired of the magnanimous, disciplined,  
     beached eye in  
its thrall. Even the accuracy  
is tired—the assimilation tired—  
of entering the mind.  
The reader is tired.  
I am so very tired.  
Whom will this worry henceforth—radiant striation of hall-light on  
     pillowcase—  
who will receive it—  
couch, table, half-open drawer, the granulated dark in it,  
the cup, the three glasses—stupefying promises we are supposed to  
     receive—  
The glance? braiding and braiding the many promises of vision?  
The glance, however exiled, wanting nonetheless only to come full term  
     into the absolute  
orphanhood? *Do you really want to die?*  
Do you not maybe want to *sleep it off,* this time, again?  
Nothing moves but the cloth as you breathe.  
Don’t look up at the four corners—the four conquering

     corners—  
for the shape of mercy. It swarms.  
It composes gray-eyed walls on which the trapped light plays  
     like fumes off  
kerosene—light, light everywhere, beckoning with its epic self-  
     sameness—  
all round you, roaming, rough in your shoulders, sparkling,  
regrouping—grain by grain, no oases, no conversation—  
asking each granulated breath your deep sleep  
     blossoms  
to yield to it, to marry up—  
and other dimensions—sandy, windy—exact—unincarnate—  
     tireless dimensions—  
metamorphic yet unpliant—  
now sparkling, sparkling—it’s the light, you can’t keep it out,  
room 363,  
its century of wide-eyed wing-work splashing  
     hither and thither like graffiti  
over the featurelessness—distending—distending the nature of  
the erasure—merciless in its lightheartedness

in which the living is forgotten to be living—

—Jorie Graham