

## SANDY SHREVE

### Snow Sestina

*for Maggie Benston*

The mountain doffs its cap of cloud  
to the dazzling art of snow  
and standing here with all this in my eyes  
I breathe in several degrees below  
zero, up to my knees in powder  
a breeze caressing my face

I cannot begin to fill my eyes  
with the clarity of winter air                      Here below  
the sudden frescoes of snow  
miles distant, I feel face to face  
with those sweeping strokes of powder  
paintings, fallen from a cloud

This morning sounds like powder  
floating in the air    Just below  
the stillness of a willow cloaked in snow  
I bend to form an angel out of cloud  
that's landed here to cool my face  
and tantalize my eyes

It sparkles crystalline, this eau de snow  
now melting on my mitten, scents my face  
the one perfume I'll wear, a dab of cloud  
here, on my forehead, neck and just below  
each ear, each touch as soft as powder  
puffs, swift as the blink of eyes

The beauty of geometry in snow  
is like a poem and the grin on your face  
when I said I loved the math in words—cloud  
covered thoughts unveiled like equations, eyes  
opened to shifting solutions, below  
above and around each phrase, whimsical as powder

in a wind, images and ideas to create, then face  
and balance as best I can—the way snow  
can be both flurry and blizzard, powder  
and firm, a pleasure to the eyes  
and agony for skin, glowering in a pewter cloud  
while lighting up night on the ground below

The mountains flaunt white powder, while below  
city dwellers' eyes are on the sky, dread any cloud  
that delivers more snow than we know how to face

*Sandy Shreve grew up in Sackville, New Brunswick. She is the Departmental Assistant for Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. This poem is from her recently published collection Bewildered Rituals (Polestar Press, 1992)*