

Maralee Gerke

Winter Sheep

Sheep in bulky blankets
Of greasy waterproof wool
Wander on slender black legs,
Gnawing their way through
The waterless pastures of winter,
Puffing warm breath into
Cold air, clouds as round
As their thickset bodies.

Apples, the last of the season,
Shine like puckered garnets on
Turn-of-the-century trees.
In winter vestments
I swish against the parched
Weeds and grass,
The sun warm on my face,
My feet cold in the shadows.

I touch the
Knobby, woolly back of one sheep
And then another.
I burrow my fingers into the heavy
Fleece and bring them back,
Soft, lanolined, and musky
With the smell of winter sheep.