

# Poustinia

*Amy McCann*

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Say eyes are not the only  
eyes. Say others hide

clamped behind ribs.  
Skull-shod. Say fingerprint

whorls spiral into pupils. Focus  
on this. The world

husks itself. Dusts  
at a touch.

The scene goes  
black as the body

inside skin—the hidden halls,  
impossible engines.

You might enter  
your desert, the chalky scree

of soul, and stay  
until you can stand  
it. If you don't

stop crying,  
high grass will mask  
the sand. But thirst

is no myth: Who will wet  
your mouth, if you can find

no eyes, no water?

# "God Exists"\*

*Amy McCann*

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\*after Yusef Komunyakaa's "Corrigenda"

I take it back.  
The dark words my thumb traced  
  
across your skin, that ascending  
tenet of faith in ink. The woman  
  
inscribed against you on the bed?  
Forget it, you'll never pluck a wife  
  
from some criminal lineup  
of bridesmaids. She won't be the one  
  
with a drooling bouquet,  
a Midwestern inflection.  
  
I haven't seen an oak tree since  
Wisconsin, haven't held  
  
an acorn to your lips and said  
"remember." There's no one else  
  
to join us, you said, just Hallelujah  
and the laying on of hands. Our  
  
Father. Lay off. I never claimed  
I knew the names of children  
  
ringing Sunday bells, never said I'd felt a phantom  
pain in my chest where the Spirit once slept.  
  
If I did, if I have, you  
were my ghost, my neighbor, my god. I take it  
  
back. I'm no virgin, no star-crossed,  
poison-doused lover.  
I've left no limestone cairn  
at the edge of the frozen river.

# Snow Takes on the Town

*Amy McCann*

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I.

Tonight the snow can't stop  
touching the world, which is dark  
and wants to be held.

The bus driver on smoke break  
adds ash to flurries gathering at the curb;  
the hands of the hostess at the Uptown Grill  
get colder with each cat she accepts. The city  
quiets. Everyone's palms face up.

II.

She's at the window, holding half an orange  
and the other half is his. The yard's  
a long white pause, a page  
the sky worked all night to erase.  
They're not sorry; they're eating  
Christmas citrus shipped  
from technicolor Florida orchards.  
Her hands are luminous  
as she feeds him, as she opens  
her blouse, its buttons a sequence of stars  
releasing the lit field of her body.

III.

Sometimes it's too much to be covered  
by another. Walking the dog tonight,  
I want the sleeve of ice on the river  
to shatter. To let the water go. Flakes  
skate the uneven surface; the dog disappears  
and reappears from drifts. But the warehouses  
look clean, and each streetlight's transfigured  
by a pale corona as the snow delivers itself  
again and again, the white-robed  
word that burdens and ransoms us all.