

## White Seals

White seals the doom of surplus squirrels  
 vying now for an insufficiency of seeds  
 in yards power-vacuumed clean  
 of sustenance. The tails  
 of the smallest ones  
 are thinning fast;  
 night's scourge falls heaviest on these  
 wretches in threadbare quilts.  
 Imagine the trees'  
 crackling implacability by moonrise,  
 even their safest notches snarling cold  
 to gobble a nestling's strength.

We are told the North Pole's melted.

Somewhere beyond our sight, the walrus rolls its last  
 on a barren beach, soon to be engulfed.  
 A white fox prowls on a dwindling stretch of waste  
 as the sea of faith that Arnold heard a century back  
 ebbing off the naked shingles of the world  
 re-brims, its melancholy long withdrawing roar  
 urging now from the throat of bear and caribou  
 that speak for others lost. Only  
 listen  
 awhile to the names:  
 Great Auk, Deepwater Cisco, Longnose Dace,  
 Black-footed Ferret, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Gravel Chub—  
 syllables thinly holding the vanished  
 safe.

In the sun's first rays  
 we hobble across the icy driveway to the frosted car  
 and huddle trembling over turning wheels  
 past rigid road-kill,  
 grudging the heater's fifteen-minute latency,  
 permitting ourselves the luxury of wails  
 and a smug hankering for luscious fur  
 like white seals'.