

# Langland, Hunters in the Snow: Breughel

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## Hunters in the Snow: Brueghel

Joseph Langland

Quail and rabbit hunters with  
tawny hounds,  
Shadowless, out of late afternoon  
Trudge toward the neutral evening  
of indeterminate form  
Done with their blood-annunciated  
day  
Public dogs and all the passionless  
mongrels  
Through deep snow  
Trail their deliberate masters  
Descending from the upper village  
home in lowering light.  
Sooty lamps  
Glow in the stone-carved kitchens.

This is the fabulous hour of shape  
and form  
When Flemish children are gray-  
black-olive  
And green-dark-brown  
Scattered and skating informal  
figures  
On the mill ice pond.  
Moving in stillness  
A hunched dame struggles with her  
bundled sticks,  
Letting her evening's comfort  
cudgel her  
While she, like jug or wheel, like a  
wagon cart  
Walked by lazy oxen along the old  
snowlanes,

Pieter Brueghel, Hunters in the Snow  
(1565)

Oil on canvas, 46 inches x 63.75 inches.  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Creeps and crunches down the  
dusky street.  
High in the fire-red dooryard  
Half unhitched the sign of the Inn  
Hangs in wind  
Tipped to the pitch of the roof.  
Near it anonymous parents and  
peasant girl,  
Living like proverbs carved in the  
alehouse walls,  
Gather the country evening into  
their arms  
And lean to the glowing flames.

Now in the dimming distance fades  
The other village; across the valley  
Imperturbable Flemish cliffs and  
crag  
Vaguely advance, close in, loom  
Lost in nearness. Now  
The night-black raven perched in  
branching boughs  
Opens its early wing and slipping  
out  
Above the gray-green valley  
Weaves a net of slumber over the  
snow-capped homes.

. And now the church, and then the  
walls and roofs  
Of all the little houses are become  
Close kin to shadow with small  
lantern eyes.  
And now the bird of evening  
With shadows streaming down  
from its gliding wings  
Circles the neighboring hills  
Of Hertogenbosch, Brabant.

Darkness stalks the hunters,  
Slowly sliding down,  
Falling in beating rings and soft

diagonals.

Lodged in the vague vast valley the  
village sleeps.

See also:

[John Berryman's "Winter Landscape"](#)

[Walter de la Mare's "Brueghel's Winter"](#)

[William Carlos Williams' "Hunters in the Snow"](#)

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