

DOUGLAS WOODY WOODSUM

*Fourteener 322 (Thank You, Dear Lord, for This Long, Cold,  
Dark Time of Inwardness)*

Thank you, Dear Lord, for this long, cold, dark time of inwardness.  
To think of Christ's birth this time of year is to think of death:  
Doorstep pumpkins freeze, thaw, then freeze for good. Bare trees stiffen.  
The Queen Anne's lace sticks fork-like up from snow. The ducks  
And loons have left the iced-over lake in search of water.  
Summer color leaches from my skin: gin blossoms stare  
Back from the mirror. I walk less and must loosen my belt.

Some days the sun seems unable to lift itself, scudding  
Not far from the horizon in the clouds presaging sleet  
And freezing rain. It breaks through, briefly, but seems misshapen.  
There's a cross-cross here and a cross-cross there; here a cross  
There a cross, everywhere a cross-cross. Forgive me, Father,  
I mimic the chickadee's winter wit. I turn darkness—  
Three crows on a maple—into two robbers and your son.