1984

Returning in Winter

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Returning in Winter · Eric Pankey

after Czeslaw Milosz

Think what you will about this place where we have come—the light settled on gray silt, the creek bed choked with leaves, a fine mud, the clay of the bank tumbling in.

I cannot remember myself here before, now that it is winter and the snow begins to fall.

The paths are empty, smooth where no one has walked. Soon, eroded gullies will be drifted full of snow.

I could believe that without wind the tall dried grass would continue to lean away.

I could believe that in summer vines tangle around the unkept hedges, the red thorns and ripened berries lining the thin green limbs.

I could believe that, yes, I lived here once with you, instructed by nothing I would know enough to remember. I pull my coat around me and listen. There is the cold, the ice creaking in the trees. The clear sound of the world beyond forgiveness.

We were so wise then. We believed cruelty was weather, and could change.