

## 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.