

Winter

(in memory: CNHJ)

First light shook with ax-blows to the frozen pond,
and the geese called in guttural distress
as I chopped through to the still, black water.
All day the land gave over to thaw, and snow released the cabin,
softened and eased off the ridged tin roof in foundation-shaking crashes
until night when Orion whistled his dogs
behind clouds mottled like weathered rock,
then the farm sighed under the new storm
and silence returned like an old sorrow.

I wish that silence held some answer or passage
to forgetting. I would go to it
with its hesitant and dangerous tacks,
its seepage into night like shadows slipping bodies,
where it hangs like smoke,
drifts into itself as smoke will,
rises slow above trees
to the flat of the sky, rises and hangs
and, like sorrow, waits and will not fade.