

The Riverbank, Late Winter: Living North

Dixie Partridge

A lined calendar of empty trees
turns the cold
consolable. Even light this dim
is an invitation.
Evasions indoors have kept you
from the descending order of shadow:
river-walks that change
meaning . . . today a decoding
of sorrows and of seasons,
calling back births and celebrations
that began them, giving form
to this need to be mute.
And if you resist the rumor
that winter is a bad time for humans,
perhaps what's plain in dormancy and cold
will sprout the small, joyful detail
on its way to decay: the lime-tipped willow
brittle in this freeze
where the mind is drawn to mist
rising from the black of river water,
and the diligent senses can briefly
go blank
with the fresh force of stones
showing through an ice trace—
all those cushioned vowels in the snow.

DIXIE PARTRIDGE has published two collections of poetry: *Deer in the Haystacks* (Ahsahta Press, 1984) and *Watermark* (Saturday Press, 1990), which won the national Eileen W. Barnes award. Her work has appeared widely in anthologies and such journals as *Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Mid-West Quarterly*, *Commonweal*, *Ploughshares*, *Nightsun*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.