

White Rain
(forty years since our meeting)

Dixie Partridge

*"Even death may prove unreal at the last,
and stoics [be] astounded into Heaven."*

—Herman Melville

We wake to cold, though it's mid-spring,
so silent at sunrise
we both raise the pleated blinds
and look out: everything a shock
of ice . . . each draped petal and twig
from weeping cherry, wire on the chain link
fence—evenly glazed and still.

Yesterday there were birds
and paper-winged moths.
The new nest in a birch sits too high
to see inside. But with the image of blue eggs
coated with ice, I see how some pain holds
a requiting kind of beauty: the newborn
named for my father—gone four years.

In a spring so like any other (showers
and a little wind), the chores of pruning and tilling
are taking us longer, but suddenly
with the melt of freezing rain
a repeated wonder of grass
comes back, and brittle branches
go supple with green.

An hour of sun spurs sensation
toward the unspeakable languages of spirit—
like a touch of pollen when you discard Sunday's vase
of dead flowers. Or the way by afternoon
in the young wheat of Horse Heaven Hills,
though we hardly feel a breeze,
a whole field sways.