

*EARTH ELEGY,
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, 1997*

“Resolutions”

I know what winter is, today
at least, out here
walking the ridge of quiet trees,
heavyhearted and close to
mistaking for grief this snow
on my eyelid. But enough—
I say the word aloud, as if it
were a prayer, and it floats off.
And if words are incense,
lasting only as long as
I believe in the next breath,
let me first take this breath—
that once was mist in a field,
vapor rising, whirled
by sun toward this snowfall
and magical air. Let me want
what I have, let me take
what is given to conjure with.
And when there is silence,
let me let silence be—as Keats
may have, once in Rome,
where he saw the ruined Colosseum
just as it was, transfigured,
made a trellis redly laden
with pomegranate trees at root
in the chinks of tumbled stone.
Perhaps he plucked one fruit and ate
the tart seeds out, black
and sweet enough, and spoke of it
to no one—why should he? the moment
full of its own juice, sweet
beyond tally or trace,
the martyrs and lions and spoiled
ladies long gone, the stones
simply there for him to harvest—
thrust and gnarl, slim trunk, branch
and fruit suspended in a soft wind
that may have, for all I know,
began when a star
collapsed, somewhere beyond Arcturus.