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Beginning with the Keynote Address on Metaphor and Ideology

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Beginning with the Keynote Address on Metaphor and Ideology

I

A light rain is falling on the snow.
The stream accepts its channel over stones.
Spruces grow from hollows in the snow,
And figures stand against the snow and light.

The rain is straight; no wind disturbs the words
Or pods that hang upon the trees.
The words are straight; the words explain the snow
And walk the pale hill like flowers:
English lavender, a Spanish rose.
They grapple with a range so white, so vast
Not even the eye can cover it all.

II

We are met to summarize the snow,
And words festoon the open hall.
Great doors of glass replace
Whole sections of the wall
Beyond which snow is falling straight.

The snow is the central metaphor
 By which one world intrudes into
 Another. It falls from eastward in
 Eden into structure that has no secrets:
 Wires, pipes, lights, and fans
 Ornament pine beams. The walls
 Begin to disappear in trees and snow
 As if the snow were words.

III

In the valley birds are calling,
 Proposing flowers as fragile as the snow.
 The willow by the stream softens into brass,
 And we infer the snow from flowers.

Sunlight rides the clouds' round road
 To write pale names upon the northern snow,
 The mountain to the east leaves its print upon the face,
 And prophets bow beneath the snow's white load.

—Kathryn R. Ashworth