

TWO POEMS BY DOUGLAS SMITH

White Out

Power lines down somewhere. Dusk,
a dead furnace, no fireplace, roads blurred.

We haven't rehearsed this desire
to hollow a drift
like a partridge
and live
inside the blizzard,
brushed
into oblivion
like typographical errors,

but we go out anyway, knowing
the 747 will go down,
knowing that those white mounds
will hide deer
until light
burns the crystals in the seams of their lids
as they unfold,
shaking dreams of berries and fresh shoots
from their backs . . .

We discover
that it is a mistake
to believe that nothing lives
in blankness

and we understand
that our dark forms
are themselves mistakes
erased by the trails we do not leave behind.

Reading Old Chinese Poems

We hear ants hurrying
along cracks in the belly
of the statue of Buddha,
and slow footsteps up
the mountain path, oarlocks
rusting carefully in mist,
and the monk's last breath, the echo in the cave.