

ing on the ash frame of the snowshoes when I resume my walk under snow-laden hemlocks. I notice the trees fallen over the trails my father always kept clear.

I think of somehow framing in my memory forever the beauty of all these evergreens bearing the snow on sagging shoulders. And the silver beech trees somehow holding to their pale-yellow paper-leaves when all other deciduous trees, even the oaks, are barren, save for the snow.

But I know I can never remember all this, cannot even at this moment see it all. Couldn't capture it with all the cameras invented, wide-angled lenses, camcorders. It is too much for anything born or invented.

I remember Zen, that I haven't meditated since we've come down for the Christmas visit, too awkward with all of the people about. Now I am alone and unable to see all that is around me.

I am standing among fallen beeches sprawled across rocks three or four feet high, heightened by the drifted snow. Straight in my path, causing me to pause, consider, a fifteen-foot hemlock. Silver slivers of snow slant through the clearing. I focus on one hemlock twig, green needles half-penetrating the snow puff upon it. I breathe from my *hana*, exhaling my breath into the universe. I will know forever this twig. Of all the twigs in the forest, this has been seen.

The next morning I follow the tracks of my snowshoes. I creak on snowshoes through trees creaking in the regenerating wind, to the spot where I yesterday meditated on the hemlock twig. I know the spot for the snow is more compacted here. I move my shoes into yesterday's tracks and stare inrently at the hemlock starkly green against the snow. The twig is not there.

R. H. HERZOG

Twigs

I am snowshoeing in my father's woods while the others are cleaning up and getting on with the rest of the day-after-breakfast. No one thought my father, at age ninety-one, should accompany me; not even my father thought so.

Last summer we walked in the woods, he behind me for perhaps the first time in our lives, he breaking off the ends of branches, twigs. When I asked him why, he explained, smiling, embarrassed, that last week he had lost his way, couldn't find the path back, lost in the woods he first encountered in 1914 and walked in for most of the rest of his life.

I kidded him. "Why break off the twigs when, even if you find them, you won't remember why?"

Now, in the snow, there is no sound of his laughter. No sound at all when I'm still, no bluejay or squirrels or chipmunks. Only a distant crow, and the creak of the leather bind-

