

1973

Renunciation

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Deborah Johnson

RENUNCIATION

I slog along the sucking frozen river edge
Where fallen cedars coddle splintered water
Leaking through a cross-hatched sapling dam.
Upon its bank are pointed stumps,
From beavers' teeth
(they only choose the childish trunks)
Gnawed short too soon.

Don't mind those beavers
Even though
The stream is wider now.
It's leeching into the summer space of pines

 I used to hang from,
Arms around the biting bark,
Over giggles of amber.
Even though
The Tarzan bridge is marshed down,
Mingling with boulders in the rapids.
And, even though we'll have to rip up the old shack,
Before it slides and makes a double dam—
(I can see already the oil burner blocking trout traffic,
Scumming out mosquito larvae.)

I can say goodbye to these.
Not many are blessed by beavers.
Oh — their pelts perhaps —
But look —
Their pursuits are
Life,
To be distinctive architects
And lumberjacks.