

EXCAVATION

Oh, how I hoped and prayed
But I've seen death
Move
Slowly up a tree
Dry lower branches
From pine needle green
To orange coarseness
Ripe for garden loppers—
Yes, I've seen death
Strangle sapwood
Limb by limb
Level by level
Another fleeting Babel
Crumbles to dust
So now I must excavate
Cut your roots
Snip one by one
Remove you
From your fixed place
And dump you in *Gebenna*
The rubbish heap—
Yet I cannot blame you
It's my fault
Last fall I injured your roots
Ridding my perfect yard
Of your neighbor
The invasive elm—
Underground
I couldn't tell
Roots from roots!
Ah, forgive a prophet's zeal
It's true
It's my fault
Now just this empty
Aching space