

The New Criterion

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Poem ending with a variation on a line by Charles Wright

by William Virgil Davis

Winter, and sleeves of grey bone hang limp in
the wind. The tortured sun has cut its own throat.
This late in this late century nothing is new

or news. We nod off in the early afternoons
and wake, unrested, to icy feet and fevers.
Under their snowy hill, out of the wind at last,

my parents continue to repeat their prayers
in the same ways that we, with our raspy throats,
try to comfort one another. How many days

have disappeared into dark tunnels? How many
times will we come back to empty cupboards
and drained drinks, to landscape like laundry

frozen on a line? In a bare corner of an empty
room an old spider has spun an awkward web.
The distance between the living and the dead

is no more than one heartbeat or one breath.

—*William Virgil Davis*

William Virgil Davis's book *Landscape and Journey*, winner of the 2009 New Criterion Poetry Prize, was published in the fall by Ivan R. Dee.

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