

Kevin McKelvey

Airsheds in Andrews Forest

In these plunging mountain watersheds, roots and biomass  
hold the soil when the Pacific rains pummel the slopes  
as stream gauges whirl and jiggle.  
When the clouds lift and the temperature falls,  
the air advects and cold air flows down like water.  
In that trapped air, Carbon 13 tells of the trees' nightly work,  
the stable isotopes inscribing cenotaphs in the data loggers.  
If there were windows in these fir stands,  
poets would insist on looking out at the air  
to write about their advecting lust for a beloved.  
But this is science, where carbon isotopes can measure  
the exchange of cartoon hearts and cartoon eyes springing from sockets;  
of pheromones, kisses, touches;  
of our own heavy breaths shared in a prone embrace  
like wind carrying pollen.

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Geologizing in the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest, Oregon  
-for Fred Swanson

Bedrocks translate easily  
in their nascent lava flows.

Even the pyroclastics tell  
their exploded-rock stories.

But Cascade soil's extinct language  
muddles at cryptic horizons.

In stela landslides, unspeaking  
ciphers jumble in the roots.

Then this lexicon reveals itself  
in the soil's downslope plod.

And we can all speak the legends  
of geology in relearned tongues.

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Ars Putesco

In this decay, the lumbermen see cemetery deserts  
and semi-trailers of butt logs,

more monoculture and clear-cuts for even-aged stands  
and best stumpage.

All their foresters mire the woods' apogee  
with timber industry craft.

But these "dead" stands breathe like an ancient couple  
who spent their lives

in an old-growth citadel away from the vain egoists.  
In these old Cascade conifers,

with six score of decomposing logs and mesh bags  
filled with conifer needles,

the raconteur researchers narrate carbon and nitrogen's samsara—  
psalms of the Earth's stores and sinks—

over the next two centuries, when what is written in slim volumes  
will oust the selfish foresters.

Back in Indiana on German Ridge, the Forest Service craves  
to speed succession to oak-hickory zeniths

with a clear cut and thinning, a couple-thousand-acreburn,  
and more roads, like trite immutables.

art of putrefying, rotting

ars no compono – art of no composing

ars senium, morior, intereo, caries

the decay of writing??

the decay of poetry

- monoculture of mfa programs, - each state's program of the same trees, row upon row, board foot upon board foot
- singular trees -
- I-focused trees – short term trees – these programs trees with a short-term focus
- socially conscious trees – the climax trees' high culture,
- the mid-succession trees that will only rot for the grand old trees
- these monoculture trees that will fall at the bases of the great ones and rot into the rhizosphere

metaphor

study on the needle bags – individual poems

metaphor

study on the logs – books

metaphor back to Indiana and what I have above

1985

metaphor

current project on German Ridge

metaphor