

THOMAS SORENSEN
TREE-HUGGED

Gaze grubs it up with loveless hands
before I even get there. Thus,
 all sights arrive pre-soiled.
I wanted to perceive the tree
on my front lawn the way he was,
 and asked him to undress.

First he took off his colours, then
his scent, then height, then depth, until
 one rag alone remained:
a fatal ringing in my ears—
then that dropped round his ankles, too.
 I beheld a cleft of

shimmering, like a well's extremes,
and heard dim voices whispering
 about the end of things.
The sky was wearing at its seams.
The tree could tell how scared I was,
 and put his clothes back on.

Ever since, when I hold conches
to my ear, I hear, not sea, but
 tired old couples
bickering through air vents. The tree
evades my every look, a star
 exclusive to peripheries.

ATMOSPHERE AS A METHOD OF BEING IN PLACE

The mind has long lines, dragging on the deep, in vigil for a kind
of tightening: a gentle tug, a flicker in the murk, and the
periphery condenses into one stark mote of knowing.
You are quite here. These are trees. They are black and bright
with morning damp and glistening like things unsheathed.

You know that you are here. Coordinates begin to bead
along this pane of bare attention: beyond the trees
there is a lake, beyond the lake a tract of browning land,
beyond the land an afternoon in white, with peach scents and a brush
of dim regret. And beyond that, something radically else—

undying love, perhaps. But you are here. This is a fact.
Hereness draws in like a breath, the earthy dank, its pelt of leaves,
panting into lavish damp. These, their sawdust-crusteds greys,
comprise the most succinct cartography you know.
You are timelier than usual. There are motors creaking to the south.

And then, let's say, a more humid mood exhumes, beaten up like dust:
is that vapour in the air, or is the vision filming over? The sun
has softened now, in any case, fields flexing edgeless shades.
You are reputed to be here, a rumour whispered in the trees:
the distance lifts and billows.

The site subsides like water lights, the sight continues on,
steaming from its limp particulars. How here are things,
with you? Acquitted of coordinates, things range, tribelike,
into embezzled distances, long fine latitudes of mind,
extending, deepening, like lines around an eye.

Air stops, ripples plane in glassy cast.
The trees, it seems, have struck like matches,
those old flames.