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The Patience of Trees

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Abstract

We compare ourselves to trees, Draw analogies and metaphors for human experience

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The Patience of Trees

Westview Poetry Contest Faculty Honorable Mention

“It lies in my imagination strongly that the black oak is pleased to be a black oak. . . . Who knows when supreme patience took hold, and the wind’s wandering among its leaves was enough of motion, of travel.”

—Mary Oliver, *Upstream*

by Jill Jones

We compare ourselves to trees,
Draw analogies and metaphors for human experience:
We talk of our roots, of flowering, of our rising sap.
We draw lessons from the great oaks that spring from small acorns
And the willow that bends with the fierce winds.

But with our mobility we are “other.”
Trees have the “supreme patience” of rootedness,
Through winter, spring, summer, and fall,
Remaining in one spot for the forever of that one life.

Although not mobile, there is movement:
The wind, rain, and snow tossing the branches and leaves,
Gravity pulling down the heavy leaves of fall,
Birds, squirrels, turkeys swaying and hopping on branches.

If the evergreen, live oak, or palm
Survives man with his houses, paper, and fireplaces
And withstands hungry forest animals and deadly parasites,
It concludes that outward and upward journey to maturity.

When I see a tree striking in its straightness or size,
I have to touch it, to connect with its stability,
its rootedness, its patience.