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The Brownness

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The Brownness

Abstract

A pine-sapling starts out green as the scrub it replaces. After ten years the brown begins. Just a fox-tail of dry needles in a lower fork. Then it spreads to the armpits of shaded boughs. The pine tips swagger up into the daylight, a wedge of tall spears all shaking their tips at each other competitive, vaunting and climbing oipinus erectus\ much waving no growth, it seems at first. But month by month it stretches, strangling grasses below in this first tide of the great extermination.

Mark O'Connor

THE BROWNESS

A pine-sapling starts out green as the scrub it replaces.
After ten years the brown begins. Just
a fox-tail of dry needles in a lower fork.
Then it spreads to the armpits of shaded boughs.
The pine tips swagger up into the daylight,
a wedge of tall spears all shaking their tips at each other
competitive, vaunting and climbing of *pinus erectus*;
much waving no growth, it seems at first.
But month by month it stretches, strangling grasses below
in this first tide of the great extermination.

Humbler shrubs and bracken catch it now.
— each drought they have died back
and each winter sprung up green
yielding part of their mass to the pines.
Now they falter, surrender
fungusing brown and grey, under that
rising mattress of coiled green springs,
that assembly of cheering maypoles.

The wind in the pines has the sound of an ocean
sometimes even of distant breakers.
(Ten years old, their trunks are already like masts
Gently nodding while nearby gums are tossed.)
Pines make their own sea, are as hostile to land
as any tide. Now in their twelfth year,
gently swaying and stretching
They take over the valley
As a fleet of yachts carpets a bay
with a forest of stretching and dipping masts.
(The silent strangling of fern and acacia
continues in heat time and winter shade.)

The pines grow older; the dark spreads up,
even 40 ft high, till major boughs drop off.
Only from above the forest shows no brown, seems
a Big Top with a thousand Spring-bright poles
lifting its dunner green.
— so joyfully these thousand tug up,
raising the huge brown room below.

Vincent Buckley

MY MOTHER'S ANZACS

Take your pick: the roan in the moody paddock
year after bloody year, and the dawdling cows,
or the grand tour, the Pyramids, the Last Post,
the smack and harness sounds of rifles,

mates running and kneeling up the sand
where their turds were buried,
stumbling up over their own handholds,
joking about it, getting close enough

to hear the bristle of the Turkish oaths
when they reared, close enough to link blades
or to see one another grinning
at this Other. That'll stretch their cods.

Back home they were raging against my father.
A male bonding, mate? A coming of age?
Your menstruation? No, it was my mother's
myth-time, the openeyed failure of her girlhood.

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