

HAMILL'S LAST STAND

for Gladys McLeod

1.

Our concern is tree-murder, harvest
of the forest (she's worried
they call it "timber") timber sale A04292
structure wood
could be a rough political situation,
could be
we speak as trees,
innocent understanding of ourselves
as things or places too, maybe farming
but for the mess
left on the smouldering hillsides
and silting the creeks
maybe a new crop another lifetime, no care
for the names Hemlock, Balsam, Spruce
undone words from our own mouths,
no flowers anymore but
cubic feet seven million two hundred
and thirty-eight
thousand Cedar, Larch, White Bark Pine,
trunk roots and
limbs scrapped trash-wood fuel
for the bush-fires dirty
orange summer skyline, Lodgepole,
White Pine, Other
Species, in other words
strip it, all the growthe
for structure wood
core of our eyes to see and say it,
won't be taken
care of, hearts lost in the language
of public auction
only "profit" in the names, no talk
left about it, so set now
there is no argument, choices gone,
nothing left to say
Forest Ranger.

2.

house of structure wood all leaky
roof this morning in the rain

sits in the chimney flashing seeps
through to the roof joists and drips

still upright tree wood (branches?)
from the floor sill to cross-beams

what cells left without the bark, root-
less timbers stand in the doorways

and window frames its ok the house
is "appropriate," our real needs

do not profit us, the hillside trees
also leak the rain down to their roots.

3.

I admit the industry of it, hot
summer work, sweat and mosquitoes
in the headband of the hardhat, chain-oil,
whine of the diesel among the spruce
ehrrrrrehrrr of the saw
to the heart-wood, I admit
the hi-bailer works for a new pickup
each year, weekends in town
I admit his skill, I admit that he makes
a life of his own from it, with a grip
on the throttle lever, admit it

4,

Probably the trees are warming in the sun
the mud dries up and hardens on the roads
streams are full and muddy now in runoff
a whole forest stretches out the new rings
probably it all just stands there, amazed
with the steam rising up from clay banks
gravel shoulders glisten
 in the morning light
bridge planks shed roofs ditches a contour
part of a scene, probable and amazing
for the sun,
 warmer now towards the end of March,
a forest moves towards the light.