

Spring Replacement

Leaf buds appear, a light green stipples the surface of every branch.
No canopy covers the forest yet, but attentive eyes
Can sketch the contours of what will come, leaping forward
Through drowsy summer into autumn
When a mountain of red-yellow leaves fall,
Trapping damp beneath them, a bubble of wet turning mildewed black,

You must prune trees in the winter to restore
A sense of proportion pleasing to the eye.
Arborists tell you
Without pruning
Trees will eventually strangle.
If what arborists say is true,
The force of awakening
Is what kills, what brings overgrowth,
Constriction, choking, attenuation,
A closing of veins and arteries,
A lopping off,
And then
Decline—

Dead limbs scattered among the flowerbeds after every storm.
That is the achievement—to become clutter and refuse
To be collected and deposited in the trash.
But seeds have formed, they have been ejected,
They lie waiting,
Awakening,
Resurrecting.
Seedlings.
See: it's just like the idea hidden within the sign coming to light.

And for the ego that cannot think itself merely a sign?

Yes, pride buds and quickly spreads a canopy

Darkening the ground soil of our souls.

A conviction takes shape.

There must be more than cycles:

Budding, spreading, yellowing,

Reddening, falling to earth.

My grandson when he was four said as we walked

Under a late summer forest canopy, "I don't want to die."

There was no fear in his voice. His words did not quiver

Like an organism instinctively pulling back from danger.

He was perplexed, glimpsing the idea of a future without him,

Struggling to comprehend who he might be when he was no longer.

Not to be when the body works so effectively,

When the heart leaps nimbly back and forth across time and space,

Is impossible to imagine.

Desire for more rises within the body. In every act of love

Expectation buds that something marvelous

Is about to happen.

A hope, a prayer, a spirit

Rebudding across lifetimes.

To appear, to disappear.

Each pulse etches a promising smile

Onto the face of the earth.