

# Sugar Maple Poems

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*Meghan Barrett*

## DIRTY

They call us dirty

they have forgotten their sinews were  
pulled up from the dirt that lined our wombs  
the nutrients that feed their tall, straight spines and build  
their cities come from our tapped roots.

Our new-making leaves are punished with the  
silencing they demand of our mouths:

we do not choose what comes of us  
or becomes of us.

They call us dirty

as we cycle the blood from our sheets  
in midnight washing machines that taste metallic  
quarters fed with rosy, shame-stained fingers;  
as they sweep our children into springtime heaps  
litter on the sidewalk in early dawn, they curse  
streaked paint of life's pulp where they walk:  
the mark of our inconvenient existence in  
the secretions that first gave them air.

They call us dirty

as they prune our branches with scowls  
watch us weep sap; they hope

next year we won't grow so wide, strategically  
starve us of starred light, train us to use optics  
    powered by our powdered, burnt bodies  
and sell us their sterile dreams:  
we are left time-less to wonder how  
our growth is always unclean.

They call us dirty  
    and what they tell us makes us  
hope we won't grow back so  
we bend over stubbled forests in bathroom  
rain showers, razors bought with cloth woven of  
our thin-pressed Amazonian abdomens, the legend  
of our depleting strength; now  
we are a whisper of blade on taut bark:  
we are pruning ourselves to fit bonsai dreams.

They call us dirty  
    forgetting our sugared blood was the first holy  
oil to crimson their heads:  
it trickled into their eyes to open them to  
the womb outside our bodies;  
    they exchange their wailing for teeth  
on saws that bite into our curving osteoporosis spines,  
shaping our sides into that perfect hourglass,  
ribs lost to the creation of paper perfection:  
we are in good form only when they will use us.

So they tap us until we are dry,  
call us brittle with age  
dangerous, so they cut us  
to the stumps of our knees.  
They call us crazy, we whisper  
the sound a rustle echoed in our leaves:

even as we kneel now,  
they will always end lying down,  
buried within us

**COMMA AFTER LATE BUDBREAK: DEFOLIATION BY AN INVASIVE PEAR**

The pear thrip is a comma,  
in size and weight, it is pause  
in budbreak

mothers sing susurrus in sapriver  
of budbreaks past, wet and warm, latecoming no  
slick slipped black punctuations under our swollen  
scales, loosened

they suck these dry hallowed spaces, leave  
them hollowed instead  
scalesongs shower the groundwater  
soured

*taeniothrips inconsequens* thrust  
mottled yellow-brown witherleaves:  
short lives punctuated by oviposition  
scarred egg-white promises, broken  
clinging to thin veins on hungry branches  
hung heavy in budless breezes

thrips come from blankets of  
soft rootanchor; it hems us in,  
nestled tight, they cloud us  
hum as  
they explode dark fabric,  
carbon-colons of pollution, feathered:

a wombstone plumule, emerged

they are

swept by cool wind: father

an echo of his

pollenspore, blackening crumbs

of fertility, incessant

invasive.

To bring thrips again,

he must think we are yellowing with life

**ACERUM ON FOMALHAUT B**

I exploded  
thirteen (point) seven  
billion years ago  
a desolate star a fluttering dicot  
screaming sussurus unfurled samara  
through a loose blanket dark matter  
radiating plasma silting humus  
I: a born spectre  
[bluish white]  
rock-weathering, wavewind  
shapes my  
dust xylem  
rings, concentric close-in  
this aching debris this harsh cambium  
ashenhalted - curling  
Sugar slows  
as I - turn scarlet: one  
billion year  
of dying  
through equinoxical nights

- covered by photon fabrications

seven-hundred nanometers

sapped anthocyanin

scattering

Rayleigh

Acer

atmospheric wave-bumping

deciduous glucose-freezing

color me a

sunset-travelled

cirrocumulus