

HELICON WEST

COLLAPSING METAPHOR

Mary Ellen Greenwood

We pass the fire-killed forest, skeletal trees standing lonely
white ghosts reaching up to the sun
Not knowing they are dead
but still reaching up to the sun
Or maybe knowing
but unsure of what else they should do
—what else than what they have always done.
Leafless, branchless, barkless; fibers decaying, breaking down
as still they reach up to the sun.

My father says firekill frees a forest, removing old growth, he says.
Cleaning and clearing and unchoking the soil and carving a path for life to spring
Resurrected, he says, the phoenix from ash.

And I want this metaphor for me,
for starting over after fire consumes the familiar
—what I once knew,
what once held me strong,
what once made me sure.

But my hollow remains still reach up to the sun,
unsure of what else they should do.

HOW TO PRETEND YOU'VE READ *MOBY DICK*

Gary Dop

“Nothing exists in itself.”
—Melville, *Moby Dick*

Pause, as though considering the sea.
Consider the sea. Cup your hands
in a shell over your ear. Say, “I’m considering

the sea.” Your inquisitors will feel slight,
like a ship pestering the seas, hunting you,
your wisdom a great whale. As they grapple

with your unexpected waves, reconsider
the sea. Say, “I can’t even think of the name
of the ship or the captain.” They’ll smell blood

and squeal *Pequod* and *Ahab*, assuming
they’ve harpooned you. Just then,
channeling the inconstant sea, spring forward

and say, “I spoke metaphorically
in the persona of the sea, which casts aside,
swallows, and dismisses the existence

of *Ahab* and that ship.” If you’ve lured them,
add, “I might also suggest that the sea,
mother of our prehistoric fathers, drowns

and defies these shallow discussions.”
Finally, gaze two inches to the right
of their eye, as though you’ve lost

something precious in their ear.
When they respond, ignore them, and whisper
“We’re all Ishmael. *Call me Ishmael.*”

From *Father, Child, Water*
first published in *Sycamore Review*



Helicon West invites you to open mic nights, 7:00 PM at the Logan City Library Bridger Room, 255
N Main, every second and fourth Thursday during USU semesters. For more information contact
star.coulbrooke@usu.edu or go to writing.usu.edu.

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