



Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest

The pines found lonely years on mountain peaks,
frozen isolation on deathly white soil,
the oldest growing where water is scarcest.
Procreating singly, each pine centers an
uncontested patch of steep barren ground,
and keeps uncongenial distance from its kin.

Tougher than time, the pines cling to life,
spurning forest fires, abandoning
even their own woody core to sustain
a slim branch, a strip of bark, a tenacious root.

The pines follow life's twisting path,
sacrificing symmetry for survival.
Limbs lost and living grotesquely grasp for life.

We ephemeral creatures core annular pencils,
calibrating Carbon-14 curves to time's slow tides.
The pines witness glaciers come and go,
unmindful of our flickering lifetimes.

Young pines mutate as youngsters will,
sprouting green cones in place of purple.
Straight trunks are the fashion in this century's season.
Perhaps, when the chosen white soil
washes seaward and other creatures crowd close,
young pines will creep downslope, shouldering
lesser species aside, stubbornly seeking eternal life.

Clem Henriksen