

Bill Siverly

## Death and the Mother

Midwinter night after steady rain and a strong gust of wind  
The giant Douglas fir tore up her roots and fell.  
Power lines flashed and sparked around the quivering branches,  
The solid trunk so lightly laid upon the earth.

Older than the road she fell across, older than people living here,  
She was soon chain-sawed by power-company men.  
Above the upturned roots and resinous stump,  
A great space had opened to the sky.

We mourned the loss of our lofty landlady  
Who sheltered us for thirty of her ninety years.  
Jung says trees are unconscious symbols of the Mother,  
Like the one that Christ was hung upon,  
*And bisiden him stonden Marye and Johan.*

Mother lay in a coma after her heart attack,  
Three days and nights wheezing behind an oxygen mask.  
My sister whispered into her ear, "It's all right, Mom,  
We love you, and you can let go."

When she stopped breathing, a great space opened to the sky,  
As if a wind had suddenly swept everything out of its way.  
Midsummer light lay gently in long beams across the fields,  
And shoveled earth fell heavily into the grave.