

One could conceive “a tortured expression”
there, too.

Sky darkens over the autumn flush of maples;
my fire has fallen to a muted glow.

As I start back, the ancient forest rises
unbroken to distant ridgelines
where the ragged gates of treetops
unleash a flood of turning stars.



Tim McNulty

On First Arriving at Quinault

With apologies to Su Tung-P'o

Funny—I never could keep my checkbook balanced,
And it gets worse the older I grow.
Low clouds wreath the hills—like a Sung scroll;
Narrow road through rain-forest trees—
 eleven inches last week alone!
Not that I mind, a seasonal laborer on the road crew;
Other poets have worked for the park service.
But I worry about all the poems
 idling away in the high meadows;
Who will be there to catch them
When I'm tarring a leak inside a culvert
With July Creek sluicing down my back, and the weekend
Days away?