

Michael McDowell

## Marquam Trail

Below Patton Road the sun dapples the trail,  
big-leaf maple and cascara and ash  
now leafing out these warm May days.

The dog walks the edge of muddy patches,  
stops to smell the base of trees, sword ferns,  
newly blossomed fringe cups and vanilla leaf.

I wait, admiring the thick fissured bark of Douglas firs,  
allowed to grow old in this undeveloped ravine  
with steep forested sides—a protective envelope

along whose lower fold we walk  
while the greater world beyond suffers  
the fallout from the pandemic:

furloughed, laid off, confined, isolated, anxious—  
no money for rent, food, electricity,  
the coronavirus everywhere and invisible, like God.

The dog's ready to go, and we leave the woods,  
cross the freeway, and arrive at the Oregon Zoo,  
locked tight, silent, even the animals hidden away.