

THE DISASTER TREE

In the land of the blind
the shade of this tree stretches
farther than the eye can see.
Its roots run deeper than mere defoliation

knows; and even diseased and cut
to a stump, the least half-inch left
level on dirt is the base of a magic space
leading the eyes up

the tree the blind see, to where its invisible
birds sing inaudible notes of hope;
its xylem are still cocked toward heaven.
And even when we fall to our knees

the paper-thin skin
covering the patella is a minimal cushion
we mustn't deny, for in retrospect
it suffices. This poem written on the dead

trunk, on paper, is for the deflowered
flower-girl whose boyfriend may yet do her
justice, insurance, legal heirs, and joy;
this poem is for the proposing boyfriend

whose kneel is forced, but who may one day rise
into his wife with a true love, the force
of which needed such a long distance
runner's start; this poem to say the depths

of despair are where the lowest root drinks
underground streams, and continues
past disaster; this,
a love poem; this extended conceit, a note of hope:

the tree surgeon falling limb to limb:
when he lost his eyes, he read bark with his fingers.
And when he sawed off his hand, the stump
of his arm could still point, and beckon, and stroke.