

January 2010

Suddon Oak Death Syndrome

Ruth Thompson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate>

Recommended Citation

Thompson, Ruth (2010) "Suddon Oak Death Syndrome," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 2, Article 49.

Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol9/iss2/49>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal by an authorized editor of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Thompson: Sudden Oak Death Syndrome

SUDDEN OAK DEATH SYNDROME

Ruth Thompson

Down the long body of California,
Ramalina drapes the dead shoulders of oaks
with her bent hair.

Lace lichen. It is the color of sadness,
of rain that goes on for a long time,
of things fading into the distance.

Behind its veil ooze black
cankers of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

We are in plague time now,
these dead too many to bury, shrouded
in lace the color of smog, fallen

like kindling over the stucco-colored hills,
behind dry lakebeds
where are tattooed the lost shapes of reeds.

Here I name them, the old friends:
live oak, scrub oak, white oak, black oak,
coffeeberry, huckleberry, buckeye, bay laurel,
rhododendron, manzanita, madrone, sequoia.

In the fires, even their roots will burn.

We leave our children a place with no eyelids.
They will die thirsty,
telling stories of our green shade.