

CLAYTON LONGSTAFF

IF

Douglas Fir, Quaking Aspen,
Hemlock, Juniper; waving wind
alive within the shores of white pine
that whet these shapeless drifts of being—

See the snowy owl perched aloof
like grief upon the branch's naked edge?
See her test the pull of gravity against
her weight, as she dives

just before the branch will break?
I have cleaved to the branch as I have
yielded to its shadows. I have held
the world in a mouthful of hallelujah,

hallelujah warm and dizzying, unfurling
between these splintered lips. I have
known unbridled rage by the gilded
flare of Ginkgo in October. I have

harboured hatred in the bast of love,
the two rooted like North and South.
Felt wringing at my core the pangs
of rapturous desire in a blistering Arbutus

burnt to grey along its peeling contours,
and then peeled further to the hues
less easily defined. It's here I rest.
It's here that I, like brume amid the brae,

like contagion, am substance stretched
of definition. And when daylight blooms
from a cleft wedged far in the night,
I know a question has been heard.