

## POETRY

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### evidence of things not seen

*Clifton Holt Jolley*

Through an igneous erosion of stone has grown  
a single Ponderosa, straight as an unthreaded lace  
and tall against this clarity of Sierra Nevada sky.

We're not in Nevada but west, near Yosemite,  
east of the Sierra Madres at Shaver Lake  
where this tree has blown into the gnomon of a dial

too big to easily tell time, except by the age  
of a tree, solitary, redolence defined by insistence  
in a ground too unforgiving for others to survive.

Silver granite and gray is broken by the musk  
trunk and up to the brilliant needle-tufted climax  
and seed cones of each branching of the Blackjack,

the Bull, the Yellow, the Ponderosa Pine

until high above the weathered bark and white heartwood,  
an extinguished match of charcoal, last trunk trails into cloud,  
branches nude of seeds, of needles, a treble evidence of tree

and lightning strike. Too tall is unsafe (as is too anything)  
in a nature that diminishes even this stone mountain,  
and nature's God throws down holy fire to teach

humility to a tree.