

Lupus

By Erin Elizabeth McConnell

On cumbersome trunks of elm, i stand,
 fixed firm into dirt
 by — not a root — but wounded immunity.
 Dutch elm disease of my system's own conception.
 With swollen xylem and inflamed phloem,
 my bark cracks, turns purple
 as circulation ceases.

And i stretch —
 or attempt to extend —
 my lame limbs.
 Steeped with numbness,
 i can no longer feel
 the movements, or existence,
 of crippled twig-tips.

My leaves fall off,
 leaving balding spots
 where my foliage once
 freely flowed.

Rotting from within,
 the most paltry miasma
 will level my resistance --
 infectious vector of Zephyr.

And so i endure,
 with a dull, hollow ache
 that measures the meter of minutes;
 hunkered-down
 forever bracing
 for pain:
 my most faithful companion.

And soon,
i will be no more
than a frame
of withered timber.
Bereft of any splendor,
cowering before the cold

of winds and my limbs
that can no longer hold
onto hope that
a thaw will ever draw near.