

Thai Logging Protest

A traffic hold up, tv cameras
on the side of the road near Ban Pong

the old monk's glasses flash
as he folds his saffron robes
over his bare knees
crosslegged at the foot
of an old teak tree

his young followers fold
down into human lotuses
each at the base of a teak tree
petals of gold about the old monk

who listens patiently to

the policeman's rising voice
hands on hips, his Colt .45 juts out
his chin thrust forward

behind him a knot
of loggers in shorts
black singlets
stand bemused, their chainsaws
idle at their feet

as the policeman raises his hands
shouts but the old monk
lifts both his hands
into a closed lotus bows his head

the policeman drops his hands
shrugs a *mai pen rai*
what can you do?
retreats and later on Thai tv
a close up of the monk's
crinkled apple smile
and my friend translates the monk's quiet words

all living things, the monk says
must not die before their time.

KEVIN ROBERTS