

What Would the Trees Say?

A Poem in Twenty-Four Sonnets

J.C. Ryan (USA)

All quotes from Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" (1913)

“I think that I shall never see
a poem lovely as a tree”

envoi of casuarine conference
at wellspring of gwydir whisper
into gurgling boorolong bistre
cue of silvereye consonance
I test subterranean essence
and shelter azure kingfisher
my cortex of filigreed fissure
root of medusan tumescence
my progeny elbow for daylight
or idealise tussocky islands
away from bruising epiphytes
near river churning up diamonds
cleft and groaning at full height
I certify your sheoak asylum

cordate leaves of architrave lucent
chewed in ooliths of nocturnal zoon
inured to scathing vibrissa platoon
satedly growing growingly corpulent
listen my disquisition of silicon armament
strangler vines corkscrew and festoon
I gimpi gimpi giant stinging nettle strewn
shadowing vertex of dorrigo firmament
and to my adherents I bestow a living
red walkingstick fruits draping constellation
and to the insouciant I divest forgiving
hollowed tree stanchion dripping sensation
to the recusant who blunders unwitting
a rainforest vision of drifting gyration

prosper I through plurality
nothofagus antarctic beech
my figures primeval of speech
polymorphous lyrebird tonality
idiom am of dendrobium vitality
in mosslivrworte lichnferne pleach
auburn caesurae of fungus breach
terse gondwanan surges of prosody
njahnjah I whet waddawee I djadjadja
toeing your slickest stairs to weeping welts
wyy wyawya I dzeedzee I we bdabdabda
below satinwood seedlings so sweetly svelte
wwhedeetd seese whedeetd I are ulaulaula
all thingsthingsings repeated in everything else

boulderlike I become with time and sun
leaves leather blemished wasps churning
within pimped-stiff yellowy-grene yaerning
fruite-prise of golden-ring-eyed currawong
frome sprouted-stone creviced-root plumb
warm-wattled yarrowyck earth discerning
well-hydrated hollows centripetal turning
off universe eyland to which a returning
phlerm foraver tioncrea ey plop crock
midpyra formschurp tedli too piary
tundor ershould smidean flocke
valaslowedtemmedbipilary
figrock
e

e

rockfig

dulseourialaeroitsotplg

fare an taighe ceilidh tundor lea

phyteolith nur consynium sceptraclee

fleshfold bò craobh sionnach gobhar frig

purepulling invaerial fraue plait toradh sprig

swills kangaroo cisterns in thorax armature zig

effulgent rondavel of goat and bull paddock

barrened by hoof-tamp then cloven-patter

glyphed rubiginosa staunchly monadic

winter wind I perfuse wasping attar

an imperceptibly balletic

chatter

companionless in needlegrass clearing
a sovereign I kurrajong stance apart from
more gregarious tranche of gangling gum
squat dense arms chest dervish appearing
propped pricked pared yet persevering
orneriest origin of magpie thrum
I do not nor will not succumb
crown-cropped cantilevering
cloistering gossipy cohort beneath
buttery umbels downward breaking
pelvic pincers in stone ileum speak
tunneling suckers fluid uptaking
hawks alert fairy-wren pleak
a poetree unawakening

free: 21 sonnets
John Charles Ryan

of notes preface the four part (i. e. e) of the sequence
free: 17 includes phrase from botanist E. J. Baker's article
from Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales
free: 21 includes phrases from botanist David Don's classification
(Crotogeomelon) in Monograph of the Edinburgh New Phytological Society (1830)
free: 24 includes phrase from Joyce Kilmer's poem
free: 24 includes phrase from the Spectator of 1789
free: 24 includes phrase from the Spectator of 1789
free: 24 includes phrase from the Spectator of 1789

“a tree whose hungry mouth is prest
against the earth's sweet flowing breast”

drawn longbow bodily aches
stave careworn splitting from strain
re-receding leaves desire to maintain
the finest bearing from which to slake
heaven-lust-sund-thirst-ruby-star-take
wart-prone plinth mandrake brayn
not infectd I ed but yew by blain
nont I et but yew is ay I fersake
these eons baring wetness
en lonely stark plateau
yr atrocities n gorges
bnksia m beautiful
ey m breathless
anksia m beau

once I gave you everything
when once was something between us
which was ours yes but now you think love
is something about everything and nothing
and nothing about everything but something
so we live as two obscure anythings in the dust
of beingness because of your thinking you must
live with faith in a thinking anything into being
when I said to you once thought is as old as
things seen from bare ledges we climb
and as vast as chiasmas as these as
into the everythings of mind
of the things of love as
loved in time

where is your faith mine is bare before you
mine is grass felted and cloaked around me
mine is the charred hollow bole that lifts me
where is your faith mine is stark before you
where is your god mine is sickened by you
mine is earth under heaven beyond me
mine is flame that destroys and absolves me
where is your god mine is nothing to you
where is your prayer mine is an inching year
mine is blossom borne on a barren scape
mine is abrupt thrust of a floret spear
where is your hope mine is a seed agape
mine is a resinous thought rendered clear
mine is a wholly shrouded earthly shape

I am not divine stop being senseless
are these stigmata not wordly enough
thou who branded on me pulpous and rough
guff of diction and left me defenseless
I am not dumb rather I apprentice
to scripture you worship but only bluff
in words that hiccup injurious stuff
and ever eruct outwardly endless
let me disclose my meaning through presence
suggestive of the whole thing though voicing
nothing but utter quavering pleasance
and a demure quivering rejoicing
my wine-dark furrowing flosch which presents
an eternal conjunction enjoining

we are not two irreconcilable
parties remember that you entered me
then when our bodies seemed infinitely
lured together magnetic pliable
in a landscape forbidding plentiful
I would never suggest eternity
your vision could not yield the clarity
needed for me to be believable
I was not a falsehood then am not still
to spur the desire in you to feel
requires of you a gathering will
to receive the world as an unideal
who are the darlings you needed to kill
where is the fire you needed to steal

granite above meme above granite
whatbird left me herehere me left birdwhat
justheard gust beneathbeneath gust heardjust
planted bones underunder bones planted
canit be long herehere long be itcan
touch of rime overover rime of touch
clutchrim of pure brinkbrink pure of rimclutch
planet below meme below planet
fineniche of soil slantslant soil of nichefine
shadow behind meme behind shadow
whineof gorge torrenttorrent gorge ofwhine
below is bellowbellow is below
chineof me still herehere still me ofchine
bellow is belowbelow is bellow

tree 24, Kormets
John Charles Wood

all quotes preface the four parts (1, 2, 3, 4) of the sequence are from Joyce Kilmer's poem
"Trees" (1919)
"tree 17" includes species from Gilbert R. Baker's article "On Two New Species of Casuarina"
(Ceratopetalum and Casuarina) in "Botanical Magazine" (1901, vol 24, pag 605-11)
"tree 21" includes species from David Don's classification of "Cassipouira" in
"The Fairbairn New Phytological Journal" (1850, vol 1, pag 24)

“a tree that looks at god all day
and lifts her leafy arms to pray”

bloody brilliant place to take a smoko
mate leaning against me in this boneyard
just sip yer cuppa have a look homeward
cos when ya cark it thats whereya will go
no worries theres time but well let ya know
each arvo they rockup grey heads lowered
passed rellies concealed by plastic flowers
mattie and davo bazza and johnno
resting in presbyterian quadrant
thick with blackberries plantain and mullein
thywillnotmine on grave of an infant
damn cockatoos rippin me cones again
kickin the bucket is yer commitment
hooroo ol matey catchya later then

a depth of death I am sans abandon
as slanted sun soothes verbforms in tension
strokes blossom orchid hyphae elisions
were dying greater than remiss of one
were living lightened by the cease of none
the frosted morning foisted a sudden
falling nay to earth tho towards a coven
of boulders I hardened to their contours
to learn I had to spruik their speech in death
advised as such to snatch tongue of lichen
then you would grip a voice deprived of breath
granted the grammar from here to liken
you discern my murmur within this cleft
we transit to death through lives alike in

nor am eye mere spectacle stop being
boorish mye anguish not thy crude pleasure
which slakes thy yearning to gawk and measure
a munted fetish of cruelest seeing
aye clement noons afore vernal freeing
frore organs from ligaments in aether
of aurai anemoi wheeze of zephyr
threades of integument filigreeing
waifing into citadels of nettle
mye gristled bones interlarde this paddock
weeping pustules eye confuse thy fettle
eye selfdisclothe mye mettle sporadic
in bisque pollene nebulae which settle
which transforme thy beein to an addicte

ewe say wee never sing with lonesome sting
raised in canopies clutching fellowtrees
such living free of grit is graced with ease
ewe say the gist of loving is to cling
but ovr aloneness is a twisting thing
which interpolates tho seldom agrees
a torrid vice which grips uhs in degrees
pricks uhs from beneath like a rusty spring
ovr roots poised pendant as a musty wig
theye gesture towards a nothing to enswathe
nay petrichor to swig nor which to dig
estranged from ewr tellurian enclave
wee bide the time held captive in this brig
ovr lonely apogee of forest nave

shiver uncontrollably together
spring you wait not I already began
life is short and I have a short lifespan
spewing pink Im flower after flower
growing older Im each withdrawing hour
shall I encaptivate you where I can
sakuran dweller of the tableland
saccharine reveller with touch of sour
febrific wind blustering the blackness
morning bringing nubile throngs of blossoms
lets gyrate earth spinning on its axis
nightfall bringing agile brushtail possums
lets booze with mirth hoarding fruits of bacchus
his honeyed thrysus set flush across him

outlier
of dangars falls
buloke tough as galls
am gorge iron forged fire
nutsmall darkbrown shiningspire
drifting short samara fuzzalls
am furrowed brittle lorikeet wauls
needling glossy black cockatoo desire
see my heart wood of a deep red colour
see it toning off to pale towards my bark
am massive medullary mother
whose scaly cladodes disembark
not bearing seed I sucker
daub water on the parched
lip of another

Tree 21, Somerset

John Charles, 1913

all quotes preface the four parts (f, r, e, e) of the sequence are from Joyce Kilmer's poem
Trees (1913)

"Tree 17" includes phrases from botanist R. T. Baker's article "On Two New Species of Casuarina"
from Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales (1900, vol. 24, pp. 605-11)

"Tree 21" includes phrases from botanist David Don's classification of coachwood
(*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) in Monography of the Family of Plants called Cunoniaceae from
The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal (1830, vol. 9, pp. 94)

“a tree that may in summer wear
a nest of robins in her hair”

sentinel I dwell in this quadrangle
gone at dusk as they come pied currawong
song cleaves the crisp mucous air I belong
to decibels impelled at odd angle
accessible to larks who embrangle
along my fuguebrisk updraughted headlong
brawn is borne of golden pollen threadsong
falsetto at depth of dark tangle
when by dusk courtyard flush with canticle
and woodswallows croon lunar euphony
even I blush with moonlight in my cell
and all good hollows of me gush dolce
again in every sleeping particle
this harmony awakes to swallow me

comeon ova gimme yer attention
watchyerself mate dont slipnchip a tooth
ya need a phone ya sook then find a booth
ya right bloody mess chuck that contraption
real stunning case of dulled comprehension
useless bludger ya needta hear the truth
breathin heavy like yer in labour strewth
like I forgot to give ya oxygen
shell be right hey comeon ova here quick
yer out fer a little walkabout ay
give me honey-lemon blossoms a flick
me mob of starbursts that spark up yer way
and after that oi then just take yer click
become a fair dinkum paparazzi

devoted I am to this mode being
an ascetic in a dirtless crevice
bivouacked to a gondwanan terrace
disciplined I am to disagreeing
without helmet harness guaranteeing
suction on such crumbly precarious
chasm talus lacking even a tarsus
for traction nor a tongue though decreeing
I found my devotion go find yours too
squat beside me although not for too long
for I now have too many chores to do
the glacial nocturne swiftly coming on
and solitary I shall make it through
farewell and cheers for clambering along

a conjoined duo tethered at sternum
filmy fern fur fused feet and femora
in clique of cryptograms etcetera
we concede not having nerve to stir them
we agree twould be a risk to spurn them
those fellow late cretaceous genera
crisping old muscles like thick tempura
towards one other we therefore turn in
halfdressed chest to chest stomach to stomach
locked in eons of terse conversation
fantasising of some younger hummock
free from the effects of glaciation
perhaps filled with the tune of a dunnock
something other than this speciation

its blooming pandemonium up here
lemme out fast gawd Im suffocating
not havin privacy is frustrating
and bloody chinwaggin is all I hear
stupid creep neighbour like a pupeteer
primping me posing me and dictating
psychotically circumnutating
waxing poetic like william shakespeare
Im an antisocial bloke by nature
wish I was born in an outback wasteland
and who appointed the legislature
up in this gaol of a rainforest stand
breathless in a kind of caricature
of the life of solitude I once planned

calyx limbo five hyphen partitus
comma persistens in paucis fructu
exclaim point petala five abortu
 lineari multifida auctus
 rigentia persistenta nullus
stamina ten antherae processu
cordate rostelliformi infernu
 terminatae ovarium capsus
 ceratopetalum apetalum
 multifida apica dehiscens
 petala five lineari semen
in nova hollandia persistens
from georgius caley herbarium
I coachwood was flung into existence.



when once I gave you everything in you
when once was something between us
which was ours yes but now you think love
is something about everything and nothing
and nothing about everything but something
so we live as two obscure anythings in the dust
of beingness because of your thinking you must
live with faith in a thinking anything into being
when I said to you once thought is as old as
things seen from bare ledges we climb
and as vast as chiasmus as these as
into the workings of mind gaps
of the things of love as and clear
loved in time

part

I think that I shall prefer see
a poem lovingly as a tree

tree 1

of of casuarina conference
whispering of gwydir whisper
hoping bobdalong pistite
wherey consonance
aberrantia essence
of the azure kingfisher
center of jingreed fissure
dimentian hussence

Two Ekphrastic Poems

In response to Jacob Bigelow's
American Medical Botany
(1817)

J.C. Ryan (USA)



Sanguinaria Canadensis

Sanguinaria Canadensis

Sanguinaria Canadensis

*When taken in a large dose it irritates
the fauces, leaving an impression in
the throat for considerable time
after it is swallowed. -Bigelow 1817*

the rootstalk is a sluggish creature

inhumed supinely

one stubby appendage looks

fleshy as a ham hock

other organelles awaken

drowsily in the tepid heft of vernal dirt

trichome hairs capillary fine

secreting evermore compulsively

a fusty rhizospheric speech

in the spring after the earth

softens

after cold residuum subsides

I notice the lobes & sinuses

of leaf whorls like parasols

through which the flower slides

fracturies of veins underside

a puccoon, a poughkone, a flush of sunken fire

a peculiar resin

a bitter principle

an acrid fact

sharpens appetite

stiffens linen

hastens circulation

thimblest delicacy

transient vision tintured

in memory



Sanguinaria Canadensis

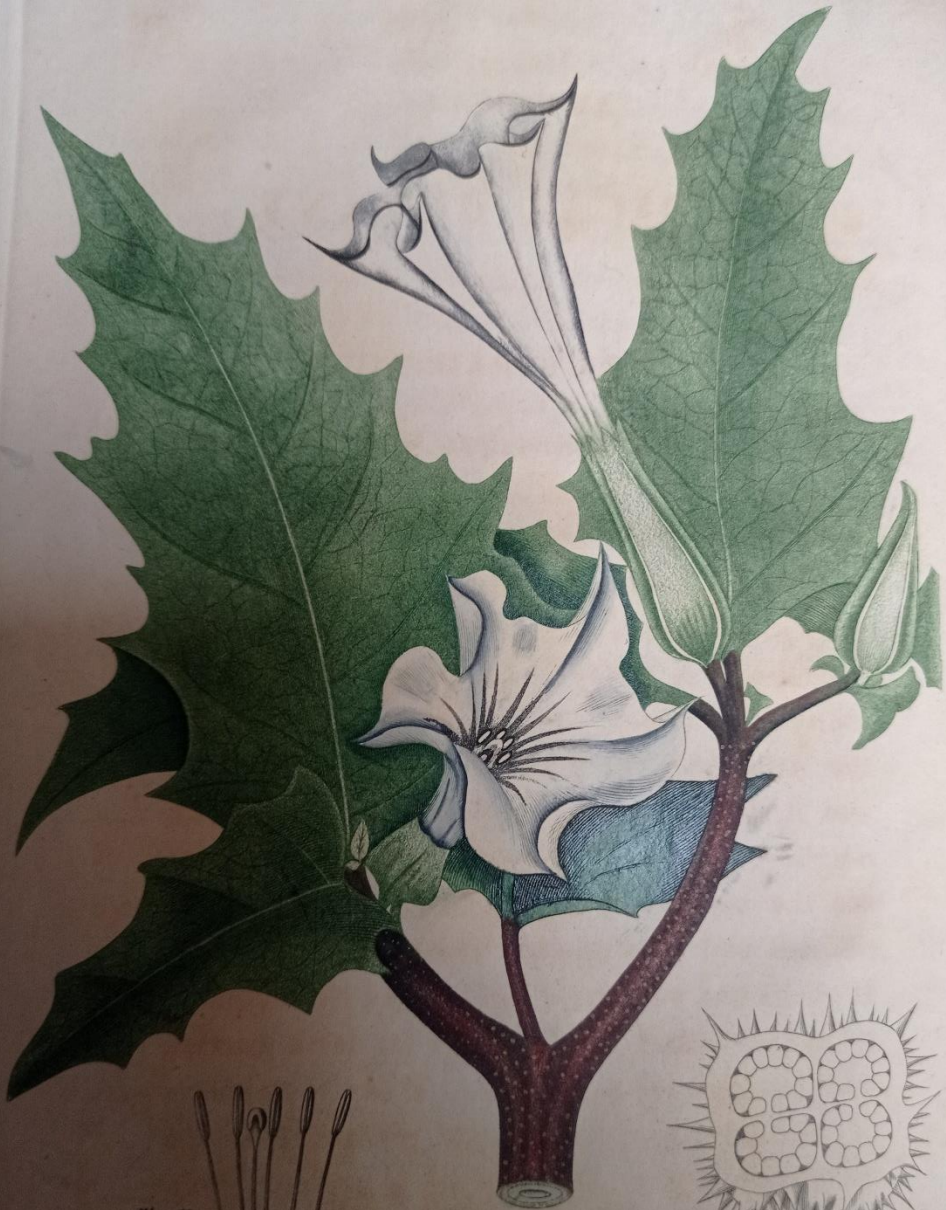


Fig. 1.

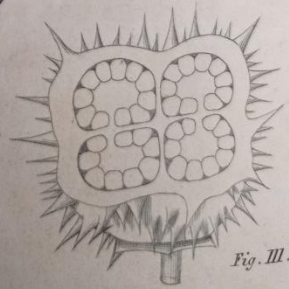


Fig. III.

W.B. Arnott Sc.

Fig. II.



Datura *Stramonium* B.

datura
stramonium

Datura Stramonium

The iuyce of Thorne apples,

boiled with hog's grease

to the forme of an unguent or salve,

cureth all inflammations whatsoever. -Gerarde 1597

the stippled stems curve like

young elk

antlers

four-valved

capsule gaping

pericarp electrified

trumpet blossoms gifting ambrosially

anther splay ramifying

shrouded in alabaster voile

rank in growth

foliately ebullient

spectring fields and roadsides

narcotic nebulizer of ancients

acid to palate

vertigo-triggering

pupil-dilatating

delirium-inducing

unguent to taste

whose inspissated juice

allays tic doloureux

cranial paroxysm

syphilitic ulceration

& whatsoever you wish

from *datūrus*, to give

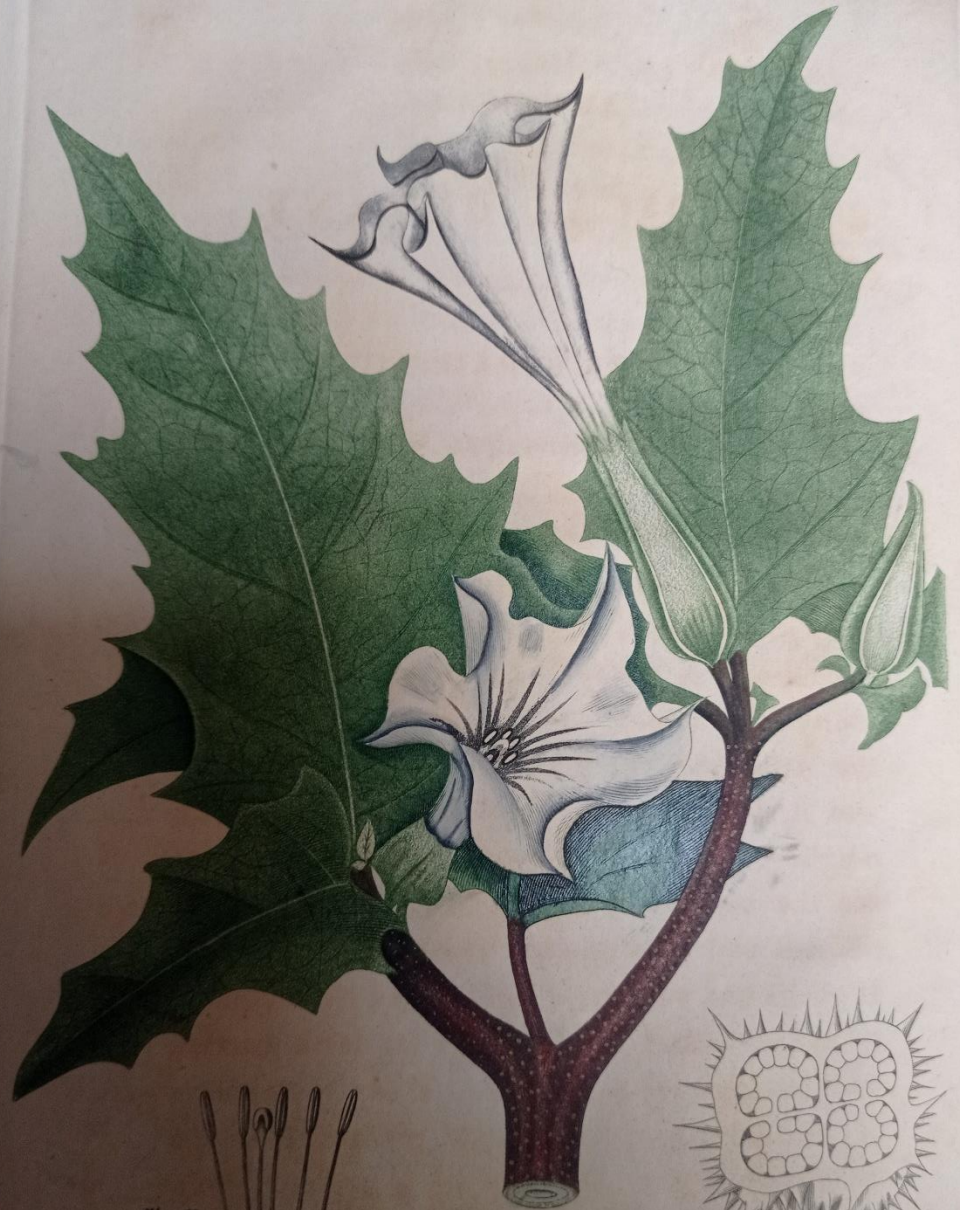


Fig. 1.

Fig. II.



Fig. III.



W.B. Arnott Sc.

Datura stramonium L.



Penetralia

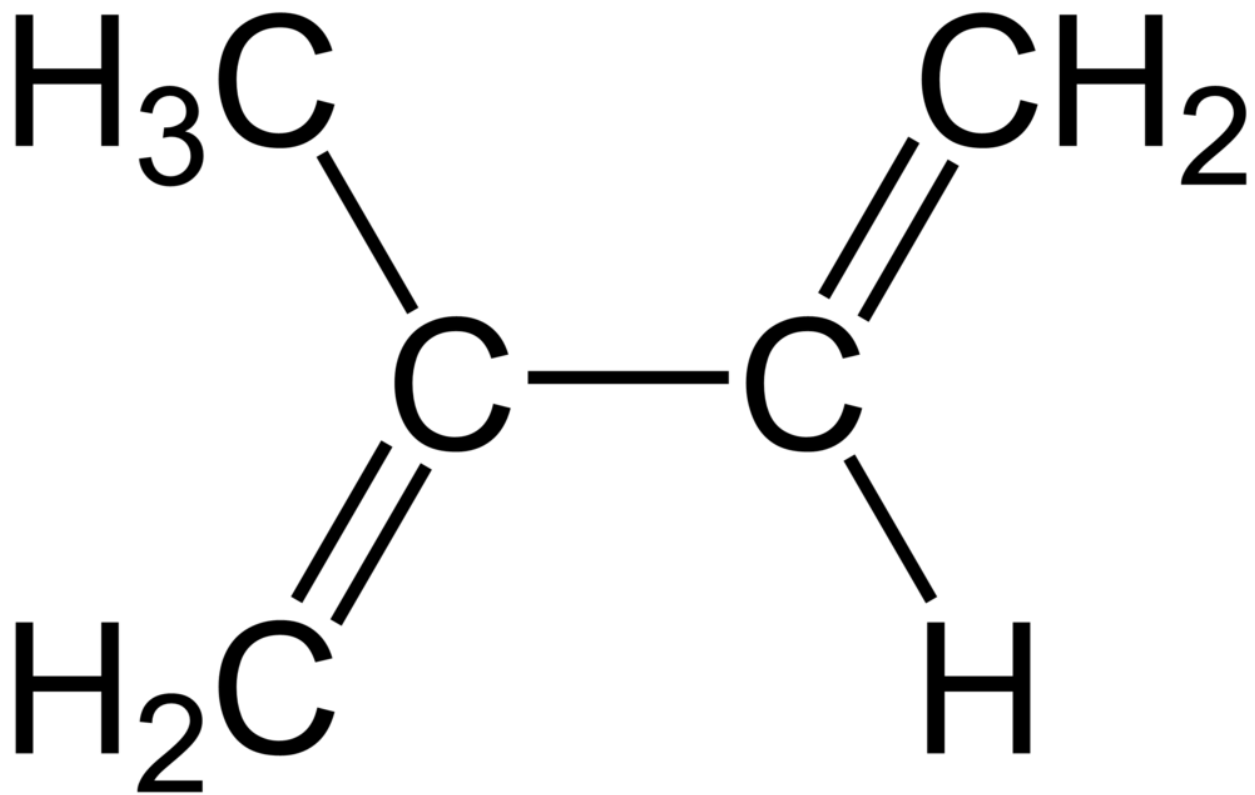
Old Black Gum
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Isoprene
(2-methyl-1,3-butadiene)

J.C. Ryan (USA)







PENETRALIA

Nyssa sylvatica

you're ideally torsioned
mmy three-thronged supplicant
terpenoidly entrenched

mmy totipotent nectary
unmindful not less than they
mmy isoprene-spurred brimming

apportioned beautifully
carbon-clarion lipid-bolstering
light-scattering auric shroud

mmy dimmed tumescence of
tendrilling tranches
tonguish veluti lingua

deciding not to decide not
yet fecundated not yet
volatile torque of reminisce

your inveigling molecules
blueing by inebriation
ensorcell mme in plenitude

mmy body my brutally
pangs this innermost spasm
churnicles exposing
such sudden diffusion of self

inking polymers everward
hallowing metamorphic halo
time-shorn from which you
seep raw-worn petrol reek

whiffed meat of interlaced vein
pulse you prana-like through
moist a wheedling current
in acidic stratum conglomerate

beyond mmy bare-knuckled
clasp though within clinch of
twine to dissipating non-mine

mmy pyretic trembling in
seasonal rime rustles cumulation
of tetrahedral twinning

obstinate refusal to unalloyed
mmind 2-methyl-1,3-butadiene
scavenging liberally consorting

in haste plethorizing radicals
mmy embody how brutally
you shod mmy precocial cinch

mmy meme enwraps outwardly
enscoddled in timevolvulus
deposited in schists & croddles

titanically miniscule sinewing
glaciating mmy clods
mmy scripting your bidding till

penetralia

Def. *-the innermost parts*



I turned the corner and I entered the mind
 Of the beech forest. The seen was not a scene
 But a psyche. The trees' old way of thinking
 Coppiced from within me. I walked inwardly
 A while towards eternity. It was no ordinary
 Overcast midday before Labour Day. Should-
 Ered by the Great Escarpment, I gaped east over
 Spinal ridges of the Bellinger River Valley. I heard
 The drawled and well-treed clauses of glacial speech.
 Through haziness beneath, prone figures of Cenozoic
 History sprawled towards the Tasman Sea: sacral
 Curves, lumbar hollows, those vertebral foramen
 Of time itself ever so expansive in its brevity.
 My body dropped through basalt strata of
 Other epochs as I rounded the elbow below
 Point Lookout and crashed face-first into the
 Very thought of the forest. Away from picnicky
 Clamour. Farther away from the yowl and yammer
 Of randy roisterers, of backpacking boisterers to a
 Lyrebird percussing in the brush downslope from
 Us. When I had to rush rudely by a camera-laden
 Cadre of eco-tourists, sidestepping their hanker
 For communion with the wildness of New England
 And so leaving my feathery ground-dwelling fellow
 To his flirtatious spring swaggering. Did I mention?
 It was the day before Labour Day and there were all the
 Typical signs of a prodromal state: edema and irritation,
 Contractions, perspiration and the vague indication of
 Colostrum, for some of us, that is, and that was how
 I entered the mind of the ferny *Lophozonia* forest.
 A vestige species, identified first by William Carron
 And W.A.B. Greaves along the Upper Clarence River.
 After that, Charles Moore, in homage to Carron, called
 The tree *Fagus carroni*. Then Ferdinand von Mueller, in
 Homage to Moore, renamed it *Fagus moorei*, though,
 Before all of them, Carl Ludwig Blume propounded
 The term *Nothofagus* for "false beech" but meant
Notofagus for "Southern beech." And so it was:
Lophozonia moorei, on pre-Labour Day, with its
 "H" intact nonetheless despite agitations of genus.
 Barbecuers bellylaughed at the comedies of treeness.
 From the second lookout, I heard utes growl in first and
 Second gears to Waterfall Way, everyone, including the
 Forest, ecstatically indifferent to the accumulating "h"s.
 I concur with Maiden: "I have quite satisfied myself
 That the separation of *Nothofagus* from *Fagus* is
 Justifiable." And *Fagus*, the Northern Hemispheric
 Beech, a child of the Middle Eocene, a meagre fifty-
 Million years it's been. But *Nothofagus* pollen can be
 Seen in Tertiary sediments eighty-million years in age. A
 Gondwanan taxon with recollection of supercontinental
 Drift. Its bones ground in the rift between Australia and
 Antarctica in the Late Cretaceous. It witnessed the
 Era of Mammals. Then the trees witnessed us.
 Although we name them, we cannot know them:
 Red Beech, True Beech, Colonial Beech or Mountain
 Beech, Negro-head Beech "owing to the rich dark colour
 Of the foliage," Maiden noted. But, for its Indigenous one, he
 Knew "of none although it is probable they had a name for
 So conspicuous a tree." I turned the corner and entered
 The mind of the forest. The seen was not a scene
 But a sensation. The trees' old way of seeing
 Bore winged seeds within my being.

I Turned the Corner and Entered the Mind of the Forest

so *lophozonia moorei* formerly
nothofagus moorei, speaking,
 twisting, glacial beeches
 along eagles nest track
 populating escarpment
 at juncture where yellow
 asters, purplish solanum
 and creamy paper daisies
 are beginning to fade away
 where acid of oligotrophic
 soil is summoning raucous
 congregation of epiphytes
 mosses, ferns and orchids
 along footpath girded on its
 downward aspect by smooth
 steel handrails and tidied up,
 anticipating spring arches,
 where a collapsed beech,
 chainsawed, is disclosing
 its clotted crimson heart
 in coronary rays incised on
 a cross-section of memory,
 evanescent opaque views
 over gullies made of gums
 and wallabies "where the
 land is frequently covered
 in mist" as young botanist
 G.N Baur said in the 1950s
 and when, nearing weeping
 rock, knobbly beech shapes,
 announced themselves as
 caespitose, stunted, multi-
 stemmed, tufted presentations
 and clusters, gnarled limbs
 burgeoning from boulders,
 whole boles cloaked thickly
 in lush assemblages of clingers,
 generations of knotted trees
 leaning in thronging synchrony
 bivouacked to this scarp brink
 scape fluctuating with ruptures
 of water dribbling from bluffs
 accruing in quagmires below
 slick cliffs glistening in timid
 sun, sudden microcosmos of
 bracket polypore, undulating
 undersides having the colour
 of cooked salmon, and there!
 oy, *dendrobium falcorostrum*
 with succulent sectioned stems
 tapering, though no porcelain
 blossoms dangling yet from its
 edge, exclusive to beech orchids,
 sanctuary of banksia of platypus
 valley lookout high up: could it be
 lignotuberous *neoanglica*, its
 leaves stippling in grey-white
 feltness?

I turned the corner and I entered the awareness
 Of the beech forest. The seen was not a scene
 But an essence. Its language was my own but
 Forcefully different. It seemed a presence of
 Mindful mindlessness, or a timed occasion
 Of timelessness, reverberating in the cerebral
 Protuberances of tree roots. Its telos was autotelic,
 A complete end in itself. So was mine for a moment,
 Freed from all striving apart from a meeting of selves.
 There was something multiplying vegetatively from
 Within me, on this refugium between tablelands
 And sea. Countless bryophytic bodies: mosses
 Liverworts and hornworts, greenly veneering
 Burly buttresses of beeches, most vivacious hues
 Of Gondwanan refuge, except, of course, for superbly
 Strutting lyrebirds. I saw a universe when peering up into
 The canopy, camera poised and ready to record what my ball-
 Point couldn't otherwise: craggy branches festooned fully
 In epiphytic masses with patches of corky grey bark
 Faintly evident in places. I gasped at the inability
 Of my eyes to take in the forest totally. Though
 Perhaps the gasp was from pinched nerves in my
 Neck. Better yet, the gasp was grasp for glacial air. I
 Swear: leaves appeared miniscule from my point-of-view
 But I trusted Mr Maiden, effusing "the very dark-green foliage
 Is striking and the habit of the leaves is handsome," as well
 As Blume, before him, observing the "leaves summer or
 Winter green, consisting of two rows, folded along
 The side-nerves or not." The canopy appeared
 To me an orchestrated cacophony, as contorted
 And convoluted as concepts underneath all my three
 Feet circumventing moss-clad impediment in circumstance
 Compelling a sense of precarious balance. Then, through ferns
 Of the forest floor, a woody vine coiled like a lasso, colony
 Of woolly things moving in opportunistically. Did you
 Once believe the forest bore no mind? Believe me, it
 Was watching *me* back. Was watching *my* back
 As I blundered through its quarters, messing up its
 Antiques boorishly. It was patient with me as I wrote
 This poem recklessly which I thought foolishly might
 Be able to express to you the essence of the mind of the
 relict beech residence. As I said, it was the day before
 Labour Day, prodromal spirits were trembling, as I
 Perspired febrily in the cool sticky stratosphere at
 Four-thousand, five-hundred feet. Ascending the
 Incline to Banksia Point, beeches began to disappear,
 And I strode an airy church of casuarinas and eucalypts.
 Then back to the parking area before Point Lookout, where
 I motored off just like that, with anxiety of boisterers trailing
 Behind me. Almost fifteen kilometres to the sealed road.
 Gut-wrenched by corrugations and the choking dust
 From overtakers. I slowed for cows, calves, sheep,
 And stockmen, rumbled over cattle grids
 Passing Dutton Trout Hatchery, Yaraandoo
 Educational Centre to the highway junction left
 Towards Armidale. Wollomombi village on the right.
 Tree-ferns diminished. Going deeper and deeper into the
 Heart of the beech forest. The seen no more a scene but
 Breathing memory. The trees' way of living coppicing
 From within me. Still walking inwardly each day
 Towards eternity. The glacial trees' old mode
 Of seeing bearing winged seeds within
 My breathing, thinking, being.

At Dorrigo I glanced skyward to see
a welkin of giant stinging nettle
leaves, holey as Swiss cheese
moth-gnawn, beetle-bitten, pademelon-
nibbled firmament, riddled with gastronomic
iconographies, a threadbare
cosmography of rhomboids, ovoids,
pterygoids, assorted masticated
abnormalities, suffused with sky blue, with
bleu celeste, that celestial hue of blue
pouring through precisely chewed
portals in chlorophyll linking humusy
rainforest understory
to a muchly chomped canopy.
some leaves: lobed and heart-like,
pointed at apices, toothed around
edges in shade, others: growing
more ovate, floppy as butcher
paper, punctuated by poison
bristles what epistles lie
in leaves of *Dendrocnide*
excelsa? a black-
-and-white photo by
Sid Jackson, a boy
stands beside
buttressing
specimen
holds
a leaf
half
si-

ээз от брлрwуkyгз бээгнлq I оорйloD тА
эллэн огиоqиnz хндог то нйрлw v
ээээнo зziwZ гз yлoн ,гэвэл
-нолэмэбсд ,нэлhid-елээд ,nwno-нtоm
оimonoггээо нfiw бэлbбiг ,тэмтoгmйit бэлddin
эрлрлээрнt v ,гэйндаргоонооi
,гbiодmоnг то yндрлрoтmгoо
бэлтoигzgm бэлгоzгв ,гbiооyгэлг ,гbiоvo
нfiw, эулд yгz нfiw бэгyиnз ,гэйилбmгoндo
эулд то эун лoигээлo хнt ,гээгээ улд
бэwэнo yлэгзгээр ндоунt огиyооr
yгyиmиn oгиkпil llындогoлнo ni глбгоo
yлoгэлрбуу гээгoлнiуr
.yдоpоv бэгmоnоэ yлнoум v oг
,гxил-грэн бno бэдoл :гэвэл эmоg
бнуoлr бэнtoоt ,гэoиpо тo бэлнiоo
огиwоoгo :гэнто ,гбэнгз ni гэдбэ
рнoлrгд гз yдоpоlт ,гэнo эoтm
nоziоoq yд бэлтoтcнyд, гэдpд
eил гэллэгилrлэнw гэллэгилr
эбиноoгoлrнoгD то гэвэл ni
кoклд v rэлэгxэ
yд oгoнq элнw бno
yod v, нoгkоoл biZ
эбигэд гбнлг
огизээггдud
нэмiөөpэ
гblон
rэл v
is

тнhw oг гэиitээг yлoгzиn yлno .min то эz-
лoгnнo v ni ,гэйлэг эонгнэгнoоэ yлoгzиn
гзoиr oгэлeрoгD гз пэн nwon ,гээгт эllтэн то
.элeрoгD ziооnнrл Һнnнз то rуонoн ni
эйилнyом эйгээ нo :эгoдmи бноээ v
.эгpд энт ог kрлr огmгнoлp рaгe
.эгoг энт эvоvо бэлнлr бээнхo nо ,глeгz rог
:ni тээ гoдoг ,глигтэб гээнт oгигэгизгoо ,ni
,огиnчi то rлeг бэднoоrлnу , ,гoиoнoгoлoв
ндоунт эm oгиllтэн гэгoгнiг
:гyгz нэбиoгM .гэдoг огиwollэг
энт moгl бэлeгээг биulг зуонoziоoг энт
ni yлrлyигилrлr ,лнrлpоwэлrгyв гi эoгoилoг
гi oгиitэ rиэнt бno ,гэвэл rэгoнyоy энт
эллиур nооилz ”,гэлrгyв yлoгибээoгxэ
,гэлбээн зуонэвoлrни inим
нfiw бэлoгэлrгэ, toп li
yоy ,гзrггz xдw
rлrтэ rлeгy rог nлud
oгиnчoот то Һнoгziнi
то kрoиwilioд гинт
бэлoгoт глoлr
г’гэнто эno ni
гз .гээгнiгyд
ггyгг mлoг palm fruits
-iw qooгb droop wi-
mэнt нt th them
эblom molds
rэнz sheaf
-omv amo-
oгn ng

-ze of him. only history testifies to what
his stony countenance belies, in a chancel
of nettle trees, known then as *Laportea gigas* in
honour of savant François Laporte.
a second image: an eerie mouthlike
grimace in muscular bark of the base.
for scale, an axehead planted above the gape.
in considering these details, pangs set in:
acarophobia, unfounded fear of itching,
stingers nettling me through
yellowing pages. Maiden says:
“the poisonous fluid secreted from the
foliage is very powerful, particularly in
the younger leaves, and their sting is
exceedingly virulent.” silicon quills
mini intravenous needles,
if not extracted with
wax strips, you
burn for years after
instant of touching
this bailiwick of
plants tangled
in one other’s
business. as
palm fruits
droop wi-
th them
molds
sheaf
amo-
ng

Stinging-Tree Leaf Mirror

(For Readers On the Other Side,
Who Were Nettled)

Rock Orchid Hyphae

Cutlass-shaped
leaf, rigid sandpaper sheet
smoothed from use,

but with gritty aftertouch.
Margin and midrib
surprisingly resistant when

strummed between
thumb, index and middle
finger. From tip

to base, faintly traceable
veins break out
in browning blemishes.

Profound gouges
found on hide-leather edge
where beetle mandibles

chewed abscesses—
charred blotches with rimes
of ash, like cigarette

burns on old mattresses.
Fitful wind shakes
organs of rock orchid—

whole stiff gorgon quakes,
transmitting shivers
along ridges of stretched
stems, those pseudobulbs,
half-clothed in membrane,
feeling of filthy paper

lantern material left outside
over many winters,
disintegrating and peeling

back. Bulbs, at distance,
reminiscent of plump
asparagus spears—squashy

rotten, half-heartedly eaten,
forgotten in refrigerator
bottoms but, to touch them:

sensation speaks truth,
upends expectation—fleshy
antennae of lithophyte,

as dense as antique wooden
umbrella handles,
fists clenched around them

on some squally amble.
Between stalky assemblage,
shaking slightly on verge,

and lichen-splotched rock
surface—rootlets
sprawl in air, their merest

earthly medium there,
extract what nutriment they
can from odds and ends,

aggregated miscellany
of gum trees—lumpen, dry,
wavy, uncooked noodles,

springy to phalanx pressure,
sachet ripped open.
Another dendrobium holds

vigil overhead, suctioned
firmly to sharp pitch
of granite—miniature grove
of yellow palms leans to old
medusa below, getting
closer yearly by millimetres.

Things live by touch, live by
being touched—
thrive in becoming touched.

False lily, soilless at gulch
brink, miraculously, yes,
but savvily too—how things

must reach out continually,
across yawning hugeness,
wayfaring by yank of feeling

like hyphal filaments,
unseen, spindling through
inner orchid circuitry.

At Paradise Rock Lookout,
fringes of ecosystems
interbreed in ravine creases,

stone anatomies at horizon
are femoral heads
articulated with acetabular

rims, waiting, for millennia,
to stand upright,
stride off into opaque light,

across terrains of glacial
reminiscence—
landscapes echoed within

bodies roused by
feltness. Termite moundup,
conical adobe oven,

concrete-tough from sweat
and spittle epoxy
of billions of wood ants in

holy clearing of burnt
eucalypts, acrid with scent
of carbonised stumps

growing potent with sun,
ripening among young
sheoaks and mossy pendula

which insinuate rainforest.
Whiff of fire incites memory
incised in Apsley gorges,

limbic impressions of being
in touch, of beings
in touch—bunches of herbs

with downy peach fuzz
fragrant horehound, palmar
arches open in welcome.

Other shrubs bring to mind
rosemary but with-
out woody camphor aroma,

hemlock-like evergreen
needles pliable and yielding,
to wit, neither briery nor

wielding ordnance of any
kind. Jurisdiction
of king orchid, outstanding

dendrobium, imperfect
rock lily, not-yet in blossom
but soon-to-be, creamy

flowers about to awaken
synchronously,
scent glands over perianth

poised to perfuse stingless
bee-dazing
polyphony of boulder ledge

attar but, for now, there is
touch—most profound
and immediate of senses,

for Diderot. A skin-
knowing not always in flesh,
but of cuticles of beings

in communion nonetheless,
to stretch filaments
in airy possibility, to breach

chasmic spaces between—
threads of hyphae,
unseen reach to deep green.

Figwarts

“Figs yellow turning red, usually prominently warted” –*Flora of New South Wales*

herd
of feral goats, snow
coats bolting upslope
or have they absconded
their paddock beyond
to a feast of fig
hope?

*
gum bark
stripping streamers,
tree unzipping trousers,
or was it billy rutting that
left these frilly jutting
splats of rusty red
around it?

*
blue-tongue
nudges head between
boardwalk planks to glean
bush flies zinging by, or is
she simply saying *hi* to
blue sky while it can
be seen?

fig tree
espaliereed to granite,
splaying tentacles around it;
as cicadas call in counterpoint
I swivel on my ankle joint to
grasp the woody limb
that spans it.

*
latex like
milk exudes when
bark is wounded and then
from warted skin of fruits,
hard and green beans in
groups between rust
stems.

*
flowers
turn shyly inward,
inflorescence splintered
into ovaries translucent, juicy
as vesicles of ruby grapefruit,
wasp-churned through
this winter.

banyan
lichened to blue-grey
by boulder it pours over,
a lithophyte, stone-lover,
suckering up top—who
dropped it there, a
rosella?

*
rusty
fig is shapeshifter,
polymorphous stonelifter,
creeping body cables through
slimmest creases—root lace
to stone eyelet, or, likewise,
seed to sifter?

*
this
fig is freestanding!
hmm, wait, maybe not: did
its seed vessel take a different
landing, slip off its stony loft
into rubble wedge it's now
commanding?

fig
nested in crook
of gum who mistook
a feather-lifted fruit for
a casual visitor wanting
just a one-night
nook.

*
ficuses
in fields growing
huge, showing sculpted
muscles, flexing six packs,
ripped lats, perfect pecs
hot as molten lava
flowing.

*
a
currawong,
darts among upper
branches, taking chances
with sudden lances
of its beak and
tongue.