2013

Balga, Jarrahdale, Western Australia

John Ryan

Edith Cowan University

Recommended Citation

This Poetry is posted at Research Online.
Balga, Jarrahdale, Western Australia by John Ryan

beyond the slender jarrah stalks
parsing the lazuline into snaggy bits
is the roar, like an indomitable river
hammering rocks on a violent descent
out of some snowy silence:
    the boom of terrestrial pilots
    on burning bitumen.
before me, a song flies by, pure song,
only song, of a bodiless fluttering katydid;
between the metronomic clicking,
the bush breathes out an off-beat whistle
and for all I know, below:
    Alph, the sacred river runs
    through a chasm in Xanadu.
somewhere a siren sings sweetly
for a grasstree, but here, neither tree,
nor grass, nor lily—not a black boy
but a balga—this two-trunked
oldster splits into heaven, offering:
    covenant in its roots
    dark shelter in its limn.

John C. Ryan is a second-year Ph.D. candidate at Edith Cowan University. His dissertation invokes the writer-as-botanist tradition of John Clare, Henry David Thoreau, and Pablo Neruda to create poetic interpretations of the unusual and stunning flora of Southwest Australia. He is a graduate of the University of Lancaster’s M.A. in Environmental Philosophy, and his research interests include ecophilosophy, landscape writing, and the human-plant relationship.