

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Mindy Dow

Maple

Field Maple

Alpine Sycamore

Centurial species of Acer

deciduous

palmate lobed leaves

fed farmer salads and cattle fodder

Flowers ripen into winged seed whirly birds

children put on their noses

and chase spiraling to the sidewalk

Norway

Field

Silver

Sugar

Sycamore

Fig

Mountains and meadows of gold honey

in autumn

raining down

on night branches of stars

from The Great Bear hunts

of Iroquois legends

Maple wood grains

carved out the Trojan Horse,

Anglo Saxon harps from a barrow

at Taplow,

and ship burials.

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Sycamore
veined the bottoms
of Cornish Easter buns,
and carved Welsh love spoons.

Sacred peyote ceremony
from Kiowa Box Elder altar fire

Saccharum Native sap-giver
sweetener of griddlecakes

New England Sugarbush on old farm roads

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Acacia

Australian groves
Yellow-blossomed wattles
(A. riddiana) in dust gray heat

Ethiopian elephants plod under
lush green canopies of
bipinnate leaves
linear legumes
seeds and twisted pods
ground and cooked in Cahuilla
and Pima cakes

Koa ashes of strength
canoes in Hawaiian waters
mirror image barge of consciousness
supporting the soul floating through life

Even Osiris
in the Temple of Thebes
protected his body in acacia wood

Arks
Tabernacle
Altars of the Israelites
common to Moses
sacred to Arabians

Home of Ancient Chinese Gods
from the North
Tree of the Sun
Altar of Walleechu Darwin discovered
in Patagonia

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Blue thread

red thread

smoke offerings with alcohol

gratitude to the spirit world blazing

with firelight and yerba mate

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Baobab

Moon tree in Madagascar
whose white obovate flower petals
are pollinated by nocturnal creatures
Adansonia digitata
African stout spongewood
storyteller
gateway to the spirit world
water guardian
soul guardian
tree of life
to medicine people
shamans
musicians
poets
you facilitate the soul's ascent
and when called upon
the soul's return
in deep places we cannot pass
we drink your white fruit pulp
we burn repelling plagues of disease
we eat your black seeds
your gift of water sustains
through droughts of dust and emptiness
nurturer of wild animals
of wild humans
who ate your shoots and leaves
souls grow with you as they always did
elliptical in leaf

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Spartree

helmet
gloves
boots laced up to the top
buckled blades to his calves
safety harness and ropes
clipped to his waist
ax and saw and wedges

rope around the trunk
climb up lift rope
climb up lift rope
climb up lift rope
to the canopy
300ft up a douglas fir and hot
either sky or ground
but you can't see both
too tall, too ancient

chosen by the highrigger
it's tall enough
strong enough
to withstand pressures
of the straining cables
and dragging logs

limbing
they fall
needles drift lingering
their old dust hangs midair

it smells like tree and gasoline
screaming saws and their echoes
guylines and cables wait with

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shackles fired in the smith shop
heaving with anticipation to be rigged

finally, the topping
pushing through the heart
holding the tension
sawdust piling on the ropes
sliding down his legs

his arms and back
straining while holding the chainsaw
eating through the wood
as the teeth cut fibers
hot and smoking until it's through
the tree's weight holds it for a moment
the anticipation of the fall held in stillness
wedges inserted
the highrigger pushes it and shouts down
his veins swollen in his neck and arms
sawdust sticking to his sweat

cracking, it sighs off of itself
the oldest crown falls thundering below
as its body sways back and forth
with this calloused rigger spiked to its headless neck

deftly he climbs to the round, flat surface
he made for himself
sits on top as the tree body continues to sway
at 300ft
he lights up a cigarette
surveying the endless, forest canopy.

*Phillip Borsos filmed Hap Johnson, a legendary highrigger at Caycuse, deep in Vancouver Island, capturing an era of giants in 1977.

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Owl Field

the moon calls
she listens
silence glides down her forearm
sifting through her fingers
it wants to rain
leaves stir
as if sleeping
she strokes her hair
just once
blue her eyes
green
branches in the moonlight
the trees are old
they drop their delicate fruit
I am listening
for owls
she eats the fruit
seeds and all
she is my tree