

Chaga: An Eclogue in Fragments

John Charles Ryan

I.

strident winter light
cast on benevolents
canker charcoal outside
coffee hued inner

studding paper white
birch canopy sweet
carob bitter coffee stark
amidst cold lucidity

if trees are fount (have
font) is hieroglyph image
inscription of *Betula* bark
around amoebic conk.

II.

chucking roadside rocks
to dislodge clinkers from tops
in Adirondack autumn
swift missed the mark

smashing my own wind!
screen sighs of dismay resound
(hope the insurance will pay)
blame it on errant asteroids

this is no way to wildcraft
this is chaga and chaga resists
chaga is granite yields itself
only with deft patient tactile

precision breath on tarp grinding
ear of tinder fungus *Inonotus*
to taste sting of forest grain
infuse seeping spring the same.

III.

aggregation of jagged
angles an ironclad Janus
head a shamanic polypore
parasite a whisper: *obliquus*

not gangrenous stealer
but mycelial healer and
adaptogen ulcer stomach
soother of cancer rot

concrete mass hammered
to chunks to pieces to bits
reduced to dust in mortar
body of stone chaga resists

IV.

syllabus of silent signs heave
of forest then abrupt groaning limbs
under snow weight woof and weft
of barren lines shimmer then none

fire warmed first floor of three
a short-range aura pipes burst
toilet froze a mini skating rink
tho' shower coffin steadywarm

stepping out you'd turn blue
nose first eyelids lashes brows
spidering ice through capillaries
we wore six layers boots skull caps

even wind choked sauna wood wet
so respite only under covers
and the sparse stars of sleep and
deep dreams that *that* season knows.

V.

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