

*Mt. Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales,
Australia 1999*

Winter Trees

Eucalyptus niphophila, snow-gum trees,
cloud-trees, storm-trees.
Curved white limbs,
fair and hard as bleached antlers,
spread and spiral among
boulder fields and tors,
somber etched granite,
raising from wind-rippled heather
below summer snowfields.

Small scimitar leaves,
pendants of summer, flash sage, lime and bronze,
flutter from fine red petioles.
Supple sweeping stems converge.
Every curved length
of every twisting limb
flows like the limbs of dancers.
Motion in stillness.

Swirling strips of peeling bark
reveal in leather rainbows
layer upon layer of exfoliating skin
in colors of slate, ivory, buckskin and wine,
now glowing in slanting sunlight
under gathering storm clouds.

Muscular multi-color limbs join.
Hard round wrinkles form
around thighs and knee joints.
Massive boles lie along ledges,
bulge from crevices,
merge with granite.

The day darkens and we,
wind chilled, teeth clattering,
retreat to warm valleys.
The snow-gums, squall-tossed
celebrate the brief mountain summer.

*Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park
Sydney, Australia 1999*

Summer Trees

Angophora costata, coastal apple.
Tree of sun, sea cliff and sandstone,
sheltered among rippled fissures
in Permian canyons and cliffs.
Stubby lumpy limbs twist and rise,
a symphony of elevated elbows
below the wind sheared canopy.

Spring leaves erupt bright red-bronze.
Chartreuse and citronella flash
in bright sunlight,
backed by bolts of cobalt sky.

Fat curved limbs and twisting trunks
shed paper streamers
of last year's bark.
Old leeward surfaces retain
skin like dark Cordovan leather,
highlights of pewter, plum,
red-purple.

New windward surfaces expose
pitted platings of yellow gold,
saffron and copper, etched with
fine waves and ripples,
like the sandstone;
stained with dark gum,
like the sandstone.

Sandstone diminishes
century by century.
Summer trees prosper.
Like *Gumbo limbo* and *Ligna vite*,
trees of the Caribbean,
Arbutus trees of Oregon,
Angophora makes gold, saffron and crimson
from stone, sand and sea spray.