

RODNEY STENNING EDGECOMBE
**NORFOLK ISLAND PINE,
RONDEBOSCH**

At the foot of Africa,
And caught within my window frame,
A Norfolk Island Pine
Impressed upon the sky.

A dark-green trilobite
Of ribbed and laddered jade,
It never moves—taut even
To the taunt of southern gales.

Not so the feather-duster palms
That sway and rustle at its waist,
And point its stillness and its height.

Despite their grisaille beards
(The spent fuel of their rocket climb)
They've got no further than that waist,
Nor ever will.

The pine lets down a web of macramé
Across a stucco spire,
Rigid like its web, but half as tall,
And too intense by half—
A self-important finger jabbed toward
The dead-end of the stratosphere
To stake a phoney claim.

Indifferent to spire and palm and wind,
In all the dark
Containment of itself,
My tree draws being from
The hawser roots that plait around
Thick power lines and cable veins,
As charged as they.

It offers an anatomy,
—A flat-fish skeleton on plated sky—
Not only of its ladder form,
But of the aeons that gave it birth.

The globe that sucks itself into itself,
And forces into fire the phoenix tissue
Of its crust, folded down and under
At its redly leaking rifts—
That globe is always pulling things apart.

Where Africa now rides, so once a piece of Pangaea,
Then dragged away and made a southern island
Crumb where my dark tree came slowly
To its shape and self.

And, having shaped and selved, it's rooted now,
A dark-green revenant, upon a
Spot where different land lies anchored on
A samely different sea,
On soil familiar and estranged.

Seen thus, my window tree seems frail.
No stony rock-ribbed fossil shape,
But more a plume, a feather meshed
Against the spire, and just as passing as
That stucco jab at things unknown.