

Ailm

Elm

A

Some scholars say
I was once the Silver Fir,

But for a long time now,
I have been my beautiful self.

I was what I was; now I am What I am,
a high-rising fountain of elm.

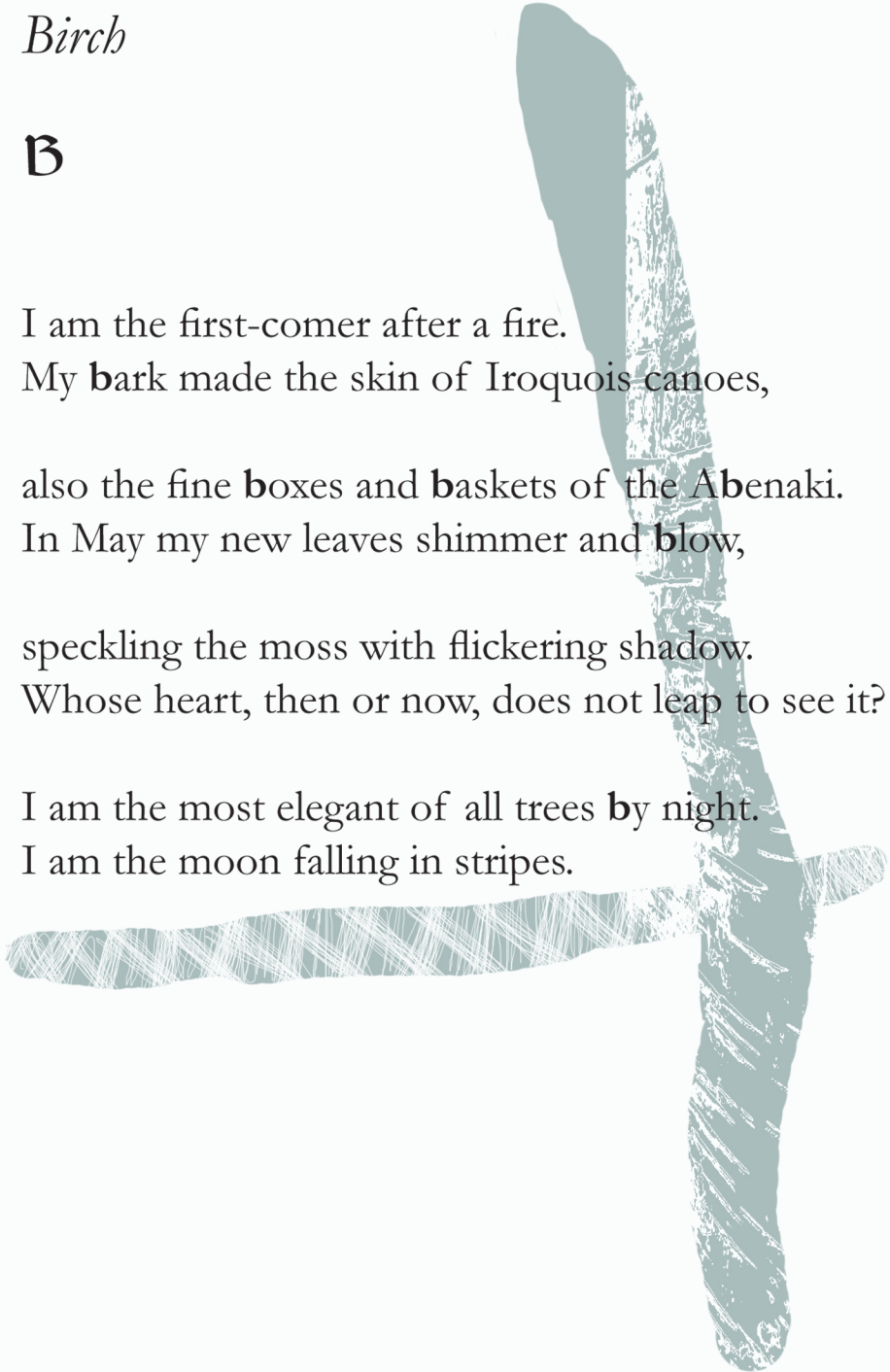
Beithe

Birch

B

I am the first-comer after a fire.
My **b**ark made the skin of Iroquois canoes,
also the fine **b**oxes and **b**askets of the **A**benaki.
In May my new leaves shimmer and **b**low,
speckling the moss with flickering shadow.
Whose heart, then or now, does not leap to see it?

I am the most elegant of all trees **b**y night.
I am the moon falling in stripes.



Calltuìn

Hazel

C

I am never the “ssss” sound, never snaky or soft.
You must cough out a hard sound to name me.

And contrary to the myth, I don't really stand
With a spring full of salmon feasting at my feet,

and them growing wiser by the moment. But you –
dip my nut in chocolate and feast!

But think also of the nut the Gardener
showed Julian, when he placed the All
in the palm of her hand.

Dair

Oak

D

I am the root-word of holy **Derry**
and not very far off from “**d**oor.”

I am the one who steals the thunder’s fire –
I am the King Tree,

never mind that the ash **d**isputes it.
Mistletoe, sparrow, squirrel, owl, and moth –

These are among the beings
I shelter.

Εαδθα

Aspen

Ε

I am the forest's fore-seer and fore-teller;
also, as you see, I'm the commonest letter of all.

On fine days I flutter softly as a moth;
I am a fair morning's soft-murmured echo.

I see every change before it sees itself.
Before Autumn takes his first breath, I shiver.

I pay in advance for my winter sleep
with fine October gold.

Seàrn

Alder

§

Look any which-way, you'll spot me.
I love both the bog
and the dry forest's edge.

I'm the filler of your untended fields –
your one true sure-crop,
and equally the sparrow's retreat.

In another time, in another place,
I guarded the island of the dead –

I bound its dark banks with scarlet threads.
Bran's singing head is my emblem.



Gort

Ivy

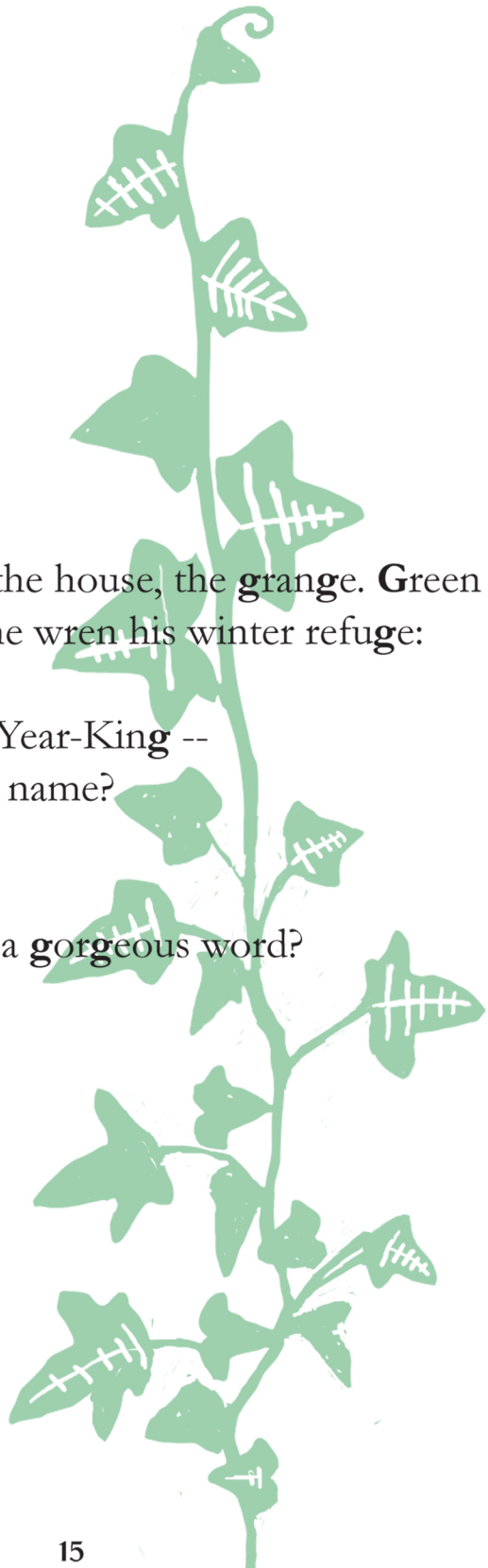
G

I **cling** to the wall,
I **cling** to the tree.

I **cling** to the church, the house, the **grange**. **Green**
in all seasons, I **give** the wren his winter refuge:

Garrulous bird, Little Year-King --
do you know his **right** name?

Dreolán, dreolán –
Don't you think that's a **gorgeous** word?



(H)uath

Hawthorn

H

Some say I am **the** fairest of trees
and call me Queen of **the** May.

Others say I am unlucky, fit only
for a witch's stick.

I say beware you, Raven and Merlin:
the thrush that flies to my **heart** I'll **hold** safe.



logh (lodh)

Yew

I

I am the cypress of the rainy lands:
I am the churchyard tree there, the shade
for their dead.

Green Robin fashioned his long-bow from me –
I am red-fleshed, knot-less, sinewy, strong!

I am also the place where black and green meet,
the place where night hies for his noonday sleep,
sequestered deep in the heart of me.

As for my fine red berries, take care:
Noli me tangere!

Luis

Rowan

L

In May I offer you platefuls of stars,
but you must come north to see them —
I am not common hereabouts.

By September those used-to-be blossoms
are berries, rusty red as Aldebaran. By Samhain
they're scarlet, as vivid and shocking as blood.

I am the tree that shields against misfortune,
the dark troubles that blow from the north.

Muin

Grapevine or Bramble

M

Clos de Vougeot or Blackberry Jack,
I'll **m**ake your cheeks red as **m**y winter canes.

I lead the revels, I shake out the gladness
that hides in every heart.

All the **sam**e, you beware: after the laughter
and the **m**erry dance, **com**e again the cold and the
dark.



Nuin

Asb

n

I was the original Louisville Slugger – long before aluminum, I sent balls flying out of the park—**N**ew York, **B**oston, **B**rooklyn, all over.

I also supplied oars and slats for coracles. **N**o canny Irishman took to his boat without me. I was his talisman, his ancient proof against drowning.

For I am Royal: I am the Sea King's favored tree – and if that weren't enough, I was once Odin's all-seeing raven's perch:

I am Yggdrasil, the World Tree. So tell me now truly if your vaunted oak is not an upstart.



Onn

Gorse

O

Furze, whin, gorse, conasge – I have many names, but **you do not** know me by any.

I'm **coarse** and **over-rampant**, but **coated** with lemony, much-perfumed blossoms in August.

Left to my devices, I'd **clot** every **foot-path**, every **cow** and sheep-track that **crossed** the **country**.

Human **or** beast, it pays a **soul** well **not to stumble into** me – I am a **thicket** of sting, a **nest of spines**.

Ruis

Elder

R

I am **fragrant** in flower
but **bitter** in **berry** –

however there's a way
to make my **rancor** sweet:

you may have heard it,
I make a fine wine –

just **turn** my indigo into **drink**.

Seile

Willow

S

“Down iby the **S**allie Gardens” –
Don’t you know that’s a **s**ong about me?

I bend, I **s**way, I **s**ing in the wind,
standing as I do between the water and the moon.

I am the **f**irst leaf to unfurl in **s**pring
and the **l**ast green to fade in autumn –

it’s also important to mention,
I am the poet’s **o**wn tree.

Peith bhog

Downy Birch

“Soft” B

I am “Beithe” pronounced with a “soft b” –
a sound a bit different than your English “p”

(but don’t worry: plain “p”
is fine for our purposes).

But which birch species am I?
Poets and scholars have never agreed.

Some have gone so far
as to call me the guelder rose!

Teine

Holly

τ

A fine ruddy man clad in glistening green
am I all winter. I trek

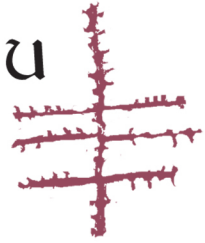
along the forest's edge, but I will not
spurn your garden.

You deck me about in the house at Christmas,
yet surely I'm at my finest wearing snow.



UR

Heather



Heathrow, Heidelberg, the poetess Heather McHugh –
these are a few of my namesakes.

I'm low-growing, **un**assuming, **un**-treelike,
it's **true**, yet in **autumn**, I light the hills

with day-glow fire – my colors **burn**
as hotly as a Brontë plot

(think of poor Cathy
and her **struggle** against Heathcliff).

