

YGGDRASIL, THE MUNDANE TREE
after an illustration by Bishop Percy, 1847

Nanette Secor

A map of the universe,
a bonsai in a paperweight.
And under that, a mine,
its dust-kicked, and sand-spit men.
And, at the foot of the mine,
a tree, and under it,
the empty air.

The worldly tree strikes rock and springs
from rock. Snakes coil along the black-
flint path; the cuckoo's envy sounds
ring out predictably. I'll wager,
you'll see land before us all:
the Holy Roman Empire in a boot.

Forgive me for not seeing this before:
the tree of heaven, the snow-globe upsidedown,
the bright sunshowers, flotillas of mimosa
falling. What springs from rock returns to stone.

Don't listen to negativity:
and you will find of your own accord
your happy desert isle
beneath the sea, swordfishes
leaping from the rock,

each mundane joy anomalous.
A tree, which is not death or life,
or land or sea, is floating under us
as bright as light.