

Men and Trees

by George Vukelich

The shape of the black oak exactly a Y
on its last day against the sky.
The young sawyers cutting, wedging the base
will be half as old when they come to die

There is no man living who can recall
this old one facing its very first Fall.
Last century's child in a wilderness place.
No man alive can remember at all.

Now it lies in the petunia plants
its heartwood hollowed by carpenter ants.
Their queen dispatched with a shovel clout.
Is it all by plan or is it by chance?

Men and trees die inside out.
No matter how tall, no matter how stout.
Something within us starts gnawing about.
Thriving on heartwood, gnawing about.