

Jan Owen

FIG TREES

These Burmese figs are not posing
for Henri Rousseau. Expatriates, they are gazing
away from us over the pond, in mud
made grassless by their own deep shade.
The glossy leaves like elephant ears
or satellite dishes wait for the buzz
of a certain wasp that never comes
(being two countries off in a hard regime)
and so the buds like parrot beaks
gape after nothing, but grow and take
dry scrotal shapes or sag like shrivelled wombs
from aerial roots and inner limbs.
The few that swell up to a sexual red
are sterile still, final as z
in a larder for bats. Pick one.
Slice it across. Are you closer in
to sadness? Or to a cave
of rose agate, the mirror halves
of the heart of darkness opened on light :
mother of absence, sister of quiet.
They make good compost, Angela says.
They make good ballast against imagined loss.
From here it seems the two trees crouch
down over their slope as if to hatch
some future out
in their own right.