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# Apprentice

Judith Beveridge

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It'll be dawn before the sawing's done; all night  
cutting it up, yet by dark's end, a pine,  
or cypress moon, fragrant, awaiting finish. I watch

the lathed curls roll off, sinuous as beach names  
wound up in a nautilus. I love the axe's  
deskwork prose, the four grades of night sky,

the thunder brought into sync with the cross-grain  
gnarls. All night I work under lightning's  
rough-edged saw. I rub at the rings, polish each

stump to a peak of well-logged summers. All night  
getting a rhythm, sealing time under resin,  
my sweat mixing with the dust, the saw singing

as it hits a burl, sandpaper lending wood a choice  
of stars. Though I'm sore from the sticking  
blades, though my heart is like a buck, rubbing

antlers on bark, though my hands seek concert  
with the dark, by morning's first spill,  
no stroke will be unrung, no tool-teased curl will

lie unswept, or be taken by wind; no wing-sown  
whorl loom up to the levelling sun.  
I love the silent gnarlings, the ingrained refusals;

designs hewn from skies hardened by a splintering  
glaze; sighs knurled into curses, moon-edged  
rehearsals; words curling off a lumberman's tongue.

All night listening to the wood crack, to the saw  
keen back. My heart coming hard again —  
& again if the shrill stars of summer have sung.