

# MUSINGS

by FR. SEÁN ÓLAOIRE, PHD - 2017 VOLUME 1

*The Gravity  
of a Scrub Oak*

I

An ancient Scrub Oak  
is clinging tenaciously  
to the very steep hillside.  
Perpendicular to its foothold,  
it stretches out  
almost horizontally  
over the valley far below,  
pointing three gnarled limbs  
to the West.

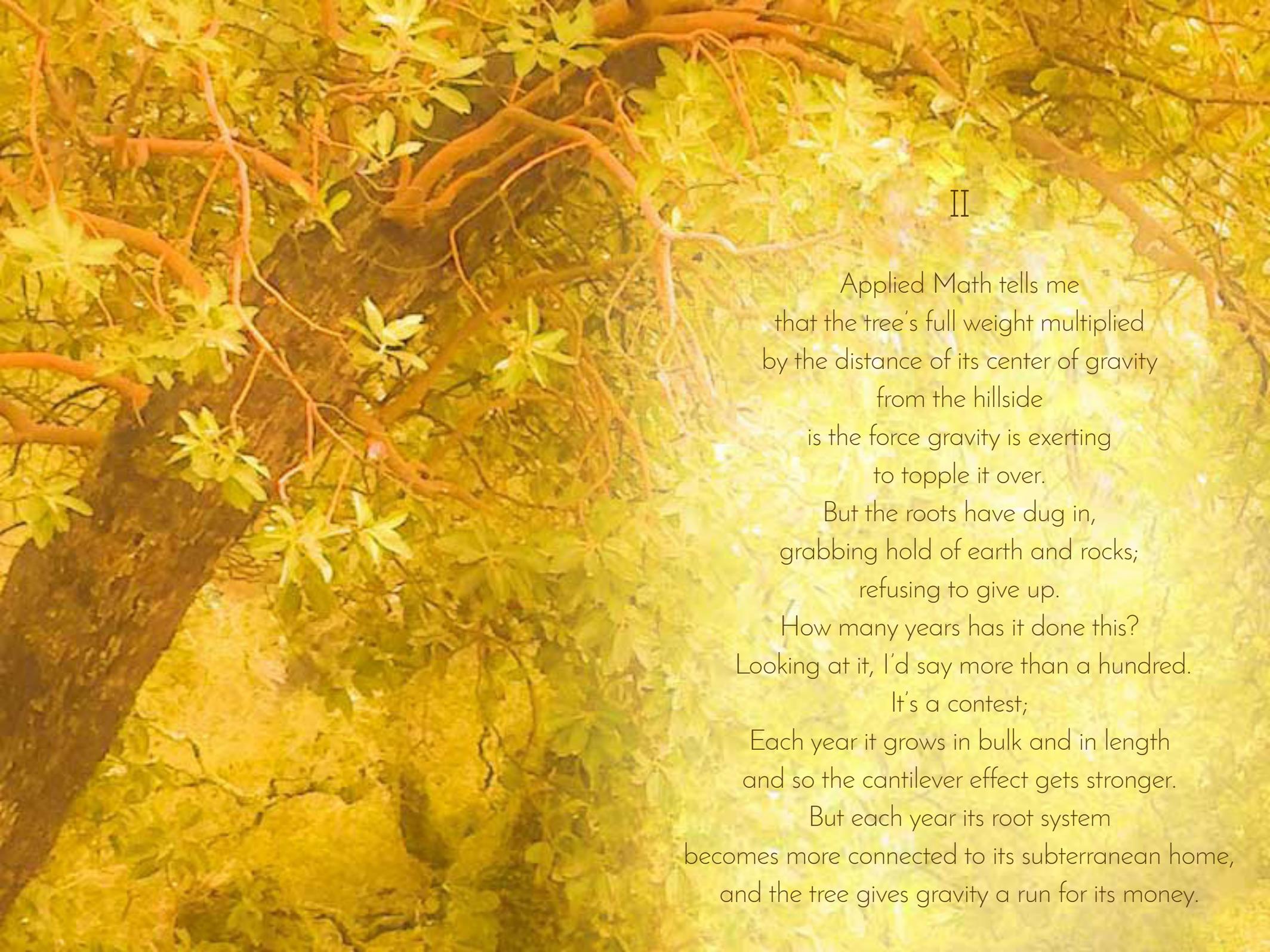


They look like three arthritic fingers  
curled and knuckled and painful,  
as they attempt to push themselves  
into a green glove  
fashioned of prickly leaves  
and stubborn twigs.



The svelte trunk is clothed  
in a form-fitting gown of smooth satiny lichen  
that sensuously emphasizes every voluptuous curve;  
only the arthritic hand reveals its age.





## II

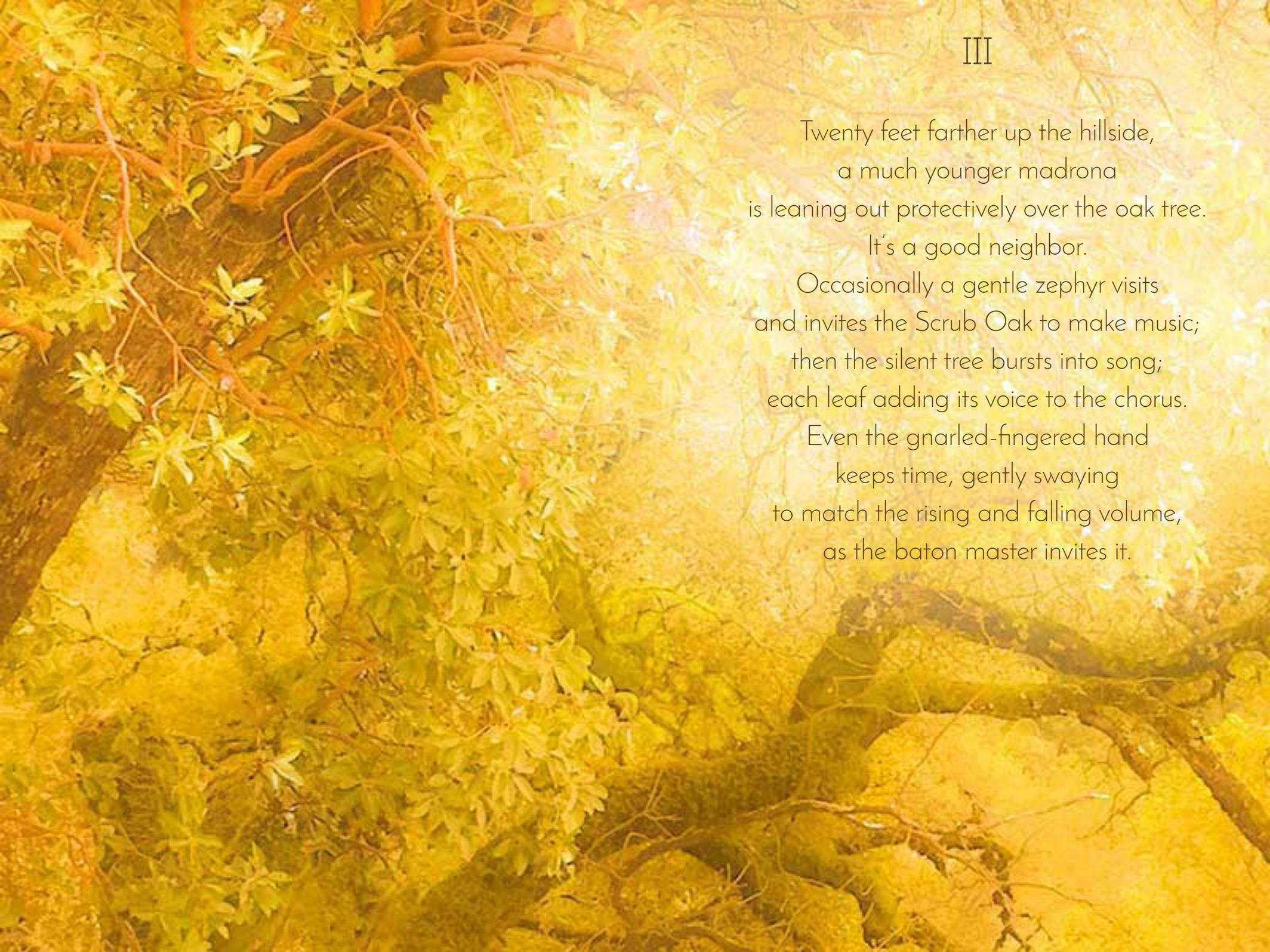
Applied Math tells me  
that the tree's full weight multiplied  
by the distance of its center of gravity  
from the hillside  
is the force gravity is exerting  
to topple it over.

But the roots have dug in,  
grabbing hold of earth and rocks;  
refusing to give up.

How many years has it done this?  
Looking at it, I'd say more than a hundred.

It's a contest;  
Each year it grows in bulk and in length  
and so the cantilever effect gets stronger.

But each year its root system  
becomes more connected to its subterranean home,  
and the tree gives gravity a run for its money.



### III

Twenty feet farther up the hillside,  
a much younger madrona  
is leaning out protectively over the oak tree.

It's a good neighbor.

Occasionally a gentle zephyr visits  
and invites the Scrub Oak to make music;  
then the silent tree bursts into song;  
each leaf adding its voice to the chorus.

Even the gnarled-fingered hand  
keeps time, gently swaying  
to match the rising and falling volume,  
as the baton master invites it.

# IV

Meanwhile Father Sun  
continues to feed it intravenous chlorophyll.

It's like an outdoor Irish pub:  
music and laughter and a "drop a' de craytur".

Nature surely knows  
how to throw a party!

Namasté,

*Seán*

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