

A Review of the Poem “Jacaranda”: To See the World in a Jacaranda

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Abstract:

“Jacaranda” is a lyrical meditation on the violet-blossomed jacaranda trees that line Sydney University and Broadway. Through vivid, cosmically tinged imagery, the poem transforms the trees from local flora into emblems of enduring beauty, impermanence, and cosmic order. It juxtaposes radiant bloom with graceful decline, portraying petals that fall “without sorrow” as a dignified carpet beneath “pillars and constellations”. This interplay of light and shadow, serenity and brilliance, frames the jacarandas as living metaphors for resilience amid adversity. Ultimately, the poem resolves in a philosophical vision where “a person, a tree, a star” are equally vast and minute, revealing an infinite, cyclical unity that binds the earthly to the celestial.

Keywords: “Jacaranda”; resilience; impermanence; cosmic interconnectedness; natural beauty

Jacaranda

Lin Funa¹

In the sunlight, it throbs, in the gloom, it shines,
A pure and radiant galaxy of fairies,
Blooming in serene brilliance.
At the University of Sydney, along Broadway's sidewalks,
They stand tall and elegant.
When battered by wind and rain,
Their petals fall without sorrow,
With the dignity of pillars and constellations,
Still beautiful, laying down a carpet of blossoms.

¹ Lin Funa (林馥娜) is a famous Chinese poetess who has many poetry works published and now lives in Guangzhou.

The kaleidoscopic reflection of heaven and earth:

A person, a tree, a star—

Infinitely vast, infinitely small.

Original Chinese poem:

蓝花楹

林馥娜

阳光下怦然，灰暗里夺目

一座莹净的仙女星系

绽放恬淡的灿烂

在悉尼大学，在百老汇行道旁

卓然亭立

当风雨相摧

她们花落而不悲

以楹柱与星座的气格

兀自为美，铺垫一地花毯

这天地万花筒的投影

一个人，一棵树，一粒星

无穷大，无穷小 (Lin, 2014)

The poem “Jacaranda” celebrates the beauty and resilience of the jacaranda trees, which are known for their vibrant purple blossoms. The poet draws a deep connection between the natural beauty of the jacarandas and broader themes like cosmic significance, the human experience, and the cyclical nature of life. The jacarandas, blooming around Sydney University and Broadway, serve as a central metaphor for beauty that persists through adversity, capturing the fleeting yet powerful moments of natural and cosmic rhythms.

Jacaranda is a blue or purple flowering tree commonly found in Sydney, Australia. The choice of the jacaranda as the subject of the poem not only reflects the tree's prominence in the physical landscape but also symbolizes deeper aesthetic, emotional, and philosophical meanings.

The poem opens with “In the sunlight, it throbs; in the gloom, it shines”, presenting the jacaranda as something alive and dynamic, both in light and shadow. This duality implies its beauty is not fleeting or dependent on external conditions. The image of “A pure and radiant galaxy of fairies” evokes a celestial and otherworldly comparison, placing the tree among the stars. This comparison elevates the jacaranda from a mere tree to a cosmic entity, suggesting that its beauty and existence are part of a larger universal order.

The jacarandas are described as blooming with “serene brilliance”, indicating a calm yet radiant presence. The juxtaposition of these seemingly contradictory qualities—serenity and brilliance—speaks to a deeper aesthetic appreciation of balance and harmony. This tranquility is further emphasized by the physical setting of “At Sydney University, along Broadway's sidewalks”, giving the poem a specific geographic grounding that blends the cosmopolitan with the natural world.

The poem addresses the inevitable challenges faced by the jacarandas: “When battered by wind and rain, / Their petals fall without sorrow”. Here, the poet celebrates the resilience of the jacarandas, whose petals may fall, yet their dignity remains intact. The idea that the trees do not mourn their fallen blossoms reflects a philosophical acceptance of impermanence and change, a key concept in both natural cycles and human life.

The lines “With the dignity of pillars and constellations, / Still beautiful, laying down a carpet of blossoms” suggest a dignified, stately beauty. The “pillars” and “constellations” evoke a sense of grandeur and permanence, which contrasts with the fleeting nature of the fallen blossoms. The jacarandas retain their grace and majesty even in loss, leaving behind a “flower carpet” that turns their inevitable decline into another form of beauty.

The final lines of the poem, “The kaleidoscopic reflection of heaven and earth: / A person, a tree, a star— / Infinitely vast, infinitely small”, encapsulate the poem’s broader philosophical perspective. The comparison of a person, a tree, and a star speaks to the interconnectedness of all things, regardless of scale. The use of “infinitely vast, infinitely small” suggests that life, beauty, and significance can be found in both the cosmic and the minute. This reflects a worldview in which everything, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is part of a larger, infinite system.

The tone of the poem is contemplative and serene, with a sense of awe and reverence for the jacarandas. The poet’s choice of words like “serene” and “brilliant” indicates a balanced, harmonious approach to describing beauty. The style is refined and elegant, with vivid imagery that appeals to both the visual and philosophical senses. The use of symbolic language (e.g., comparing trees to constellations) deepens the poem’s layers, inviting readers to look beyond the surface beauty and consider the larger, more abstract ideas at play.

The poem’s structure mirrors the cyclical, natural rhythm it describes. It flows with a sense of progression—from the initial blossoming of the jacarandas, through their resilience in the face of wind and rain, to their ultimate shedding of petals and the reflective conclusion on the nature of existence. The use of enjambment and varied line lengths creates a feeling of

movement and fluidity, much like the sway of trees or the passage of time. This rhythm reinforces the theme of natural cycles and the endless interplay between creation and decay.

“Jacaranda” is a poem that combines the observation of nature with deeper philosophical insights about beauty, resilience, and existence. The jacarandas serve as both a literal and metaphorical presence—rooted in the physical world of Sydney and the sidewalks of Broadway, but also part of a larger, cosmic system. The poet uses the jacaranda's serene beauty as a way to explore themes of impermanence, the interconnectedness of all things, and the quiet dignity found in the natural world. Through its rich imagery and contemplative tone, the poem encourages readers to reflect on the cycles of life and the infinite beauty found in both the grand and the small.

References

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