

spare adjectives

running

through

the air

Changing-Time!

colours deepen toward the fulcrum of decision  
nervous system stretching through the mountain  
tapping into its knowing  
with a chemical key  
plant-hormone door to the Decision Time

For millennia, no one knew what made the ancient Oracles of Delphi see. From around the 8<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, they plunged into underground temple chambers set into the mountain, speaking in tongues. Seekers came from far and wide to ask about the future. From their trances, the oracles answered with cryptic turns of phrase.

But how did they enter their altered state? The ancient historians claimed that sweet-smelling air in the temple chambers, seeping up from the rock, sent the oracles into a trance. But when modern archaeologists began excavating the site in 1892, they found no evidence. They saw no great fissure in the temple rock, and concluded that the ancient historians couldn't be trusted.

Many decades later, a chance encounter between an archaeologist and a geologist produced a different story. Following a hunch, they discovered that sweet-smelling ethylene gas once seeped into the temple chambers through micro-fissures in the mountain rock. Earlier archaeologists, who lacked geological expertise, overlooked the many tiny fissures in the temple. In fact, these were the perfect vessels for gases to escape.

Ethylene, the modest hydrocarbon gas, is a known sedative. It was briefly hailed as the general anaesthetic of choice in 1920-30s hospitals and medical journals. At higher doses, it can loosen the tongue, and induce a euphoric state. In plants, it serves as a hormone. Its presence provokes many changes: from losing leaves to ripening fruit.

In Delphi, the mountain fissures have long since run dry. The oracles have fallen silent.

Where is ethylene now?

The ancient molecules have many modern cousins. Ethylene is manufactured in a wide range of industries, to make products like polyethylene plastic bags and automotive antifreeze. In a niche application, it is used to artificially ripen bananas. The bananas are picked and shipped green, to avoid bruising. Then, in refrigerated chambers, they are gassed. Their hormone rushes in, in industrial doses. Their ear to the Changing-Time opens.

When ethylene whispers, at do they hear?

the creaks and groans of ancient decisions?

the warp and woof of Decision Time rushing in?

the cadence of the ages?

an answer to the seeping and the cracks of our moment, strained to the pages, where eggshells of decision wander in on slicing trays and the air licks its chops and turns it in, turns it in, turns it in?