

THIS GROUND MADE OF TREES

The giants have fallen.

I think I can hear the echo
of their slow composition

the centuries passing
as note by note
they fall into the forest's

silent music. Moss has run
over their backs, mushrooms
have sprung from the moss,

mold has coated the fungal caps
and the heartwood
has given itself to

muffled percussion
of insect and microbe
that carpet of sound

that gives the forest its rhythm.
A nuthatch twits
or a vole cheeps.

The scent of decay rises
like steam from a stewpot.
Anywhere I set my foot

a million lives work
at metabolizing
what has gone before them.

The day is shortening
and the winter wrens have
something to say about that.

I can almost give thanks
that the soil will claim me
but first allow me, dear life,

a few more words of praise
for this ground made of trees
where everything is an invitation

to lie down in the moss for good
and become finally really
useful, to pull closed

the drapery of lichen
and let the night birds
call me home.

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