

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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