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.

October 2008
H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest

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