

OLD GROWTH

Go back
before any word
was asked
to corral
the grandeur
of giant forests.
Okay, now fast
forward into
the heart of
what was once
called god, hemlocks
and firs, wide as
I am tall, doorways
into the public space
of what's evolved.
The super old
fall and consolation
grows wild, a pelt
of green—*Dicranum*,
cattail and stepping
stone, the moss-made
soil feeding a fierce
quiet flourishing
that the birds cannot
stop footnoting.
There's no word
plain enough to describe
what makes a visitor
weep in the presence
of trees so ancient.
It's time that makes
the godless godly stillness
shock the body into tears.
Sublime might be
the word, a feeling
just barely under the
threshold of what
it's possible to feel,
love made loud
by cellular symmetries,
death only
one phrase in
the ceaseless song.

Alison Hawthorne Deming, October 2011

From a hike on the old-growth trail in the Andrews Forest as a warmup for the Eye of the Storm Gathering on Sept 29-Oct 2, 2011.