

excerpts from The Body in the World

It was the deep voice of the earth
she listened for—rumbles and groans,
sobs

of exultation in long, slow phrases—
as she plunged her hands into the red
bucket of dirt—dark matter—its grains
and globules, skeletal tatters of leaves,
spongy shreds of bark and splintery
twigs

flowed through her open web of fingers,
back into the bright, hard plastic
she'd lugged to the woods to rob
the forest floor of its riches.

And she listened, too, for the clicks
and cries of small, busy creatures—
their minuscule sighs of pleasure—
under the leaf litter, digesting
and gnawing, tunneling, drilling,
opening black veins to ocean and
blue sky.

The fruiting body pushed its tender head up through glowing lignin, the last tough fibers of the rotting tree that resist, and resist the earth's churning engine, acid decay, the freeze and heave of ice that breaks down rock to sand, silt, clay, builds up the elemental broth we're made of. To rise up we must first press deeper, sending a net of pale filaments through the mined and nourishing dirt, prepared by dung eaters and decomposers, predators and prey. Everything that drops to ground, even the toughest—
snake skin, antlers, hair, the cuticle of insects, heartwood, leaf vein—gives back what it took. Up through the fertile bed of death, the fruiting body presses its tender head.

--Anne Becker