

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