

Please consider:

Forest as site of first blood
where you stumble and are seized
Forest as obscured vision, the way
branches layer to block out anything
but immediate surroundings
Anything but
the immediate moment

Unless you know this land, this spot, this patch
the special eddies, the shape of the place
the rhythm here
Then it has a history

Forest as intimacy – stumbling upon a shy unicorn, its
dainty head poised *just* so at the end of a neck curved
softly as a dove's breast

Resting in the center of the labyrinth
Like a dew drop shining in the center of a spider web

surrounded by pale blossoms
ephemeral as memory

Forest as flesh: the body
Forest as a deer slain
As a deerskin, patchy and fungal
And the quick work
made of its corpse
Efficient like a spider draining her prey
with deft grace

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excerpts from "Not So Far as the Forest"
by Edna St. Vincent Millay

II

Branch by branch
This tree has died. Green only
Is one last bough, moving its leaves in the sun.

What evil ate its root, what blight,
What ugly thing,
Let the mole say, the bird sing;
Or the white worm behind the shedding bark
Tick in the dark.

You and I have only one thing to do:
Saw the trunk through.

IV

Not dead of wounds, not borne
Home to the village on a litter of branches, torn
By splendid claws and the talk all night of the villagers,
But stung to death by gnats
Lies Love.

What swamp I sweated through for all these years
Is at length plain to me.

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None of my delusions were ending, nothing was being satisfied, there was no release or absolute truth that didn't have to be discarded and reevaluated. Every path wound around to nothing, and I had to find a new one, like being lost on a mountain, unable to find the summit.

– And Then I Thought I Was a Fish by *Peter Welch*

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Scientists restrict the word symbiotic to those relationships between species that bring some detectable mutual benefit; but the true world, the true place of any kind, is the sum of all its phenomena. They are all in some sense symbiotic, being together in a togetherness of beings. It is only because such a vast sum of interactions and coincidences in time and place is beyond science's calculation [...] that we so habitually ignore it, and treat the flight of the bird and the branch it flies from, the leaf in the wind and its shadow on the ground, as separate events, or riddles – what bird? which branch? what leaf? which shadow? These question-boundaries (where do I file that?) are ours, not of reality. We are led to them, caged by them not only culturally and intellectually, but quite physically, by the restlessness of our eyes and their limited field and acuity of vision. Long before the glass lens and the movie-camera were invented, they existed in our eyes and minds, both in our mode of perception and in our mode of analysing the perceived: endless short sequence and jump-cut, endless need to edit and range this raw material.

– The Tree by *John Fowles*

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Tadhg said, 'My father often told me of the tailor,' and Sean cut off a slice of plug, rubbed it in his hands and took his pipe from his pocket. 'Now this tailor,' said Tadhg. 'You remember the old travelling tailors better than I do.' 'I do,' said Sean, and took a red piece of turf from the fire with the tongs to light his pipe. 'I remember them well,' he said after he had lit it. And for some reason we all remained silent until the pipe was lit. 'This suit of mine was made by one of those tailors,' said Sean, 'and there's wear in it yet. That's the kind of tailors we had those times.' 'They went from house to house making clothes for the people,' said Tadhg, 'and whatever house they went to, there they would stay until the work for that house was finished, and they'd get their bit to eat and a place to lie down for themselves every night, for what time they stayed in that house.' 'They would, they would. That's true,' said Sean, puffing. 'And a great number of tailors were great storytellers,' said Tadhg. 'I remember 'twas a thing we'd all look forward to, the visit of the tailor, because of the long stories he'd tell by the fire at night. 'Twas a thing you'd expect of a tailor, to be able to tell stories, for when he was able to make clothes and travel, he was surely well able for that.' 'If he wasn't able for stories,' said Sean, 'the people those times would hardly think him fit to remain in the house making clothes.'

– The People of the Sea by *David Thomson*

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Further consider:

In the beginning the labyrinth was not the center of Wanderverse. Believe it or not, in those days Wanderverse had no center at all. But the man who would give it one had already been born. He was not impressed with the world so far. It didn't meet his expectations, but that was fine since he hadn't expected anything whatsoever. Nonetheless he was ambivalent – at best – about what he got.

He traipsed the land from town to village to hamlet to any other peculiar, particular small settlement. The man's motives were pecuniary, after a fashion – he was forever pursuing his fortune, which had slipped away up the road. Wistfully he recalled the days when it had dogged him like a shadow.

This man was a traveling tinker, a jack of several trades who patched pots and pans, sharpened knives and axes, even did the simplest farrier jobs. He sold trinkets, brick-a-brack. Fancy candy made in molds, colorful like glass beads. And, tied up with string in crumpled kerchief bundles, a few arcane charms. But only if you struck him right when you asked.

The tinker bartered. He dickered. In between all of that he listened – listened with a quiet openness, absorbing snatches of gossip, family woes, the grim mesmer of renowned local campfire haunts, rumored portents, and singular dreams, be they sweet or unsettling. The tinker himself would pass along those tales he deemed fit to tell, especially any he'd heard twice over.

A certain story came first from a sturdy, surly farm wife, then later he heard it repeated by a jolly rendition of the same. It was like a lure, a temptation that snagged in his mind. The drama flashed bright in the corner of his eye as he rode long hours in the lurching cart, gazing ahead along the rough-hewn path that had been laboriously eked from brambled wilderness.

Lulled by his steady mule's gait and the motion of the vehicle, the tinker glimpsed the emerald shimmer of a peacock's tail and pondered what he'd heard about the Wailing Mother, the queen from ancient days who'd been worshiped by his ancestors.

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