

UNIVERSAL KINGDOM

They're everywhere. Surrounding us.
Excrescences of patience--lowliest
of the living: the fungi. Essentials
that neither flower nor fly--bizarre buzzards
that scavenge all realms. Picking up after man
the despoiler, harvesting the loss. Returning
what they salvage to the needy earth.
Silent, unthanked, mostly unseen.

Master recyclers spewing secret smoke,
anointing everything with clouds of spores,
their truth threads whitely
through the nether beneath our steps.

Memory stirs with centuries of frowns,
the quick clutching of cloaks
encountering devil's bunions, devil's spit,
devil's cups on a woodland stroll.
Appearing overnight from nothingness,
such flora of canker and decay, men once said,
could have no root but hell.

While humans expand the surface hell,
their piddling reparations never enough,
the fungi thrive-- limitless-- variable,
inventive to a fault. Aftermaths of falling,
agents of change, they meter larger time.
Daily man continues wasteful, fastidious, deluded--
not knowing that all his future fails without them.

Some push high, smelling of the grave,
some tempt touch with orange, cerise, elf charm.
And some, posing benign, demure
as the serpent's proffered apple,
still invite any who will to taste the legends.

Some men do. And sometimes-- some men die.

--Glenna Holloway