

## DARK KINGDOM

They surround us. Excrescences of patience,  
lowliest of the living: the fungi.  
Bizarre essentials scavenging all realms.  
Cleaning up after man most of all,  
harvesting his losses.

Silent, unthanked, mostly unseen,  
they recycle the salvage to needy Earth.  
Spewing secret smoke, anointing everything  
with clouds of spores, their truth threads  
whitely through the nether beneath our steps.

Memory lurches 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, man once said,  
could have no root but hell. And as he expands  
surface bedlam, his reparations never enough,  
the fungi thrive-- limitless-- variable,  
inventive to a fault. Aftermaths of falling.

Chin held high, man moves ahead, fastidious,  
deluded, not knowing his future fails without  
these agents of change, meters of larger time.  
Some forms are palatable, some smell of the grave;  
a few tempt touch with orange, cerise, elf charm.

And some, posing benign, deceptive and demure  
as the serpent's proffered apple,  
still invite any who will to taste the legends.  
Some men do. And sometimes--  
some enter the ultimate kingdom early.