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poems
by
doctors

Petrichor

Daniel Racey

“Petrichor is the smell that often accompanies the first rain after a long period of dry weather. Oils are given off by vegetation when washed by rain become a signal to lifeforms that the season can support breeding. The word comes from Greek petros, a stone, plus ichor, from the Greek word for the fluid that flows like blood in the veins of the gods.”
I J Bear and R G Thomas, *The Nature of Argillaceous Odour, Nature*, 7 March 1964.

The earth’s pelt
is shaking off drought,

a steam
of mould and tuber,

the wood taste
thick in our mouths.

Your feet hop
from slab to slab

as you spell the voices
that haunt the soil.

That winter, I saw how
you shuffled on Clopixol

as through the lean months
the roots bound the seeds.

Our gift was a staying hand,
a cruel cradle, Sectioning,

which hid your kernel
from ant, bird, sun

and now the land breathes,
saying, ‘Go. Inhale this stuff

that slid through the veins of Gods.’
The assenting yes surrounds us

and the world
is ripe for unfurling.

At last, rain has come
and I am standing

not knowing what is rain
on your mother’s face

and what is weeping
as you walk through the hospital gate.

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