

When I was a child, I used to love trees very much, and I loved the wood they offered, and how people used it to make all sorts of things out of it.

And I loved woods of big and small trees. But I loved the woods near my house the most... I would spend hours and hours wandering in these woods, exploring. A whole world these woods were, infinite world, of small creatures, large flowers, plants, pools of waters, rivers, magical boulders and pebbles, walls - remnants of times past, little meadows, inclines and downhills, wild spots and tame passages, and a myth...

A myth that these woods were the creation not only of nature, but also of a woman who, a long time ago, would go round planting sapplings without stop, deep into her old age...

All my playing was done in these woods. The chasing of each other with my friends, the war games and the wrestling, and most of all the games of the imagination, those stories that children often make and that last for hours, days, many times for years.

One of my favorite imaginary stories was about people that were tiny like ants, their villages and cities like anthills, their woods the autumn grass that grows in the spring, while their cars and airplanes were the size of a used-down pencil, even smaller....and over these woods there existed a far larger forest, an inconceivable, unreachable and eternal forest, that of my village!

Further above there would be more woods and places on my island and in the whole wide world... so I would put my nose to the ground, smell the fallen leaves...., would place my eyes as low as I could and would become an ant! Then I would turn my gaze up toward the infinite – that is toward the tops of the trees, and back down again.. I'd dig into the leaves, finding the different levels of time that you identify through smells, like the odor of meldew, where the autumnal fungi grow and become mushrooms - red, white, blue, brown, thin, long, stubby, poisonous or delicious.

The stories of the microcosm multiplying up its surroundings to become infinite went on, and the world became even more complex when, growing up, I discovered fairies and pixies, naked figures running and sitting by me, showing me their bodies and vanishing suddenly. I would embrace the trunks of the trees and kiss them, inhale their aroma and fall asleep by their side, my head resting on a pillow of fallen leaves.

The winter rains would transform everything, the cyclamen would grow and in the spring, yellow and white flowers would alter the scenery, whereas in the summer the smell of resin would fill the air and the sea would come closer.

Everything seemed full of possibility, powerful, beautiful, eternal. The trees so big and mighty and unchangeable... Yet, one day, my woods burned down. The whole world disappeared. Gone were the flowers, gone the animals, gone the streams. The rocks, each of which had a name, looked huge, black and repulsive. Lost was the life-giving thick layer of leaves where the mushrooms were born, vanished the anthills and their cities, and the scorching sun now burned with a hundredfold intensity.

I stayed silent for a long time, my sole companion one thought. I had heard once that there existed a forest, so immense that there was no end to it, with so much moisture and so many waters that it could not burn, though its biggest secret was that somewhere inside its vastness there stood an enormous tree, a huge oak tree that could speak. So I set out to find it, and on and on I walked, sometimes gathering plants, sometimes fishing to satisfy my hunger along the way, and other times painting pictures with the colors and brushes I had taken with me, selling them in the villages and cities to buy food and move on....

At long last I saw the great forest, it was truly magnificent!. And what was most important, I was utterly unafraid, despite the awesome sense of infinity its immensity gave off. My steps took me deeper and deeper inside it for days, months, years. Until one day, I found myself in a clearing, in the midst of which there stood a vast and verdant oak tree. The shade it provided must have been as large as an olympic stadium, yet it still gave you the impression you could put your arms around it. At length, I approached it and the tree asked: “why have you come?”

“I have come”, I replied, “because I am suffering from the destruction of my beloved woods, and I would like to learn why there is destruction, and pain and death of what we love”.

“You are a creator, a painter, aren’t you?” it asked.

“Yes I am” , I replied.

“When you paint”, the tree inquired, “don’t you ever erase?”

“Naturally I do”, I responded, “and indeed many times ”.

“Why do you do that?” asked the tree.

“Because in that manner I learn, and because a painting is improved that way.”

“Does it not bother you to destroy?”

“It does not, because in my mind’s eye I can see the end result....”

With that, the tree seemed greatly pleased and it said to me: “Listen, I wish to give you a present, I am going to lower one of my branches, you shall cut it and you shall take it home. You shall built a boat, exactly the way you want it. You shall place on its bow the wood from my branch and it shall be able to speak in your stead. It shall also be able to travel the seas and traverse the heavens, to sing and recite poetry. It shall be able to transport one who verily believes in it anywhere.

And so the tree lowered to shoulder level for me one of its branches, and its aroma was so beautiful that I almost fainted. I clipped the branch and did with it exactly what the tree had instructed me to.

And ever since, it never ceases to sing upon the seas and proclaim across the skies, for all to hear, that there is beauty, and there is love, and there is trtuth for ever and ever down the eons.

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