Hiking Fiery Gizzard

— for Leigh, Winter 2023, Tennessee

Two streams converge in a wood of yellow poplar,
By gravity led to some goal as yet unknown:
This carved natural scene—so severe, so serene—
Toppling-towering landscape of tacit fallen trees
and loud waterfalls.

From divergent hidden springs, we have managed, strength
Married to strength, through winter’s melt and summer’s drought. Boulders block the path yet never slow the downward
Flow that feeds fragrant mosses with fractured moisture
and faery-filtered light.

Bearded hemlocks, shallow-rooted, heavy-shadowed, Threaten us no more. Your crimson parka leads me, Faithful fool, to plunge headfirst into stony pools Until at last, here, we join forces on the furrowed brow of a mountaintop.

Nestled in the naked stone of winter, taking Stock and wisdomless, we anticipate the spring.