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CAROLYN JESS-COOKE

We Have to Leave the Earth Because We Know So Much

He buried the letter in a forest near Auschwitz
where it hibernated for forty winters,
ampersands of his hand dormant
as field mice, and for all he knew
the letter would never be found, snows
might drink the ink or the ground
swallow it as a grave. But
the urge to bear
witness moved him past consequence
of being found to speak of what he said
to those he led to the gas chambers –
that they were not here to be bathed
as they'd been told.
We are still in that place,
being moved past consequence or to death, or
to witness the taking of what is not owed.
We have not passed the urge to obliterate
the Other. We have to leave the earth
because we know too many ways to destroy
her, we have to write these things
we have to tell them to the forest
and the watchful snows.