The Encircled Grove

I never understand anything until I have written about it.

—Horace Walpole

And written here is the ceremony of the land itself, without commentary, other than what it, this grove, places before the senses. In the deep cool of glades, clumps of twisted salt cedar, snake barked cottonwoods with trunks twice as thick as a man, broad leaves pushing at the sunlight that only glimmers down to the moist earth with its beetles and ferns.

The grove is circular out of ancient incantation, some enchantment older than Comanche spoke here, formed this protected world and held it against wind or geology. The high plain stops at the edge of its greenness, swirls around it, continues as far as the eye travels the spreading land and domed blue hold it in their rushing powers. Sky Father. Earth Mother. Here is the point equidistant, focused, the navel that magic flows through

As I passed through shaped, protected, set free by the Pecos River and the wind from the quarrels of family, whispers that held our old house fast. Grandmother’s ghost could never walk in the Bosque where silence became a moistness, held your breath like another pair of murmuring lips

—for my brother, Simon Ortiz