



(Photo: Dwarf Pines, Alpine Moor—end of March, the Alps)

Sonnets to Orpheus XXI (FIRST PART)

Spring has again returned. The Earth
is like a child that knows many poems,
many, o so many . . . For the hardship
of such long learning she receives the prize.

Strict was her teacher. The white
in the old man's beard pleases us.
Now, what to call green, to call blue,
we dare to ask: she knows, she knows!

Earth, now free, you happy one, play now
with the children. We want to catch you,
joyful Earth. Only the most joyful can do it.

O, what her teacher taught her, such plenitude,
and that which is pressed into roots and long
heavy, twisted trunks: she sings, she sings!

Rainer Maria Rilke (tr. Cliff Crego)