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When Jesus was nine years old
some Germans led the Roman army
deep into the peopled forest
all wet and nasty. It wasn’t so cold
as winters in Germany run
but it rained and froze and thawed
and mess and men used to Our Own Sea
died by the mean little black
rivers narrow as sewer ditches
scummy with elm leaves with maple.
Acorns underfoot to twist
Italian ankles. Wild boar and bears
to holler at them from the shadow
and that one youngish Saxon
or Coruscan or whatever he was,
assassin, dux bellorum, leader
of men. After three days
the Romans were dead or slaves.
Arminius led them away
into the death cults, the meaningless
names of local divinities
who knew nothing of sunlight.
He was not yet thirty years old
and the Reformation was
already beginning.

Rome
was radical but never had a chance.
They did not ever understand
weather, strange since their own god
was the god of rain. Arminius
is not noted for his devotion.
For beech and ash wood, maybe,
for spears, and bronze
snake-tongued daggers, yes,
but not religion. Religion
is of use only to the losers.
They had the forest, the Dark Mass, the slippery yellow leathery leaves. Their naked arms. No room for gods in the woods.

5 December 1994
A kind of pagan roar, smooth
the way a calm wind probes
under your clothes. The wolves
are far away, a wind away

*Whatever moves yearns for knowledge
of what is still.*

The traveler stops
and looks on that, chiseled into a boulder
and something like milk still dripping down it—
an offering or a mistake, what traveler
can tell the difference?

Thinks
about what is written. Feels wind
like a smooth palm move on skin.
Understands what it means to be between.

6 December 1994
The drain of light is a remember time
as if the rain—or even snow—would come
rearranging symmetries—first this umber
shimmery pallor of the day—the discussion
is of war—old men own a monopoly
on war—they create it, arrange it, declare it
won or lost, and above all they survive it—
then write down their memoirs—bar room
by bar room until they too pass into
the wounded majority they have recruited—
why do deaths observed make conversation
plausible—is death some Sorbonne scholar
that we should listen so raptly to his graduates?
Birdless the image window-held now, the whole world
between the rhododendron and the barn—
light, war, place, bird are these—lightless,
warless, birdless, only place apparent—
we live among apparencies—the eidolons of order—
is seem enough to spell a noble music, Frescobaldi,
Gabrieli?—come or not come, symmetries
abound—Goliath saw one coming fast from David’s hand,
thing between us, word or weapon, thing, thing, thing—
no telling what death is—except the old Narrators
in every tavern telling of Troy—My Lai—Kuwait—
our trashy little wars and great—the words we say.
Pearl Harbor Day—mark this to ponder, how
we did right wrong and opportunely. And conversely.

7 December 1994
How are the Gauls likely to react
when a windstorm —in the rain—
slips across the Channel from the Mother of Weather
— over there, Alba — and snorts around their cool
— gorgeous — naked — torquey torsos and

when that time comes (Philomela, Corax,
Anas) the mythic Transforms
flutter down and eat out of our hands.

Whatever they might have been once they now are birds.

7 December 1994
Not having a say now is some hoping
still-stand will say my piece for me
for I loved this forest’s forester’s daughter
but only the birds and things will answer me

a city slacker, a sugar loafer in anxiety among
this mishmash of precise detail a woods is—
and if I have to know the properties of each least wort
moss beetle in all the agitprop of wind and night

what will I ever learn of his daughter, is she
not somewhere simple, as a want is, or a touch
you maybe of some quick thing, water is it,
wet or not, no other parameter to decode,

but a daughter, and his daughter, and I want?
Playing with words while no one listens
I prepare a busy vacancy for her to sit in,
I build like a dumb bower bird my cabana for her

and wait with mugger’s manners at each trailside
knowing her father will let her come this way some day
and then she’ll see this punk palazzo, this house of shards,
time-trap, the weasel-face of history peeking in,

that a lazy man has labored all his life to heap,
hap on, harp, haggle, hod up ladders and hammer in place
instead of learning the names of all the dickussy particulars
spread out at our feet adoring him, and her, and even me.

8 December 1994
It was so warm the rhododendrons came to new bud — leaf buds or flower buds who can say? — and then December started acting like itself, blackboard sky and Orion incandescent over air too cold to breathe — it seemed after so much autumning — now ‘nipped’ the word is and we’ll wait and see — one remembers other words, ge-
laßenheit, impermanence, redemption, Spring — and the Cam be flooded after — where are my legions? — so who’s asking? — a query built of stone in the form of a road — shale, shimmer of slate in the non glare — summer when the schools close — hot empty rooms empty blackboards — o Emperor we have lost the north, God save us the middle — spurt of grape juice from the dropped basket — revelers — under the curtain of her skirt a play is readying — wine later in all the altitudes of hope — my engine, my “photographic device called hope” — alarm on the catwalk, someone falls to the stage and begins to speak — their text is this dying — AIDS research, implausible consolations — soldiers follow one another through the endless woods — no tryst but their own bodies — and we know the salt they scatter and what grows from such seed — Mercurius is worshipped here under the form of a loose-limbed youth whose image — iron plates bent over carved wood then fixed in shape by countless iron nails — these characters sing songs to and pour out beer — his name hard to pronounce — no spelling in our language — and this Mercury is armed.

9 December 1994

1From a text on the city, by Nicole Dreyfus, November 1994.
The fact we understand lucidly where
a mind is “coming from” is not the same thing
as lucid structural insight by an author — Bram
Stoker’s long chapter in Lair of the White Worm
comes to mind, irrelevant to the action —
will they get married and be safe? — and pursuing
instead how and how much a young man can
bare his heart to and befriend an older —
patently not-so-young Bram and Sir Henry Irving—
the relationship of his life suddenly foregrounded —
this is not the same as Structure of the Literary Text
— though it tells all — invoked or not invoked,
the god is present — there is no

marriage in this forest, no giving in marriage —
the legions love one another as a man can
love another man, it is not easy, — “towards a joining
that is not easy,1” — love readies them — but love
is not much the hermit of these woods, are you?—
how far can love go? — and in winter —
the hegemon of this discourse — a colony
of language changing trees — blackbirds even
the crow on my lawn — is my alarm — bird warn me
where I walk — crow be my guide — I picked up
the aluminum foil their scraps — rice, chick peas,
lamb fat— had been set out on — clean, the metal
pierced by their beaks, so many holes my music,
beaked, they stab to eat — darlings — picqures —
injections — the habits of the heart so — to interject —
wounding love’s object — the body — o love you long
infection, or the body, it is no more than the metal
platter on which the actual — personage of love —
is served — stop-lights in fog — “my violences!1”

1Robert Duncan, “Stanzas from Dante.”
tail-lights in rain? — no matter — when all a wood could be is who he is — following another just like himself into the lovelorn intricacies — brush and stubble — who calls the forest’s tune? — a man is listening.

10 December 1994

1 Tennyson, “Idylls of the King”
A word to look up. *orange*, etymology of Netherlandish dynasty, of tropic fruit, of 1944. Fresh squeezed juice of what is war.
If you divide the homeless from the poor the poor become another enemy.
Divide and eat. Proud beggar humble banker meet. The cannibal cartoon we inolate.
Be in me, baby, as a finger or a pop tune is, unrelievedly pressing to *inhabit, dwell, reside, occupy* (as: to be an occupant of these or any premises, thus a sort of philosopher of the occasion, a man born blind), *move in, settle or be settled*, or generally speaking, *live*.
Call them all The Poor, and know yourself among us. Tri-value system: Some people got everything. Something. Nothing. All morning a broken car alarm has yodeled over the suburban calm.

11 December 1994
HOW TO WRITE A POEM

Bring in everything you’re thinking about and anything else that comes along. The result’s a poem, shape of your own glad (sad) mind.
It is like the Gospels (a poem is like the Gospels): you send someone out to gather guests for the wedding feast.
First he gets the proper ones all neat and kosher, dressed in finery and rented tuxes.
But there’s still room at the table.
You keep setting the table. He goes out again and brings in anybody vaguely clean — and still there’s more room at the table.
Finally he goes and gets anything that breathes, brings them in and sits them down. Then and only then the wedding can take place, then the husband looks upon his bride, the evening comes, the feast is served, the poem’s done.

11 December 1994