

## The Poet Learning to Fear God

The mood of trees  
is an answer  
like the Archangel's voice  
relayed from the curled lips  
of wind that blow somewhere  
beyond the neighbor's field  
and vibrate the airborne timpani  
to call the heartbeat into my eyes,  
    and upward  
so blinded, I squint  
through the sun-beam bullet-holes  
that weep dust in a descent  
cousin to the talk  
dripping before blues  
in brimming tea-cups above me.  
I only knew when I touched  
my rain-smothered hair  
    and tripped  
on the mud brace  
around my ankle.

But I wish to read the leaves  
like poetry and knuckle-bones,  
    tellingly and dryly,  
but tones, I feel,  
depend upon the soulful prayer  
of a stove-top teapot  
or a young boy calling his dog.

The trees' mood is sometimes made  
of what you will it:

*I suggested  
domestic pleasantries  
like the teapot  
and backdoor whistles.*

Steal me into the forest  
that binds me  
    *frameless*  
so still  
I hold my breath  
    *for fear I'll wake  
the air*

yet growling, hear  
it chase me home  
to replace mossy underclothes  
and peaty cough.

For only in that soggy exile  
can a fugitive stay  
*hidden*  
in ever-changing skies  
whose jagged thunder-jaws  
well up tears beyond  
the leaves the latch one's eyes.

Thus, I thought justified  
this desire to run from this chance  
rain and weather  
yet perpendicular  
remains escape to belonging—  
one needs be at times  
caught at the neck,  
teeth sunk,  
to feel the wild  
in creatures' watching eyes.

I sought beyond the fogged undergrowth  
with the superstition of a foreigner  
who leaves without a map,  
and I failed to see estrangement  
in that hostility  
refracted through the bush  
*and then the absence of eyes  
in the bush,*  
scanning the sudden precariousness  
that entered the forests and swamps  
in my breath and under  
dirtied fingernails clinging  
*to every step.*

The eyes are what I seek,  
but mostly to be  
the lens that lets me hunt  
the thoughts that won't stop  
*running*  
into haunting visions  
watching me stumble.

The rioting ranks of clarity  
that escaped my head  
in thrashing, wild glances,  
want payment of time  
and gaze by whispers leading  
me ever deeper in  
*the muck:*

“Don’t take the corduroy, minstrel,  
it will jostle your feathers  
*“There are marsh places  
which will hide flying thoughts  
keep them still,”*  
unless you mean to avoid that place  
where you can’t hide  
from the siren-song of mud-cling.”  
*“Search for Jerusalem  
beneath upturned roots.  
There, battered,  
you will feel the blast  
of Autumn’s chariots  
cool the Pompeiian embers  
of skeletons  
and shattered orange teacups.”*