

VII

And a man child

But then of course no haggard Clothos came
 With spindle fingered bliss and sister's kiss
 To snip upon the tangled skein he'd spun.
 No. Crispin frayed. And trussed in his linens
 Swayed day long on the chaos of his sack
 Enkinked in twisted tattings of his mère,
 Unevenly attended by his tribe
 Who stewed a porridge for his matinsong,
 Ordaining clystering Asclepiads
 To vesper on his excavated form.
 Nightly thus he shook the mortalist coil
 And borne upon the horsehair bier unsprung
 Took up triumphal progress through the clouds
 Who made him ministrations as if kin,
 The bearded papa to their boyish streaks.
 What breath. He dozed and saw new ructions from
 The stricken stone: sprung up from pollard stump,
 A pole in jerkin skin, briar-raked and pink,
 A buff chip, fringed, who coalesced amidst
 His footboard apparitions' frankincense
 Wherein he spied shy cats and struck them down.
 In these flights Crispin leaned upon a staff,
 While down *par terre* like tops the bobbins spun:
 Such cotton-puff distaff might tick his quilt
 But he keened for imperishable bliss,
 Not this; some proxy for the epic of
 His piaffing quest, an eaglet fledged to brave
 What crag hills gave, a stag to raise his rack,
 Rail-splitting boys to bark his milt in feats
 Befitting kith and kind, a little prick
 Upon these Carolines, who would beget
 Small Crispins till the tiny end of time.

The hypercephalous seraphic swarms
Attend the slipping dreamer gone to seed
And navel-less bear salvers heaped with cane
A toothless suck of sweetness for his lips
Which mouth hosannas at the dribble tip
Of manna hacked from out his flooded brake.
Thus reed-refreshed he feels himself assumed
To greet the sun arising on his feet,
And sees his own senescent camisole
Resplendent in a blinding morning light.
Now continents can slip again in view,
And he inscribing Christ on sugarloaves
Is semaphore above the uncut way
Who bleats the Andes operatic keen
And spots the Rockies *nidus* for his egg.
Fatal he is, though not a fatalist.
Since now he girds the army of his loins
For noble war upon their mistress time
And with his fragile skittles borne aloft
By cherubim who pluck at condors' quills
He can in benediction bend his neck.
Clang clang! Cymbals shiver the gibbous moon;
Hoos hoos – the tubas sound their sorry tune.

Who told the ants she could not say, but they
Came, eschewing kitchen craft, disdainning
Barley, the pebbled oats, quinoa fleet,
Seeking meat, something softer to feeling
Touch, swill wetness to serve their dirty work.
And she, Socratic aproned scullery maid,
Mammifer, Adam's clod, maker of clay,
For whom the hungry crickets sang and sang,
Countenanced these formic kin parading
Up from bowers deep in the middle earth
To file that bedpost like a black bead chain.

Though in haste, they lick with cillial sense
 Each pilgrim brow, touching, teaching the way
 Which lay through skewed foundations he had laid.
 Enter social nature most overlooked
 And come to carry Crispin home in spades.
 Nota: a man's intelligence is soil.
 So spoke his clay and wiped his nose for once.

Had she others thus to swab? Say perhaps.
 But whose? Good Crispin to his doom had stewed
 In doubt. This genealogist of plums
 Long fretted how the flower got so fat
 With pipples fruit, and filled his foolscap sheaves
 With pistils curled and trees of staying men.
 On the flyleaves crabbed and over watermarks
 That involuted philologue made trace
 Of patronyms like taproots into time,
 Unquartered blazons back to shields unmarked,
 Dreamed heraldry to seal his peaked groins,
 Escutcheons cut to cap a tip top arch,
 His chalcographic pacts with heretofores.
 Here was the final poem that he left,
 A thunderstone locked up under the bed
 Inside a tea trunk clasped with steely hasp
 Hammered at the forge by an ox armed lad.
 Two meters well mitered close the whole tale.

Unlatched from out her prisms by the lid
 That closed upon the coffer of her care
 She tucked a tissue up her modest sleeve,
 Concocted rare cates in his gurgling wake,
 And then returned to tend her flower beds,
 Forming what spilled from the brim horn's bill.

Construe this plainscript as enjambéd in praise,
A tricorn swept beneath a stockinged knee,
No rebuke in suit or airy trump of trick,
But stock erected out of salvaged stuff,
Familiar timber spirited by night,
And set to close upon what neck you will:
Take Crispin's nape as prey, arraigned to chafe
In collars cut by amazons who tail
Their pilgrim up from Carib bays. Do they
Exhume his corse in later days to teach
With ululations wild and teeth and fork
A deference meet to his unribboned sticks,
Tapping the treacle from his bladdery skin
To ferment and then distill corrective brew?
Or if the tumbril brought the sorry bard,
For whom the cart makes spondees on each stone,
Who hears the howling mob as chorus cry
And poppets Crispin through his wandering con?
What difference does it make who fills the slot,
If the stock sits fixed, its smile so wooden tight.

So may certain relations of each be slipped.