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## Truancy

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## Truancy

Burr Oak

30 miles from any town in any direction,  
and I am lost

in alder thickets, pine, and Laurel.

This place is not dead – or alive,

but the wind moves it like Rappahannock current

shifting the fleeting sense of decay and ferment

along these vines where blackberries fall and rot

on the ground. I feel the woods

hear the beating of my heart.

The peculiarly awkward sensation of adventure  
and panic.

I walk it like a balance beam

where no human stride has found ground.

But it's this dead coon dog

caught in rose haws as thick as knotted barbed  
wire,

its leaf-colored eyes wide with life

under a hard autumnal sky,

and me sweating and jerking

like an old Vitagraph film,

finding this untutored awareness

melting like the perfume of ruin

from these thorned mazes.

*Richard Latimer*