

ON A SELF-ALIGNING BALL BEARING DEUS EX MACHINA

You got balls to try to objectify Teutonic precision
and you must be well-adjusted,
though they say the Swedes are throwing themselves off
bridges these days
and spending the dark hours in sterilized wooziness,
not at all the picture of perfection,
but this is a shining exemplum of steel and chrome,
self-aligning, futuristic, a chromium cock ring
for a giant, or a mechanized muff, minus merkin.
Precise, objective, infinite. Nordic.
But how precise was the onslaught of Hermann
(or should we prefer the italicized *Arminius*?)
amid the mud and mad muck and
endless screaming in the Teutoburgerwald?
Baritus et ululatus et planctus.
And on the Palatium miles away
the personification of mechanized imperium
in crepuscular antiquity
wanders the state halls and private chambers
of the establishment and cries,
“Quintili Vare, legiones redde!”
ad infinitum.

NOTE: “On a Self-aligning ball bearing” (1907) by Sven Windquist (Swedish, 1876-1953) in The Museum of Modern Art. Suetonius reports that the Emperor Augustus would spend sleepless nights roaming the halls of the palace repeating “Quintili Vare, legiones redde!” (“Quintilius Varus, return my legions!”) years after the disastrous defeat and slaughter of the Roman army under Varus’s command in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest.