

RAPPROCHEMENT

I awoke as from a dream. And I rose
near dawn, boiled and drank the blood-colored tea
sweetened with berries and wild honey,
and started to compose a lengthy list
of all of the day's necessary tasks:
a visit to the aluminum mills;
a meeting with one Solomon Mighty;
an appointment by the tall yellow gates
on the Street of the Hyacinth of Waters—
it all somehow added up to a day,
at least on paper. And as I walked out
and down a path that bordered the forest
a wind came and blew this list from my hands.
So having passed the lapis lazuli—
plated fountains and the octahedral
towers that receded to a blue prospect,
and having arrived at the green-black trees,
I decided to cut through the forest;
and having entered I could hear, just barely,
the thumping fulling hammers of the mills
of the waking city in the distance.
The primrose, amaranthus, violet
and balm; the marigold and cornflowers
trembled in the zephyr. Honeysuckle
in profusion, the yellow-green vine grass
intertwined with stems of blinking daisies,
mushrooms in the deep shade of the saplings
swelling, white-yellow, with the liquor of the dew,
so unaccountable to pantheists,
seconded and blessed, the blue diurnal
water monarch and the water anarch.
And pretty soon I came to a clearing.
It was a glade, cool, green, lambent shadows

sweeping, fan-like, over lichen-covered
boulders strewn about a half-collapsed berm
with reddish vines and wide leaves of burdock,
like the ruined foundation of a house
that had been washed away in a great flood
or burned to the ground in an ancient fire.
This seemed to be the perfect place to sleep.
And as I walked toward the sunlit clearing
I noticed, half reclining in the grass,
my mother and father, a small child
playing near them in the overgrown grass.
The two were newlyweds, apparently,
young and carefree, seemingly much in love,
laughing and enjoying their small child.
They had wine and bread and green plums spread out
on the blanket where the child had gathered
a small pile of polished pebbles from a stream,
and they asked me to join them. I accepted,
though I knew, in some vague and quiet way,
that I had to be elsewhere, and I noticed
the rusted weathervane standing in the grass
tied with red strips of fluttering ribbon,
and scraps of red cloth fluttering in the trees.
It was strange to think that these three people
had been here since long before I arrived,
like the trees and rocks, the stream and sunlight,
like the house that once but no longer stood,
and as I sat down to join this family
the clouds rose in great vertical towers
behind the trees as if a fire burned
uncontrolled in a faraway city.
And they were not unkind to me, only
so very involved with one another,

fascinated by and in love with the child.
And of course they didn't recognize me,
my young father, shirtless and reclining,
nonchalant and smiling in the sunlight,
my mother, slim as a willow, her hair
tied up loosely in a light blue kerchief;
both laughing and younger than the May leaves.
And me, feeling lazy and safe, a stranger
getting groggy in the afternoon heat.
I fell asleep. And later when I woke
to the sound of crickets after what seemed
like a lifetime of slumber they were gone.