

THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FIRE

Evenings, a roach of light scrabbling through
the walls of a hieratic solitude
as the frantic child imagines in procession
twelve cauled and swaying men,
ghost-like, their torches
spiraling into the cavernous
moss-ridden vaults of the mind.

And by dawn the autumn landscape holds in perspective
flats and vectors, irreconcilable distances
from which the spark of flint is never absent.
The boy gathers leaves, desiring
a paradise of ashes, while from the brow of the sky
a pulsing threatening eye looks down upon the earth
as on a dangerous son.

Toying with matches—see the magnificent havoc,
the wrestling bright bodies of the flame.
Look, as an ember surges and darkens, at the terrible
filial fear of the boy.

And when the cooling ash dies out of his reverie
his skin's as dry as a snake's, his fingernails singed—
alone and afraid, his darkness shifts under the house.

And this deceitful beautiful reticence of fire
that wavers deeply into the drowsing night
as a cool blue mist, like the prodigious feat of will
that, in the outlying suburbs of the present, can recall
those ancient burning fields, that lurid sky,
where the moon, a calm and loving face,
first went up in flames—

faster and faster, the long abyss of fire
while in his arbitrary fury
—because in the end we are all
lost, all
dancing into ash—he beats against the finiteness
and infancy of time: the child, my dark-eyed son,
may he never be born.