

Modern Poet and Calypso · *Larry Johnson*

An island ringed with boulders—huge sea-grapes
Rising and crumbling gradually into soil.
Grass flanges backward from the cliff—
The long, rimey grass, spreading through arbors
Where wet lattices stab among the leaves:
Long ago, poets rested here.

Lamps streak those garnet-terraced chambers
Where man and goddess sleep. Tonight she lies with him
Because he strained ashore, knowing his right
To ease down in ancient gossamer
And wash through her divinity like sea foam . . .
(To come here, some have written of languid oars
And sea, poppies, burgeoning island streams;
Others of the burning fog of cities,
Some of all the sorrow that children bring.)
He wakes suddenly—arms still heavy with her—
That body's tangible light enphialled in his stare—
And thinks of ships: he listens to a nymph's waved song.

She welcomed him. But now he has drunk
From the moving, porous vessel of her mouth.
These last hours murmur awhile, and soon
The gauze of night will ravel—his stay will end.
Fire and clover. Aching into her
He stalls the dawn and every new care
Though he cannot create here; his is no seed
This goddess can enwrap—the others found this out.
The shore remains, though mariners are few,
But this is not earth—his thoughts are earth . . .
Islands still lie unsummoned . . .

Nymphs sing thin:
sea brings the dawn through arbor
in mists of bees—
melting, the sunrise like gasoline.