The Psychoanalysis of Fire

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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.

John Morgan