

A Dream

Michael Schmidt

I had a dream on good authority
That fastened on me like a stitch in skin:
Construct a boat, God said, along these lines
And spread the plan out on his cloudy knee.

So many cubits wide, and here the masts,
And make the hull as large as a hotel.
The animals, of course. Reptiles? And bugs?
Each animal, and two of those in love.

There will be forty nights without a star
And forty days go without a sun
And when the clouds break there will be nowhere
Till oceans finds another hemisphere

That dream is some time past. The fields are full
Of grain, the mating creatures now give birth.
I come home evenings a puzzled man,
Hearing the infants cry, touching the solid earth.

I tell the dream and reason thus with Shem:
'Dear boy,' I say, 'if we construct this thing
The flood may come and we will be the cause.
God does not act until his will is done.'

'The earth will be ours, though,' says Shem:
'Imagine, all the ground from here to night,

And God will fix his eye on us alone
And make our offspring rich, our furrows full.'

Japheth is lazy. When I worry him
He says: 'Let's have it built, then we can sleep
For forty days under the care of God
And settle later in a quiet grove.'

Ham is a craftsman, handy with a saw.
I hardly told the dream when he began
Pricing old planks and readying his tools.
He worries me, his eye on destiny.

Shem tallies, Japheth dreams, and Ham prepares.
Our neighbors have heard nothing though the wave
Hangs over them and I could make it break
I don't believe the dream was meant for me.