
GEPETTO DREAMS THE APPRENTICE HOME / *Roy Bentley*

for Bob Demott

The boy, my one success, gone
I've warehoused years, mute armies,
In search of the same rough sphere
Of head, spindly puppet limbs,
Film of eucharist color laid on last.

The mechanics of creation tumbles irreversibly
To scrap, surfeit of pine and yellow poplar
Passed to shavings. Once, near morning,
I mistook candle work for a blush,
Bad light for motion. All night

I'd begged life back,
Waited that first lie an instant after.
Not a cry or half.
Not the dumb wonder of a shout. Nothing.
I labored less. I'll not be spent.
Not all. When the boy comes,
And we sit by the fire, I must show
How easily hard woods splinter,
Soft grains give and give.

I would kindle a respect
For the difficult convexity of a face,
For subtraction
And the perfect love of limit.
When he wants too much of the wood,
I'll say a man, old already,

Watched, and forever,
For what comes once, just.
When he is hard at it, invested,
The fire low, I'll go up
And turn down the big oak bed.
The better ones teach themselves.