JOHN REPP

The Teeming Swish & Stink

of the dream-water he straddles—left foot
on the scaffold, right trembling on the tiny
cleat protruding from the workbench,
the food the friends need just within reach
in a stack of pleated pill cups near the lathe—

reminds him of nothing after he wakes,
viscous though it remains with the crumbs
& shavings he & the gobbling friends
churned up as they feasted, the foul, fecund
river having spilled from the ravening cave

dreams populate—a guess, of course,
or not a guess so much as the first, helpless
scrabble for words to envelop what certainly
(now) is no more (or less) than brain chemistry
& not ancestors whispering the spell required
to gaze without fear into Fate's molten face
now that neurohormones have transubstantiated
the man squinting at the bright ceiling. At his hip,
a black cat (no less) tucks tighter into himself
after running his long tongue the length

of his tail. The man lies ruminating images
not these, aches beyond the reach of words,
tiny twitches of what I as the Moses
of this Exodus choose to call "pleasure"
at the aroma wafting from downstairs.