

Green

The man whose fingers are made of dark mud
and clay kneels down again, digs his fingers into the earth
like the set of his fingers are knobby worms nosing
away from the dawn's light into the moist garden soil,
as if wiggling down to home. Above him, a red cardinal
strokes the low gray sky with a sudden color, lands
up in the branches of a maple tree, begins its singing.
Trucks on Harper and Gratiot thunder on already,
and the old woman who waters her pots of geraniums
on the front porch waves at him, coffee in hand.
One by one the little boys and girls who help him garden
line up above him, eager little sprites, skinny as celery,
knees ready to fall down into the soil, to dig and weed.
The man pulls up a radish, pink, moist, drops it into
the pail. Moves down a row, cultivates the soil again,
pats and caresses the earth woman beneath his hands
like he and the earth are in something like a partnership,
like they are dear lovers or something like old friends.
And he pours the smooth water into her mud again,
as if giving her a cold long drink, like a Mother's Day
gift. Dawn splits open above the downtown buildings,
carrying a light across the garden and the fruit trees.
His knees nudge the earth, as if he is climbing back
into something primal in himself, some old way of living.
A dog barks, a cat wiggles through the fence line,
runs at something underneath a wood pile, stops, sniffs.
Wind carries a sweet breeze he recalls feeling as a boy.
He used to work at Chrysler. Made parts for cars.
Nothing in his memory of that except that men make parts
for other men to sell, and now he is loving something
else, a mud and green world where his hands, just worms,
cultivate the soil, make edibles, dig and pat the body
of a woman, Detroit, and grow food for her children—
whose eyes are hungry, and gaze at him like dark beans.