

## Language

About the turtles who died copulating forty million years ago  
And sunk to the bottom of the sea—  
The male's tail tucked, meaning he died inside  
Her death—"poisoned by a sudden flood  
Of carbon dioxide," one scientist remarked,

"Just like a bottle of champagne popping."

Just like a scientist, reaching for figure to speak of death.  
Bearing meaning inside death,  
The bitter whoosh of feeling at looking on  
What is no more, what was to have been.  
Pang of the looked-at world glimpsed then lost.

Like the two terminals of the nine-volt battery  
Touched to what was to have been my tongue  
In that world. Touched  
To the what was to have been.  
Nails of light hammered out of the water.

Out of the pit it sparkles a little,  
This small, tessellated body of bodies.  
Sparkles a little in the harsh, surfeit of light.  
Air aglare. Future's suture.  
Color of preservation. Color of hurt.

Touching the what is  
To what was to have been,  
Composing  
Us. Two terminals.  
What we don't say

Standing before this ocean. That day.  
The cold physical abstract girth of it.  
One of many disguises, perhaps—but not "humiliating."  
One cannot feel as it moves any one way about it  
For very long. And that's to love.

## The Love of Repetition Is Happiness

Today my name is a pseudonym.  
I was thinking about K., writing  
In his diary the date, the eighth  
Of September, and the exclamation  
Point flourishing after it.  
Something unspilled unconcealed  
Seemed to be emerging then retreating.  
A leopard appeared on the kitchen table:  
The rattle of the refrigerator  
Frightened it into the world  
Of appearances. My teeth hurt. It was  
Nothing personal. Become aware of  
The leopard, the dog shifted  
On its bed, emitted a low growl.  
I thought of E., who wanted arrows,  
Axes, nectar, and growling.

Here at least the growling. To be  
Pierced by anything. The urge to always,  
To think *always, always*, familiar  
Urge, to return, to come back, as if back  
Is home, as if home is a point on a circle  
In which—*Voluptates commendat rarior  
Usus*—Juvenal growls from the wine  
Lover's desk calendar. To be  
A voluptuary of anything, to feel  
Uncalendrical, opened by the daunted axe  
Of the day. Sweet gravel of each surface,  
Ribboning.

## On Nostalgia

1.

If I ever get enough money, Jack said,  
I'll be an alcoholic. That's  
The best life there is.

2.

The unsaid  
Has many faces,  
Like a shirt with unnecessary buttons.

3.

A blue gratuity, an authentic functionless  
-ness one wants  
To undo, though not all at once.

4.

I have, almost  
  
As hard as I can,  
Tried to make my shame into a lemon  
So I could discover it.  
It only hurt  
Other people.

5.

Wounds are open, Jack.

That's the point  
About wounds.

They don't have, "resolve  
into," faces.

6.

What they have  
Is reality.

7.

There's never enough money. That  
Is the market truth. That  
Is the lemon, the boy in the blue bathing suit.

8.

Nostalgia is  
More. Just more.

Like a beautiful old car engine.

9.

Would that we all could be  
So reduced  
In our desires.

10.

If they wake up people look back.

## Glaciology

In Japan they're developing  
A square watermelon.  
The problem's curvature:  
The hard rind, the packaging.  
The problem's the new thing.  
Each arugula leaf in the pre-  
Packaged bag cut to the same shape.  
Four rounded pale-green edges,  
And a top curled like a tongue.  
It's a kind of puzzle. Each piece  
Not too bitter, not too sweet.  
The maximum cut. Small alteration  
That compounds, not meaning but  
Gains. The maximum  
Cut. If the apple grows too big  
It's not a saleable fruit. Throw it out.

How does the red go in this sky?  
Why does the map break here  
And not over there? This is an edge  
And this a corner. This is the  
Picture and this the table where we  
Leave the puzzle when we go to bed.  
In the morning, the same piles,  
Same disorder, the rectangle  
And the leaves, the box in its  
Completeness. Here is where we  
Stand under two miles of ice.  
Here is hunger. Here, poverty.  
The problem's the rhythm of production.  
The problem's scale.  
Here what it costs to kill a terrorist  
And here, to feed the problem.

## Ghosts and Indices

I had been eating apples,  
Reading poems before falling asleep,  
Turning all the things with faces toward the walls,  
Going through the motions of closure.  
I kept reading poems by women about unnamed birds  
Thrashing inside various bodies and poems by men  
About being fish. These said they  
Were notes to the future. Then the dead birds  
And the dead fish were in another  
Poem, a vast, abstract poem, shaped like a cube.  
That poem was about ghosts and indices.  
Its edges were rounded from so much touching.  
But it appeared so touched as a monument  
To touching. It was made for neglect.  
It was like a city or a reliquary, a piece of bone  
With a hole in it tuned to two notes  
Or a ring from the nostril of a beast of burden.  
Trying to read it was like being in a gender neutral bathroom  
Hastily converted into an interrogation cell.  
Or being buried in a leftover wedge of cemetery next to a palisade.  
Or being alone after reading a destroyed sonnet  
With golden hair trailing through fingers.  
Everywhere I turned I sensed it breathing.  
But it was, predictably, the absence I sensed.  
And then I slept like a pill in a pillbox.  
And then I slept like a flying fish.  
And then I slept like grains of sand in the mouth.  
And then I slept like an angry people.