

## romantic subzero

that was the height of ice. kudos caspar david.  
cathedral carved inside of it, thawing its way  
down her wet throat. breathrobbing.  
a vertical glacier. bottleneck. within it  
halls and chambers. beneath it water, black  
with cold. very cold, very black. turkey hens  
are on the roam, invisible but for their core,  
like a coffee bean in motion. but don't  
be deceived, the turkey hen's still there,  
it just can't be seen. the whole thing's fatal.

## to refrain from embracing

you didn't want to die yet another time,  
to collide and still miss was your only chance.  
for this you had the city, the country, your name,  
under which you vanished, to which you felt called.  
it was a blanket, spread over you, your eyes  
shut, you knew blindly that's what it had to be.

you heard everything. you wanted to burst. almost  
died for the fourth time then. everything was left  
just as it was. thus you entered a world extinguished.  
you had to camp there for years. the bed without soil.  
the ghastly trough. the stitchless knit. the thing  
without style. indoors, the coat. at the seaside, no sea.  
the thump of the breakers. their eternally dry beat.

as if there were nothing but the deathly prospect  
of having to actually live with this absence of answers.  
*love calls us to the things of this world*, but what calls us  
away from them? the horizon's meaning was lost on you  
and you stayed in the distance, soon therein to dwell.

like this love of a hairline, of a trace of fragrance  
at the neck, all that's gone, didn't stay, became distant.  
for this dwelling, too, there was a time. and in this time  
there was no other dwelling than this widening distance.  
that was the reason, there had never been any other.

that was the reason, there will never be any other.  
and then you lost it, and you lost it again.  
except that by then the reason had changed. you did stay,  
to lose again, that's why you stayed. this didn't help  
you, too late for that, but it did help improve mankind.

## the opposite of seduction

this drying out, is it some belated protest against the march of time?  
and this imperceptible growth in spite of bad treatment: for years  
now i've been tipping the rancid remains from the cups – more  
coffee anyone? – into the pots, or not watering them at all  
for weeks on end, loose woody stalks in some excuse for soil.  
the way they keep growing, or at least pretend to: they parody life.  
and into my back they soundlessly heft their rickety swords,  
put out of joint in transit from one office to another. they slouch  
in corners, engaged in gloom and photosynthesis. what moments  
ago was cooling the chip is now being used by our eight-hour lungs.  
what sort of plant is that? heidrun brought it. they've bred dogs  
without hair, yes they have, but plants without leaves? i stand  
before this plant and into the computers' hum i say: "forevermore  
my dwelling place shall be". and think of outside, a wind, gentle,  
the leaves, the leaves, moving as one and among their own kind,  
and this single ugly plant here as a redeemer figure, so that all of us,  
all of us rise again into an age now obsolete, where we don't sow,  
don't reap, just bide our time in the opposite of seduction. they all say:  
i'll bring some peat tomorrow. the morrow comes. no one brings peat.

## pray how does getting ready work?

pray how does getting ready work? how do fake tans  
and hair-washing work? these are age-old questions,  
surely, stretching way back down the generations,  
like standing on a landing stage and eating canapés  
on someone's engagement day, and a band plays,  
and over and over bottles are emptied and glasses filled.  
the wind changes, flutters, lays bare the triceps,  
frills shimmy, flounces, hands on upper arms, verily  
between champagne and flesh-tone the difference  
is a sliding scale. or might it not be better (even now?)  
to grapple with bodies, to rip at the glad rags  
and lie in back rooms as dawn breaks outside and  
truth dawns within. and then have to write something  
far younger than my years that makes the otters  
laugh and hold hands, ring-a-ring-o'-roses, no, no, no,  
that lingerie's not mine, it must be someone else's.