

Substratum

enter the fat earth.
rappel carefully down
the striped well-side . . .
see how it all came about,
youth to age, strong to weak,
the loss of essential malice.
tough it, feel it
in your dark veins,
the once-warm world
full and open to sun,
now folded in stone, faded
as remembered flowers.

study the prints
of layered love,
each creating another
of more intricate design . . .
see how the tender skin
hardened into armor,
how the stammering touch
became cool and poised,
how from each innocence
evolved a higher form of doubt . . .
eternal rhyme
of rock upon rock.

press against it . . .
recall grass, sky,
beasts and birds,
mountainous clouds . . .
the endless seams
of loss and gain.
hold the young bone,
time's champion
before you, now,
bone-hunter
life-hunter
of morning mirrors.

Marion, Ohio

noon's golden boats
heeled on the parking lot

ladies in broad hats
affected tennis on my lawn

servants murmured
in the halls of the church

it stays on, bewildered
as its memories blink out
one by one—
sirens in deep morning

and handsome warren waltzed
the gray and dying girls . . .