

## THE ENVOY

If I touch a certain place on  
My leg I am a child again  
Wading a cold mountain stream.  
No water clearer, but to the parallactic eye none  
Less certain. Sunlight scatters like orange peel  
Over the surface. In the depths a molten swell  
Lifts rags of sand. Water beads  
Skitter in dimples about  
Legs which trail away like flat  
Long underwear toward the mere blue blur of feet.

Then I see something bitterly white push  
From the bank mud through scarlet tree roots, pause,  
Then move again slowly out toward  
Me. If a serpent it is faceless; if a worm it is wide  
As my wrist. It moves beyond my leg, not quite  
Touching me, then the tip curls back and for  
A moment nuzzles the calf. Colder than space  
The touch is nevertheless a kiss  
In which there is no wish to possess—  
Only some antique courtesy, as though  
Cold were sending an envoy to Warm  
To tell him some of the customs of snow  
And learn some of what it means to burn.

---

Appeared previously as a broadside in a portfolio produced by Palaemon Press Ltd.