

## KINGS CANYON/EARTH

1

In this damp forest  
Animal bones are buried in a womb  
Of pine needles and shredded leaves and earth.

There is a jay, dead only hours, with worms  
Tunneling through the ruffles of brain,  
Ants pinching the stomach empty.

After a few weeks the jay's skull  
Will be licked, inside and out,  
To a dull shine.

2

There is a fox, trotting for the valley.  
Mucus, like snail trails, seeps  
From her eyes.

Where her left forepaw steps  
A track of blood is left behind.

3

Somewhere on the cool bank of a creek  
A beaver, shot in the throat,  
Gags on his own blood.

In an hour he will be dead;  
In a season a fur sack with a cage of bones  
That holds nothing but darkness.

And within a year his fur and guts  
Will dissolve into earth, enter the roots of pine,  
And become bark or a cluster of cells  
In the tree's new ring.