

I leave them wrapped in that stained sheet like a
double larvum in a speckled chrysalis,
they sleep with their mouths open like teenagers,
their breath sweet, the whole room smells
delicately of champagne and semen and blood.
I let them rest, but I go back again and again to that moment,
I watch them over and over until I get used to it,
like God watching Adam and Eve in the garden—
that first springing rill of dark blood,
I eye it the way the castaway stares at the
blackish life pouring out of the turtle's throat where he severs it.

THE PRESENT MOMENT

Every time my father gets worse
I forget what he was like before.
Now that he cannot sit up,
now that he just lies there
staring at the wall with the dark rich
mysterious liquid planet of his eye,
I forget the one who sat up in the light
and put on his silver reading glasses so the
light multiplied in the lenses.
Once he got to the hospital I
forgot the man who had lived at home,
lying on the gold couch with the pink
blanket around him, like a huge crushed bud,
the swimming pool just outside the door if he should
want to go down into the earth
in that blue water, water his servant,
air his servant, earth, fire, and I have
long forgotten the man who ate food,

put the dark seared flesh of
other animals into his mouth, that
good blood of the four-footed, or
pineapple like wedges of striated light,
the skeiny nature of light made visible.
Long ago we have left that ruddy man
with the swelled cheeks and the lips of a sweet-eater,
the torso so solid it looked as if it were
packed with extra matter the way there are
planets a handful of which weigh as much as the earth.
Left behind forever is that young man my father,
white-skinned dark-haired boy who held that
bourbon like a baby bottle in his
beautiful hand. Everything is
gone but this big emaciated man
curled on his side, the darkness of his eye, the
silver curve of his hair, his lung
slowly filling up with fluid like a
cup slowly filling up, the
great curved spout tilted in the air above it.
It is the same with my son, I look at him and I
cannot really remember the time
he could not put his clothes on but
stood there in naked dazzling beauty to be dressed,
I have forgotten the one who could not feed himself
but sat in the highchair with his clean mouth open and his
hands like bright useless stars in the air at his sides,
I have left behind the one who wore diapers,
dipping him over on his back and whisking one
off and whisking another on, a
brisk flashing of white, left
behind is the one who could only sleep
and drink from my body, his eyes on my face
staring with a wordless steady gaze

the way my father lies there now with his
eyes open, then the lids come down and the
milky crescent of the other world
shines there for a moment before sleep.
I cannot push him forward or hold him back,
I just stay beside him the way the boat
stays abreast of the Channel swimmer at night,
you know you cannot touch them, you see them
faintly glowing there in the dark water,
the strong pathetic star-shape of the human body.

DEATH AND MORALITY

The one thing I like about my father's dying
is it is not evil. It is not good
and it is not bad, it is out of the moral world altogether,
and once I am out of the moral world
I can live as easily as any animal
made to live in the element it inhabits.
I can watch them empty his catheter bag,
pouring the pale ember fluid
into the big hospital measuring cup, it is
neither good nor bad, it is only beautiful,
it is just the body. Even his pain, when his
face contracts, and his mouth makes a thick
sucking snap when his jaws draw back
is not bad, no one is doing it to him,
there is no guilt, no shame,
there is only pleasure and pain. This is the
world where sex lives, the world of the
nerves, the world without God,
the world of seasons, the creation of the earth,