

A PRAYER IN HIS SICKNESS

You brought me, lord,
to these sun-punished hills,
this Academy
where I opened my eyes and my ears
to the peacock braying
and the peahen running over the fields,
where I bent to the grass my brother
sleepy and red at the close of the day
and made my farewells.
You brought me, lord.

You bring me now
to the mouth of my 33rd year
but I'm afraid to drink
of this black water.
Weak hands, weak heart,
liverish spittle, lips
shaped and bled dry by so many cravings,
my whole life at sundown dissolving into the grass—
I turn away,
and you turn away in despair.

Be with me now.
Don't let me speak with my painted tongue
to the ghosts of this world.
Let me put off
this heavy finery, let me put off my suffering flesh
and I will come down to meet you, lord,
wherever you say.