

1974

Kings Canyon/Earth

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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.