

These poems do not live: it's a sad diagnosis.
 They grew their toes and fingers well enough,
 Their little foreheads bulged with concentration.
 If they missed out on walking about like people
 It wasn't for any lack of mother-love.

O I cannot understand what happened to them!
 They are proper in shape and number and every part.
 They sit so nicely in the pickling fluid!
 They smile and smile and smile and smile at me.
 And still the lungs won't fill and the heart won't start.

They are not pigs, they are not even fish,
 Though they have a piggy and a fishy air—
 It would be better if they were alive, and that's what they were.
 But they are dead, and their mother near dead with distraction,
 And they stupidly stare, and do not speak of her.

1960

Morning Song

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.
 The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry
 Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.
 In a drafty museum, your nakedness
 Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother
 Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow
 Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath
 Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:
 A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral
 In my Victorian nightgown.
 Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try
 Your handful of notes;
 The clear vowels rise like balloons.

19 February 1961