

Cairns
(mid-1980s)

At sea it seems, though we did not stand there. The sun rises up from over the edge of the depths, punishing the waves with its brilliance, while there are no clouds. The no clouds that we speak of, finding solace far down beneath the waves, in the cold depths from which the sun did rise.

The no clouds also form in the black depths, beyond the rising edge, though we do not see them, though they cannot be stood upon. Fish swim there with unseen lights, between and through the no clouds, but slowly, only occasionally ever caught by astute Japanese fishermen, with their impossible and illegal nets, combing the no clouds, but slowly and with diligence.

The brought up fish explode, black and ashen, as though a thousand years dead, as though having passed from the intestines of the sun, as though having known the secrets of the no clouds, the genesis of the sun, though we did not stand there, our toes cold, at sea it seems.

The marlin, of which we might properly ask in the quiet night, prior to driving through that night, as though it were possible to do so without at any stage, if only for a moment on the curving road, if only for a moment in the grey light preceding dawn, when mist rises up on the lake, to drive through that night without sleeping, without dreamless casting about, with head poised like a falling rock, utterly still, and finding in that stillness a serpentine mark, a question of foreign depth arising lightly from beyond our sleep, a question properly not our own, but of the quiet night, hence it is properly asked then, but we must utter it, in order that it may return to the quiet night, that we speaking may return as well, dreamless casting about for the marlin, that we may properly ask.

The marlin, in its suspension, may well attract a strong man's fist, which could have no other aim, having constituted itself as will, than to split that fish and pass inside, or more specifically, and obviously requiring the other hand as well, another will, to pull the beak apart, and straight downwards, into the fish's gullet, stretch the arm, for the arm must follow the fist, and the fist having reached the rough center, opening out into a hand, with five strong fingers to grasp that singular place, the marlin's essential core, which no sooner grasped than the fish splits apart, and falls away to either side, into the black night, leaving suspended in its place an empty and bloody fist.

Orange berries that no old cart has ever passed by on its way to market, briefly stopping to search beneath the green leaves for the decaying berries that no hungry villagers will pay high prices for, and that are not considered delicacies in distant lands, or prized as a potent aphrodisiac, or as an agent of longevity, and that have never been used to dye the bridal veils of the marrying daughters of savage kings, or squeezed by an artist to fill in a circular sun, but that instead lie without renown upon the forest floor, upon the rotting leaves, and without exclamation.

The forest is green, like a toad on a princess, like a toad aback a princess. Her pale skin beneath the moon. The clinging dark lump. Throughout the night they walked. The forest's silence, like a toad upon a princess. Exhausted she lay down. Whereupon the toad, green like the forest, shifted sides and remarked, "the forest is green."

One might also have written about the forest itself, although many efforts are as good as none, though one is far worse. I have only five hands. How often have these words been repeated? How often have the forest trunks grown straight and tall, only to discover at their summit the stupidity

of afternoon? Which destroys them in time.

To write towards the day which falls away on either side without looking, which pretends that the sky is blue and that the white clouds pass slowly overhead, which never considers the night to come. Why this abysmal patience? One day.