

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

I

Like all the swallows in Autumn, the sun-chasers,
before death now I turn back to childhood—

to the dark child on the terrace in sunlight,
solemnly standing—I look through his eyes.

O stranger to all things, sleep-rounded
(but whose sleep?) you look at the garden,

how long ago! You are I—in your limbs,
strange limbs, I break light like water and
murmur the sound of man.

2

Man's always the child he yet remembers,
one, somehow, with his earliest beginning;
carries a single heart through all Decembers;
is what he was—to all encounters bringing
self-knowledge, self-disgust, that still dismembers
lover from love and will from its own winning.

3

Memory is salt, like the sea, and
sad, despite windows of light and wild
wave-glow vanishing away. Can you see
a horizon behind or before,
or even within? Our shore
is where we drown; is where my words—
calling, recalling—find
death in the Word's torn body and lovely mind.

K.F.