

TIME OUT

I

Imprisoned in the rats cage of success
for failure to do good and love the truth,
we learn humanity disused breeds out.
Scientists who lie to gratify
the common greedy wishes creep from plastic
dens to batten on the blood of mothers;
friends fall to illnesses long since controlled
albeit not for anyone or not
for anyone not in highest power;
nurses lose their civil leave to keep
the loving finger on the beating back.
So many died, so many lost their minds,
so many never grew, that others might
write in mournful numbers requisite
within the grant proposed and save themselves
in simple, rising from each clever challenge
to craft a test to justify the answers
as yet a lower form of life until
a tide of human misery rolls people
blooming in food for Titans, self-made mutants.
The state as Great Facilitator tithes
to float its noisome, poisoned cloud aloft;
after a hundred years, the light in Quincy
that sickened little Henry's temperate soul
casts a shadow, darkens the Capitol.
Court above, court below, we measure
our future worth by whose rude lust for sway
cancels our dreams of light, whose might says No
to us when most unseasonably right.

II

Turn from the hazy glare of untouchable
corruption's endless summer; drive farther up
and farther in, past the sedgy keogs.
But I have heard that the top of the world drops
in dust to somber plains of iron crossed
by stolid streams draining to the Arctic.
Stop in the middle North of the frozen mean,
find the enchanted way and step aside
into a pastel scape of headlands pillowing,

spun sugar clouds of candy rock, billowing
over unstill water burning cold,
the temperature of conscious utterance.
Without rhymes or reasons, girdled by
this richly fringed and jeweled intertidal,
neither land nor sea, stand and see
before you, the domed island at the center
of the vision, garlanded with mist,
if drowned mountain crowned with silver circlet
or planet cinctured in blue space. Where smoke
and roses ride the air, behind you, hear
the galled pines singing, fretted with bitter globes.
Now trim the skill disused to praise again
creation's bones exposed here, the will of god
the soundless watery surround, ringed round
with currents of her inference we chart
at times in part or not in time, who are
simply less successful than the lichens.
Our laches forgiven, unclean hands new washed,
the bell on running swell tolls our limitations.