Where before the final lap
Gorgeous trains and riders stop,
Ramparts beckon from afar,
Travelers quench their thirst, the water-
Vendors offer him the jar
And address whom no one knows
For a former prince. No rancor
Clouds his soul, He thanks the giver
With a smile, but shyly goes
For his kingship broke, a slight
Contact even makes him quiver
And he almost fears the light.

He lay alone upon a ledge of stone.
How distant were his lands and all the proffer
Of mercy and command, as in a coffer
Buried in sand, the gold and gems he owned.
And deep into his hands he bowed his head.

But through the silence sighing whispers sped.

The wayside grasses, sad and trodden down,
The dialogue of cedar trees and alders,
The plashing drops that tumbled from the boulders
Divined the grief — so strange to men — of one
Who lost his kingly heritage.

And then he heard the river surge and pledge:

VOICES IN THE RIVER

Timorous creatures, adoring, deploring,
Here in our realm is the refuge your craved.
Here is rejoicing and here is restoring,
Softly in sound and caress you are laved.
Limbs turned to shell in a palace of surges,
Coralline lips in a resonant chain,
Tresses entangled in ledges and verges
Drift, and are caught in the current again.

Lanterns aglow like a violet ember,
Pillars afloat on a pivoting base,
Waters awakened to languorous timbre
Rock into rest, meditation, and grace.

But if reflection and melody cloy you
— Anodyne joys in perpetual swing —
Touch of a kiss shall deliver and buoy you
Hither and thither as ripple and ring.
This page intentionally left blank