

PIG

We climbed with our bikes
 onto the back of a battered pickup
and found ourselves for an hour

eye to eye with a huge pig
 whose four feet were all safely tethered
so we were shocked when on arriving

in a Breton village
 the pig was brutally tumbled
into a waist-deep tub

to be slaughtered by the driver with a knife
 cutting first the tendons to its legs
and then its throat

and when the pig stopped squealing
 he cut out its testes and held them up
with a wild twisted grin

of victory over his foe
 At that moment his grimace seemed inhuman
but later I had to suspect

that perhaps it was all too human
 Was it my own sheltered life
that was unreal

cut off from the raw facts
of a world of survival
dependent on slaughter?

Or – I need to ask
now I am ninety-three –
is there more at stake in life

than this kingdom of death?