

Data Stream

Drilling to the center of the earth
turned out to be more difficult
than we'd imagined.

First, we lost the data stream,
whether from electro magnetism, heat,
or something else, we didn't know.

We didn't know what forces
operated at these depths:
that was the reason for the project.

Then we argued: some wanted to give it up;
others insisted on waiting
for a definitive sign of failure or success,

but disagreed on what a sign might be,
and whether the lack of data was itself a sign,
and if so what it signified.

Out Past Neptune

Long ago, legends say,
the Ancestors came in rocket ships
out past Neptune to the Kuiper Belt
to terraform this archipelago of asteroids.

Legends say, once upon a time
we lived on "planet earth"
where it was warm, leaves grew on trees,
and there was air to breathe.

The Ancestors, legends say,
knew which of the stars in the black sky
was the one they called "our sun";
no one knows it now.

We know just what we need to know
to service the machinery
which lets us live
under the Oort cloud's icy fringe.

Askew

He would not sit unless his mat was straight. Analects 10.12

Always the mat is not straight,
always it is a little askew,
is not aligned properly with the threshold and pillars;
or it is not the correct mat,
is the wrong color,
meant for someone of a different rank;
or if it is the correct mat,
of the right color
and aligned with the threshold and pillars,
there is still the matter of the cap:
what is required for this occasion
is the plain silk one
not the one you have brought, of embroidered linen.

The New Coat

To boil your lobster humanely
immerse it in salted water
and turn the heat to low;
your lobster will fall asleep
before the water boils.
But who has time for this?
Just toss it into a pot
of rapidly boiling water,
clamping the lid down tight
until the clattering stops
and your lobster has exchanged
its drab green coat
for one of glorious red.

