



PENOBSCOT

Children of the early
Countryside

Talk on the back stoops
Of that locked room
Of their birth

Which they cannot remember

In these small stony worlds
In the ocean

Like a core
of an antiquity

Non-classic, anti-classic, not the ocean
But the flat
Water on the harbor
Touching the stone

They stood on—

I think we will not breach the world
These small worlds least
Of all with secret names

Or unexpected phrases—

Penobscot

Half deserted, has an air
Of northern age, the rocks and pines

And the inlets of the sea
Shining among the islands

And these innocent
People
In their carpentered

Homes nailed
Against the weather—It is more primitive

Than I know
To live like this, to tinker
And to sleep

Near the birches
That shine in the moonlight

Distant
From the classic world—the north

Looks out from its rock
Bulging into the fields, wet flowers
Growing at its edges! it is a place its women

Love, which is the country's
Distinction—

The canoes in the forest
And the small prows of the fish boats
Off the coast in the dead of winter

That burns like a Tyger
In the night sky. One sees their homes and lawns
The pale wood houses

And the pale green
Terraced lawns.
'It brightens up into the branches

And against the buildings'
Early. That was earlier.

George Oppen, 1996