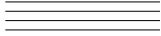


T U R N I N G   T H E   C O M P O S T   O N  
T H E   L A S T   D A Y   O F   T H E   Y E A R



K A R L   K I R C H W E Y

Forgotten savor of a grapefruit hull;  
    coffee grounds for each day begun in doubt;  
    the onion skin on which you used to write;  
the smashed wall-textured pallor of eggshell:  
all's discarded; all's still recognizable.

Dig down and turn, dig down and turn once more  
    with the silvered blade of an old shovel  
    to where a Brussels sprout stalk makes Yggdrasil  
and golden apples keep their withered luster  
in the dark. Dig down and turn past where

the hectic leaves of Japanese maple  
    that throughout November lit the blue room  
    are layered in crisp bands of crimson flame,  
so that it seems time is reversible,  
with each stout heave through the disordered jumble

of what you loved. Then deeper, deeper down,  
    you cannot stop now, to the ruck and spoil,  
    fecundated but indistinguishable,  
beyond the warmth of vegetable corruption,  
the airless slick black mulch imagination

and memory revert to after all.

    How is it that you never understood?

    And having thought the chore routine, how should  
you find your way back with your broken tool,  
poor pioneer, before the daylight fail?