

UNDER great yellow flags and banners of the ancient Cold  
Began the huge migrations  
From some primeval disaster in the heart of Man.

There were great oscillations  
Of temperature... You knew there had once been warmth;

But the Cold is the highest mathematical Idea... the Cold is Zero  
The Nothing from which arose  
All Being and all variation... It is the sound too high for our hearing, the Point  
that flows

Till it becomes the line of Time... an endless positing  
Of Nothing, or the Ideal that tries to burgeon  
Into Reality through multiplying. Then Time froze

To immobility and changed to Space.  
Black flags among the ice, blue rays  
And the purple perfumes of the polar Sun  
Freezing the bone to sapphire and to zircon-  
These were our days.

And now in memory of great oscillations  
Of temperature in that epoch of the Cold,  
We found a continent of turquoise, vast as Asia  
In the yellowing airs of the Cold: the tooth of a mammoth;  
And there, in a gulf, a dark pine-sword

To show there had one been warmth and the gulf stream in our veins  
Where only the Chaos of the Antarctic Pole  
Or the peace of its atonic coldness reigns.