Poem for Kiyo’ko

Overfull mouth of golden teeth, one
Slightly rotted at the centre; fresh from
Nagasaki, your face folded in glazed paper.
Where would you lead me, Kiyo’ko? Blindly
Under the tremulous fountains could your
Gold-leaf body curve; or is it for the snap
And purity of breaking and bloodless
Flesh that I hold you, the dragon king’s
Perilous and abandoned daughter? How
Do you dare, mimicking old Japan on this
Slender bridge, your feet captured like birds,
And all the yellow history of slaughter
In your carven nose and the slashes
At your temples? Perhaps you can turn your wrists,
Endlessly; where I touch you there are
Silver flakes matching perfectly the whorls
On my finger-tips; before the blood comes.
And here, with ice-cream, your immaculate
And punctilious husband, casual gesture,
Pointed jacket: your smile and the exact
Inclination of your neck as you bow before
The gulls and bombers coming gives the lie
To guilt; the murder born of perfect innocence
Matches the smooth fall of your satin.
The World’s Neck

The north-west coast of Alaska,
Bright and green with summer, beside a
Surprisingly narrow channel, the water foaming
And speeding through the Bering Strait, tossed white;
I have brought you here to show you
The world’s neck; without this flow of white joy
The shape of the oceans would change, for it is
Only here that water curls upwards,
Crosses the bar, rears and shouts. As we watch,
A radio floats by, and then a pale blue
Volkswagen, in which there is, perhaps,
Someone shouting. We are so near the edge,
But out of danger, speech drowned,
Knowing the sea will freeze like a postcard
If we want it to; beside the shape to end
All shapes, on this ridiculous strand,
We are futility’s jesters.