

WALKING TO WAKING  
(after Richard Wilbur's "Walking to Sleep.")

We're seasoned to believe the garden fence,  
coffee pot, chairs, everything we last saw  
with open eyes will stay the night outside  
our languid lidfalls just as we left them,  
as we trusted them to be: Unmoved by time  
or tricks of dark we think impossible  
in our fragmented understanding.  
Against the hostile forces of morning,  
feet flung from sheets, fingers spread,  
we see nothing is the same.

We try to grasp cold vacancy snagged  
on splintered air as sharp as what impales  
our soles with every step, letting us fall  
in increments. We're unsure if this will pass  
with repossession of a full range of faculties,  
blown like the Big Bang with nothing to stop  
their outward bounding until gravitational drag  
kicks in. At which time their trajectory droops  
into the pull of some peculiar planet,  
some place not meant for mammals.

Our only option is the bed, the one absolute,  
the one universal lodestone we must return to,  
and persuade sleep to renew the contract  
using sturdier stuff. And add a clause  
providing quick precise termination of tenure  
plus a ready steady gait.

It's six a.m. Does anyone know where we are?

--Glenna Holloway