

WALKING TO WAKEN  
after Richard Wilbur's "Walking to Sleep"

We're seasoned to believe the garden fence,  
Windows, the bookshelf,  
Everything we last saw eyes open  
Will stay the night outside  
Our languid lidfalls as we left it,  
As we trusted it to be:  
Unmoved by clocks or dint of darks  
We think invalid in our failed understanding.  
We confront the hostile force of morning,  
Feet flung from sheets, fingers spread.

And there is nothing to grasp  
But cold vacancy and scent of aging roses  
Slumped without a vase, snagged  
On splintered air as sharp as what impales  
Our soles with each step, but lets us fall  
In increments. We're sure this will pass  
With repossession of our faculties  
Blown like the Big Bang with nothing to stop  
Their outward bounding until gravitational drag  
Kicks in. At which time their trajectory  
Will droop into the web  
Of some peculiar planet's will,  
Some place not meant for mammals.  
Our only option is the bed, the only tangible,  
The universal truth where we must persuade sleep  
To renew the contract using firmer stuff.  
And add a clause  
Providing proper termination of tenure.

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