

## 2. digression

if at our most ecstatic moment  
we are more like the blackness  
startling the paper than the one who inks,

more like the dust than the light  
streaming through a room,

more like the blue-white marble  
in the undividable void,  
no larger than a paramecium hurtled  
into the ocean of a water drop on a slide,

more like the written, the etched, the awled  
than the hand that holds and aches and over-awes,

so that consciousness, self and free-will  
are less like light than a self-free will –

and the sun-worshipers were more right  
than the priests of reason or consciousness,

and the soul can stand to feel  
the stars only at a distance  
because their impossible beauty  
revolves in what we are at bottom,

and Beckett was right to scrawl  
*“I alone am man and all the rest divine,”*

then the “I” scatters utterly out of self  
toward the unbearable power of  
that farther, purer wilderness –

### 3. Transcendental Meditation in Mr. Rissinger's 8th Grade Science Class

“Ya wanna be my guinea pig?  
All ya gotta do is lie on the lab table  
and I’ll teach you TM...”  
my friend Charla implored  
with such intent, womanly eyes  
that the next thing I knew  
I was hearing the class twist leftwards  
in all those right-handed desk-chairs  
to watch me stiffly lie down.  
Her voice surprised me —  
it sounded so smooth  
as she told every muscle in me  
from my feet to my face to  
“Gradually release...”  
Flipping slowly through her note cards,  
she painted this scene for me:  
“You’re hovering above a light green valley,  
a river shaking sun across its waves,  
grassy banks dabbed with violet  
and orange-white flowers,  
fragrant buds in the trees,  
luminous clouds and streaming sun.”  
She put me at peace — as planned,  
but when she said,  
“You feel you can go anywhere you want,”  
her cards got stuck together,  
“Oooops — ...Uhhmmm — uh, you — ah...  
You *can* go anywhere you want.”

That was the last thing I heard  
— the fake valley was gone,  
and my class, the table, the teacher,  
and my body were elsewhere —

I felt like doors opening  
and blowing apart like curtains  
yet I was walking a wide desert plain  
on a narrow path into the bright red sun  
just over the horizon aglow  
with orange, violet, and deep blues  
feeling that who I was there  
was not who I was here.

The alkali floor was cracked, hard and warm,  
but the slight wind comforted me along the trek  
and I was not alone; on my right  
was a woman or man in a hooded robe  
— someone I'd never seen  
yet knew well, somehow  
if I could only see —

    I felt the face  
would have been so calm  
because the peace I felt then  
was so much deeper than I was.  
It comforted me just to know  
such ways to feel could be.  
Needing no words, no desires,  
I was free — the sky and dust  
were all I wanted  
— I began to see her face,  
began to see who she was,  
to feel how she felt  
— I would have stayed out there  
with her forever...

    But Mr. Rissinger prodded me,  
shouting so hard in my ear it ached:  
    “JEFF! SNAP OUT OF IT!!!”

#### 4. post-mortems

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

I jolted up in pain.

Then Charla asked with deep concern,

“Where did you go? You were  
— out — for twenty minutes...”

After I told it all,

Mr. Rissinger stammered, hypothesizing  
quite creatively, for once:

“Malfunctioning neurons...

must have induced

a vivid kind of dream...

Jeff was sleeping probably.

But it wasn't verifiable,

it wasn't even TM.

It was not a trance,”

he propounded without persuading.

The bell rang and everyone scrambled

except Rissinger whose hard frown

drooped under his dark mustache:

“Were you faking, Jeff?”

“I — I swear — it happened.”

He closed in, his face one great glare:

“Would you *swear* you were telling the truth?”

I practically heard his hard science head etching “F”

in his fat black gradebook by our names,

but still had to say, “I — uh, just did.”

Supremely annoyed, he stalked out.

Charla laughed nervously,

“Oh. Jeff, I just remembered...

I don't wanna embarrass you or anything,

but *everyone* saw, so I oughtta tell ya...

You — you were — standing out a lot.”

Her eyes fell away, suddenly coy.

I was mystified —

“Uh, I mean, for a while you got an erection...”

“Whaddaya mean — *everyone*?”

“I think that's why Rissinger believed you.”

“Oh no! And whaddaya mean — *for a while*?”

She gently prodded me toward the door,

“Twenty minutes, maybe?...”

*“Oh no!”*

“You were ‘outstanding,’”

she smirked and burst out laughing:

“I didn’t know you had such a big talent!”

## 5. elation (some variations)

— deep in the body  
near the thickest vertebrae

the gates of the sexual open  
where the self can leave  
when the cosmos comes in

flooding over the edges of self  
with warm and awful ego-death

sundering the self  
at its most vibrant  
moment

clinging to  
its dissipating even if  
only for an instant  
to be pure —

and when elations come  
to a self held so tenderly  
that it slips its husk

before it learns it can't  
trip and trance  
untethered from flesh,

the body catches on  
and surrenders every place  
a body has

to know the sublime  
through human roots

without even grasping  
what's come  
as if it were sex —

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and when elations come — deep in the body  
to a self held so tenderly near the thickest vertebrae  
that it slips its husk the gates of the sexual open  
before it learns it can't where the self can leave  
trip and trance when the cosmos comes in  
untethered from flesh, flooding over the edges of self  
the body catches on with warm and awful ego-death  
and surrenders every place sundering the self  
a body has at its most vibrant  
to know the sublime moment  
through human roots clinging to  
without even its dissipating  
grasping what's come even if only  
as if for an instant  
it were sex — to be pure—