

## MAN WITH LANTERN, APPROACHING

*from a painting, anonymous, circa 1920*

At first, from so far away, he could  
have been a firefly, only  
the heart-glimmer of his flame  
visible in the darkness. The cone of light  
he traveled in we were blind to,  
like dusk when it irretrievably has gone,  
the night's unseen penumbra.

But there were stars then, a feathery edge  
of timber on the foothills,  
and the clay road leading out  
across the meadow. We watched  
a long while as he came toward us,  
hauling the flicker of his lantern,  
the bright slice of dirt he walked on.

We saw as well how he carried a blackness  
impenetrable as tar, how the stars went out  
around him and the night closed in  
like a great and silent mouth, and how—  
just as he passed the fence gate—we could see  
only him in a spiral of brightness and shadow,  
how he was many feet aloft, but walking and smiling,  
just as though he were of this earth.