

kevin clark

The Assignment

How long ago had she demanded
I walk without her
the length of one evening,
my assignment written on the black sky:
A haunting, I was to repeat her name
as I walked the pitch circuit.
There would be no other test.
A single name, the erotic vocable
my only companion. Breath-
after-name-filled breath, not even dry leaves
spoke beneath my shoes. Days
beneath my shoes, weeks.
Soon, the sea change.
Nerves splayed in silence from my step,
rays on the invisible plain.
Did I hover on the bouyant, salted sea,
a skinless body? I grew
weightless, like a pioneer
come to measure
the distance of his soul
under the lightless dome
of the deprivation tank.
Years swept by like protons,
white shards on silver.
Once you enter the pinhole, she warned,
space expands like a womb.
Do you want this, she warned.
I aspired in air, my breath
no longer her name.
I was a possession, a word-sheath.
I was the infinite next.
In the next town a caution light
matched my chant. The word
as inversion, as changeling.
I followed, as if on a road.
As if homeward.