

The Map of Night

The routes of the early explorers
are given in speculative dotted lines: those
compelled souls who left their oil-lit caves
to wade waist-deep in star-flooded ferns.

Young Tiresias, whose path appears in black,
achieved near transit of a moonless dark
by tracing the beaches, sometimes running
after the erratic plans of fireflies.

Since the time of the Lumigoths,
whose bonfires lamped the decks of their rafts
(whose lives were short and ended with a *biss*),
the early *lumo sapiens* spread mostly by cackle

and gossip, by personal narrative that shone inwardly.
Night was not even outlined until ideopaths
charted the complete shores of Jealousy, content to leave
the center of the continent mostly unknown.

On the back of the map we find homage to
the giants of discovery: Edison dressed in furs,
Philo T. Farnsworth, bisected by a horizontal hold. And,
resplendent in a Santa suit, the bearded eminence of Freud.

Everyone has to cross the night. Some do
it elegantly, in continuous slumber, endlessly popular.
Some know the night in pools, of dimly lit
seas of crumpled tissues, of the bland circling of clocks.

Those who struggle with shade have great reverence
for the ancients. Imagine signing on for that trip:
looking back at the final afterglow of dusk, then, when called,
climbing the mast to sidle out along the dark spars, feeling for lines.

It is tempting to think that the lost voyagers
sailed over the edge of darkness and fell
into a brilliant world, landing softly
on beds of iridescent feathers. Our task is to mate

what we know of the darkness, of its lack
of splendor, with our own journeys along
worn floors, our hands extended, hoping
no one's moved the furniture.