

# FRONT PORCH

18

Charles Wright

18.  
21.

It's been, say, five years since I've been back here at this hour,  
Evening starting its light-curling plane

under the clouds,

The east-shrugged, flamingo clouds,

Everything different now, and everything just the same.

Except the leaves and birds,

great-grandchildren, and great-great.

It's not tomorrow I'm looking forward to, it's yesterday,

Or, better yet, the day before that.

The wind keeps gossiping in both my ears for nothing.

I can't go back there,

No matter how juicy the stories are,

no matter how true, or untrue.

We don't know much, really, but we do know some things.

We know the people we learned from,

and know what we learned.

We have to be humble about that -

I know what I got, and I know where I get it from,

Their names inscribed in my Book of Light.

All the while we thought we were writing for the angels,

And find, after all these years,

Our lines were written in black ink on the midnight sky,

Messages for the wind,

a flutter of billets-doux

From one dark heart to the next.

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Who knew it would take so many years to realize

- Seventy years - that everything's light -

The day in its disappearing, the night sky in its distance,

false dawn,

The waters that rise beneath the earth,  
Bat wings and shadow pools,  
that all things come from splendor?

The cardinal in his fiery caul,  
The year's first dandelion globe,  
ash-grey on the ash-green lawn,  
Dear tulip leaves, color of carp bellies, wisteria drools  
Withered and drained dry-  
All light in the gathering darkness,  
a brilliance itself which is set to come.

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The cloud poets of ancient China  
Saw what they saw and recorded it,  
diviners of what wasn't there,  
Pres<sup>id</sup>igitators of nothingness.  
Let me be one of them.

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Sun over plum-colored leaf planes,  
shadows at ease in the east-going ivy.  
A little wind, like a falling wind,  
Tickles the planes, and they rise and fall.  
Mid-May in the city garden,  
sunlight in designated spaces  
Among the buildings, golden for us, dun-dust next door,  
The sun like the Green Knight's head,  
Rolling in slow motion toward its distant and dark corner,  
Bright drops on the bright green hedge,  
black on the black borders.

In an opposite corner, splotches of sun and shade,  
Like birthmarks all of us have,  
Some on our faces, some on our hearts,  
all of them afterprints of our ruin,  
Through which we step each morning  
Gingerly, some of us going east, some of us going west,

All of us under the same sign,  
all of us darkness, all of us light.