

JETT McALISTER

Clear tonight, and yet . . .

Clear tonight, and yet there's a paucity of words. Everything's covered up with itself, spread out before me like floodwaters. I write *tree* & see a tree

and nothing else.

No ideogram for this, and if there were I wouldn't know it—
this skin I feel about me, my body bristled to escape it.

Try as I might

I will not leave these steps outside my house tonight. I guess
it's better this way: I'll drop my pencil and lean against a rail or wall

and watch the trees light up & dim as cars pass in their random droves.

I slow

my pulse, close my eyes & breathe.

I write *breath* and there's nothing else.

Otherwise, what would I say of this matted ground, left behind by the dark?

I'm shrifted,

a *flâneur* in an empty street.

Waves of cricket song roll about. A wind on the leaves,

a rhythm like walking.

Clear tonight, each line crossed over like blotted stars.

I'll learn to like it here this month: all the plants are arrogant in their new green,

billowing out in the sun

on afternoons when the air weighs what the air should,
when the day lingers in the ridge & talk of fire begins to flame the world.