

The Star

We first saw it
on a night pitch as a dungeon,
the world's midnight.
It appeared
the only brightness in the universe,
a bird of pure light soaring,
a crystal ship
sailing the dark deluge,
a dazzling denizen of heaven
leaping the vast vault
towards our long lost world.

And so we scrolled through
the pages of our predecessors,
sages and soothsayers,
farsighted seekers of signs.
We pondered prophecies
penned at twilight
when the mind scries unicorns
and ghouls lurking in trees
and doubts its destiny.

And it seemed to us for the first time
that they knew nothing
save the yearning
for the blue flower
in a starlit clearing
among moon-white trees.

Into our calendar of moons
and slow rotations
the star was a wild intruder
routing regularities.
At the world's midnight it arose,
morning star of an incalculable day,
whose hours we could not reckon.

From our high hermitages,
from their wide vistas and airy aspirations,
we descended through forests,
finding a path we had never travelled,
though it felt familiar,
like the last leg of a journey home.

But there were many legs
and lengths we had to go to,
led as we were.

We moved like shadows
seeking the selves that cast them
in the light that defines them.

There were desolate spaces,
where even the camels stood
snorting at unseen evil.

We skirted murderous towns
where the rotting dead
hung in avenues of gallows.

We met the mad king,
heard his cunning words of welcome,
saw the desperation in his eyes.

In the end we arrived
where a sturdy man stood guard,
like a silver-armoured angel,
and the mother of all meaning,
girl though she was,
glowed with the love
that leapt lightly from heaven.
Here was the home for all strangers.
Here was the world's dawn.
Here was the blue flower
in the sunlit clearing
among milk-white trees.

Richard Bauckham