

# Q U A D R A T I C



S T E V E   B A R B A R O

1.

So with the thickly throaty, curt finality of a deity  
you insist you must sleep upon the lawn,  
this May night, upon the residential lawn, that lawn banally  
clipped to match the broader sprawl, yeah,  
this May night where you insist as such & do so, must  
do so, only to wake in the dark to know that the gods exist,  
the gods must exist, but in the very way your sleep gets lost upon the lawn.

2.

Or this August night where you insist you can't not  
gaze upon the street, the traffic-heady street not far from  
home, & where usually goes a parade of, well, such & such . . .  
& not to be antisocial, of course, or a misanthrope, it's only that  
the way you insist you must stare upon the street,  
after midnight, & when the street's deserted, or largely so,  
only compels you toward the absent traffic, the not-there sirens & fumes,  
behind which the gods must lurk like a kind of smoke beyond smoke.

3.

But why don't you get to actually ever, like, glimpse  
the gods? Or why can't you ever, like, hear their  
steps? Could it be because their sense of space  
is maybe a sense of space seething across itself at your  
expense? I mean something using your lump  
sum waywardness discretely, but still hoarding that waywardness,  
as if that waywardness might be their evasiveness's very engine?

4.

So with the draft-drifty, sprawly chitchat of a non-deity  
you insist you must deny the very existence of gods,  
this November night, & in the cozy space of your home, yeah,  
your home that simulates a world absolutely & completely  
your own, & your own so much that that space  
drunken with your god-toward guffawing becomes  
a space so dense with your you-ness as to coerce the *now*  
*here now* of the very thing you are proclaiming is gone.