

W. S. Merwin

Note

Remember how the naked soul
comes to language and at once knows
loss and distance and believing

then for a time it will not run
with its old freedom
like a light innocent of measure
but will hearken to how
one story becomes another
and will try to hear where
they have emerged from
and where they are heading
as though they were its own legend
running before the words and beyond them
naked and never looking back

through the noise of questions

Raiment

Believing comes after
there were coverings
who can believe
that we were born without them
he she or it wailing
back the first breath
from a stark reflection
raw and upside-down
early but already
not original

into the last days
and then some way past them
the body that we
are assured is more
than what covers it
is kept covered
out of habit which
is a word for dress
out of custom
which is an alteration
of the older word costume
out of decency
which is handed down
from a word for what
is fitting

apparently we believe
in the words
and through them
but we long beyond them
for what is unseen
what remains out of reach
what is kept covered
with colors and sizes

we hunger
for what is undoubted yet dubious
known to be different
and our fabrics tell
of difference
we dress in difference
as though the words were ours