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Brain Waves from an Alien's Radio

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Vassar Miller Poetry Award Winner

On antenna systems, Feynman notes: "Ours is one of the simplest possible ones; we can make them much more complicated, and by changing the phases in the various antennas we can send the beams in various directions and send most of the power in the direction in which we wish to transmit, without ever moving the antenna!"

— *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, Vol. 1, Chapter 29–4, Two dipole radiators

Not sleeping   under this window,
me, as the trees outside   peek through lantern light
                                  and bamboo slats.

the blind's bunched   strings illume.   sleeping troubles
me most at night, because   I suspect

I have not met   the right doctor   yet the trouble
with thinking at night   about the day I thought

I would never sleep   again   is how it felt,
how it feels   still-life like now.
                             I am afraid and say so.

Because I cannot   remember every body   and every
thing I have known,   and done,
                             nor what they have done to me

and mine,   my mind is likely to twist   one
thing into another—   twine so   sound sews in two

syllables   the way I've imagined   a knot—   Tonight,
trouble sneaks in,   asks me
                             what if
Ben didn't hang himself
from a tree?   the blind's bunched strings

illume. Because negation   is a rope   I can hang myself with,
I have trouble   in my body. nights   inside the refrain

of proper nouns, troubled sleep   and me,   as troubling
as Ben   who's passed himself   and passed   past