

Richard Meyer

In Plato's Cave

Perceived by the senses, sieved through the brain,
the *thing-in-itself* ... out there in the world ...
can never be grasped, deciphered, unfurled.
The most we can gather, assume, or obtain
are shadows of substance, a silhouette show,
and *that-which-appears* is all we can know.
We're trapped in a cave and stare at a wall
where images flicker, fractured and blurred,
and take as the truth the sum of it all,
a view of the real that's merely inferred.
While the essence of things is never revealed,
we dwell on the surface of what's concealed
and give our impressions a source and a name.
We live on illusions, and die just the same.

Death is . . .

the price we pay for being here,
the cost of getting in —
annihilation's lottery
you're guaranteed to win.

Richard Meyer

Soliloquy at the Asylum

The shrink who's here to plumb my mind
with Rorschach's silly inkblot test
is businesslike, or so inclined,
and clinical like all the rest,

absurd and long past wearing thin!
I won't reveal the things I see.
I keep my secrets deep within,
but she's still showing cards to me,

and each is splattered with a blotch
that's meant to trigger some reply —
a bearskin rug, a woman's crotch,
a bat, a bird, a butterfly —

such common stuff that dullards spout
when looking at an abstract shape.
They'll never get me figured out.
I'm not some laboratory ape.

This room is stifling, stale and stark.
Those other voices in my head
(the ones that come out after dark)
conceal themselves by playing dead.

I smile. Put on a placid face.
Refuse to speak. My thoughts range far
beyond these blots, this fenced in place,
to where the buried bodies are.