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Pilgrimage

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••PILGRIMAGE

W.F. LANTRY

2010 PATRICIA GOEDICKE PRIZE IN POETRY

“what are the holy cities of America?”

~Berryman

There are no blackbirds on the Stevens walk.
We circle, looking for a seemly place
to park, and try The Hartford's spacious lot.
The young attendant greets us, but he's got
no notion who the poet was. His face
is buoyant with new generosity:

parking's on him. Our curiosity
drives us to find the rough commencement stone
set in this lawn along Asylum Road.
She reads, and I explain to James the code
engraved into the polished face. He's known
as a good finder, and he spots the next

just north. The devotees of Malcolm X
are handing out their Final Call, and stare
as I explain the third. A river birch
papers its bark before the red doored church.
I love the fifth. Its sounds, in empty air,
presage our storm. We cross the Brahmin stream

to gated lions, once held in esteem
but fallen now, twisted by wind and snow:
the mansions have been sold. White faces peer
from windows, dialing. Silly, I revere
the last. A squad car watches as we go
towards the park, along the cedared block.