Elixir is a multi-personaed action movie, a love poem, a trip down memory lane, a Kulchur lexicon, an ode to NYC and tribute to exotic ports everywhere. It’s a tender balm for the paranoid and lonely, and a tentacular tonic for the heart of Time. I loved, once married, and have kept attentive to half a century and more writing of this genius of The Poem. Lewis Warsh opens the doors of perception with wit, suspense, beauty, surprise.
— Anne Waldman

I want to talk about how beautiful a book Elixir is, and describe its mastery, and soulfulness, but then I imagine Lewis teasing me about using “mastery,” then teasing the word itself, then placing it in five different phrases to create a tonal scale out of amusement and precision. There are so many layers of possibility Lewis Warsh tended to in his writing, without signaling that he was doing so, which make the poetry inviting and mysterious—steeped in recognition of common experience and wry depths of personal idiosyncrasy. His sense for arrangement of line and sentence across formal vessels that allow everything to be let in and go together is one I’ve loved and learned from for years. To have this book is to have a gift to dive into.
— Anselm Berrigan
NIGHT SKY

Night-life in the country, beyond the sighting of a raccoon,

and the headlights of a pick-up returning from the dump

night-life in the treetops. The 3-legged dog next door doesn’t bite. Do I hold on for a moment or do I slip over the edge?

Night-time in the parking lot outside Arizona Pizza, the Metro North train arrives in Wassaic, I get off at the last stop.

Tuesday matinees at the Triplex. The forklift operator’s wife at the end of the bar.

Night-life in the Bronx. A dead carnation in your lapel.
My mother knots my tie before I walk out the door.

Night-life on the Pacific Rim. I wear a bullet-proof vest in Coconut Grove.

Night-life anywhere filled with stars in the night sky.

Night-life in the baggage claim area with no where to go.
I saw you from a distance but
you turned away
as if you didn’t know me, and
then I saw you up close

and it was someone else
but you said “hello”
like ships in the night

you were coming up the aisle
and I was going down
to my seat in the front row
and you were calling my name
from the top balcony

and I was sipping a cold one on the edge
of the pier and watching the dancers
on the waves when you walked by
for the first or second time

and I didn’t remember your
name under the purple
sky but as you turned to leave

I asked you to stay
or maybe I said “hey!”
and you didn’t hear
Pots and pans need to be scrubbed with Brillo.

Sometimes penicillin is needed to cure the common cold. Free flu shots are available in the local drugstore, if you didn’t know.

High tide, flash flooding, an old pickup with a clutch.

Split the difference or rake in the chips.

A glass of hot milk in the dead of night.

A slice of pie à la mode (left over from yesterday) for the road ahead.

The twist has been out of fashion for decades. All you have to do is stand in one place and move your hips. It would seem like you might want to count your blessings for having survived this long into a future
you never thought was coming. Better melt back into the night before anyone recognizes you, and calls your name.

4
I’ll go on record and say everything twice, in case no one hears,
and you can play the record back one word at a time and you might even translate what I said into a different language so “I don’t know what you’re talking about” might be something she said in response to something I was thinking out loud, something I said to someone else in another life.

5
It’s time to collect our coats and go home but there aren’t any coats and there isn’t any home.
Do the math, for god’s sake,
and make it come out right, tonight,
on the road between
Albany and Troy.

It occurs to me that
the world could end
at any moment

but sometimes I think
it could go on forever
as well. The idea

of the world ending
makes more sense
than imagining some

kind of endless future
that might include people
walking around on other

planets and never kissing.
In the scenario about ending
now I see an absence of water,

a cloud in front of the sun,
I see scorched earth
and the bodies of fish floating

on their backs. I see some
tumbleweeds blowing across
the floor of the ocean
and a lot of bones.

7

afterthought
blemishes

stationary
viaduct

hotel room
indents

expectation
inhabit

perseveres
armband

forsaken
kiosk

inanimate
peristalsis

Ovaltine
penumbra

somnambulism
infection
absent
proprietor

scapegoat
dyspeptic

humidifier
sandwiched

mainland
rivulets

retired
ombudsman

zipper
anesthesia

bellicose
microwave

humbug
Mediterranean

vintage
caramel

stowaway
pantheon
OLD FLAME

There are movies that come back to haunt you at the end and you can hear the music building to a crescendo like Hollywood so you in the audience and you in the starring role are almost the same good looking clean cut up tight all of the above and none I wouldn’t recognize you on a bus if you paid me to get on and off and you wouldn’t remember my name for all the nights in the world we crawled into bed with the lights on and the radio playing soft and low we might as well have been blindsided by a two-ton truck for all it matters because there’s only the present like a movie played backwards with a cast of thousands hanging on for dear life.