

**GILLIAN
PEDERSON-KRAG**

Painter's Diary, 2008
oil on canvas, 18 x 18 in.



courtesy: the artist

WENDELL BERRY
Sabbaths, 1994

In Memory: William Stafford

I

I leave the warmth of the stove,
my chair and book, and go out
into the cold night. My little lamp
that shows the way and leaves me dark
is swinging in my hand.
The house windows shine above me,
and below a single light gleams
in the barn where an hour ago
I left a ewe in labor. Beyond
is the grand sweep of Heaven's stars.
As I walk between them in the deep night,
the lights of house and barn
also are stars;
my own small light
is an unsteady star.
I come to earth on the barn floor
where the ewe's lambs have been born
and now, wet and bloody, breathing
at last the air of this wintry world,
struggle to rise, while the ewe
mutters and licks. Unknowing,
they have the knack of their becoming:
heartbeat and breath,
the hunger that will lead them
to the tit, and thence to the sunlit
grass. I perform the ancient acts
of comfort and safety, making sure.
I linger a moment in the pleasure
of their coming and my welcome,
and then go, for I must comfort myself
and sleep. While I worked
the world turned half an hour,
carrying us on toward morning
and spring, the dark and the cold again,
the births and then the deaths
of many things, the end of time.
I close the door and walk back,
homeward, among the stars.