



BREATHING ROOM

by Wayne Moore

Collected Poems:
1976 to 1986

©2009, Lilly Moore, Illustrations

©2001, Wayne Moore, Cover Art

©1998, Wayne Moore, Poetry

this page intentionally left nearly empty of useful content

CONTENTS

THE GIFT: TO BE SIMPLE	1
MY REFUGE WITH THE BEES	2
BLOOD IS BLUE	3
NEW LEASE	5
TINTYPE	6
CONVERSATION WITH MY BODY	9
GEORGETOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE.....	11
IT IS ENOUGH	12
WAITING	13
CHAMELEON	14
EXTREME	15
HATPINS IN THE STORM, MT. YPSILON, 1915	17
THE GROUNDHOG'S RIDDLE	19

THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW.....	20
THIS SPOT MARK THIS SPOT	23
THE EDIBLE AND THE INEDIBLE	27
THE WHEEL OF IXION STANDS STILL	29
HOME OF THE TRAGIC POET, POMPEII.....	31
THE TURTLE	33
FORCED AIR	34
DOPPLER EFFECT	35
FEIGNING MADNESS.....	36
CREATION MYTH	37
KUMIKO'S PHOTOGRAPH	38
THE INSIDE STORY	39

THE GIFT: TO BE SIMPLE

for mother

This is the mythology of childhood
where you return once upon a time
every time you think of this thing.
It is a landscape minutely detailed
as tundra, flint hard and persuasive
as the mountain's face, and cool
to the touch with shadows and snow.
It is a room where the sun sets
inside a curtain of clouds,
the couch by the window,
the afternoon nap of waking life.
This is the story of finding everything
in place when you return to yourself
with misplaced intentions of a calendar year.
Like the season of crystals and night
there is the slowed motion and low light
of always evening, where blessings
are clear, and the forgiveness of sleep
overcomes you, as all forgiveness does.

MY REFUGE WITH THE BEES

When I come here
I am looked after.
Swarms hollow light channels
through my eyes and my worries
lose their blank cavity
to eggs and the newly incubated.
Scores of workers replace
a shuddering confidence
below these brittle collarbones
and a chamber of the heart
is made ready for the Queen.

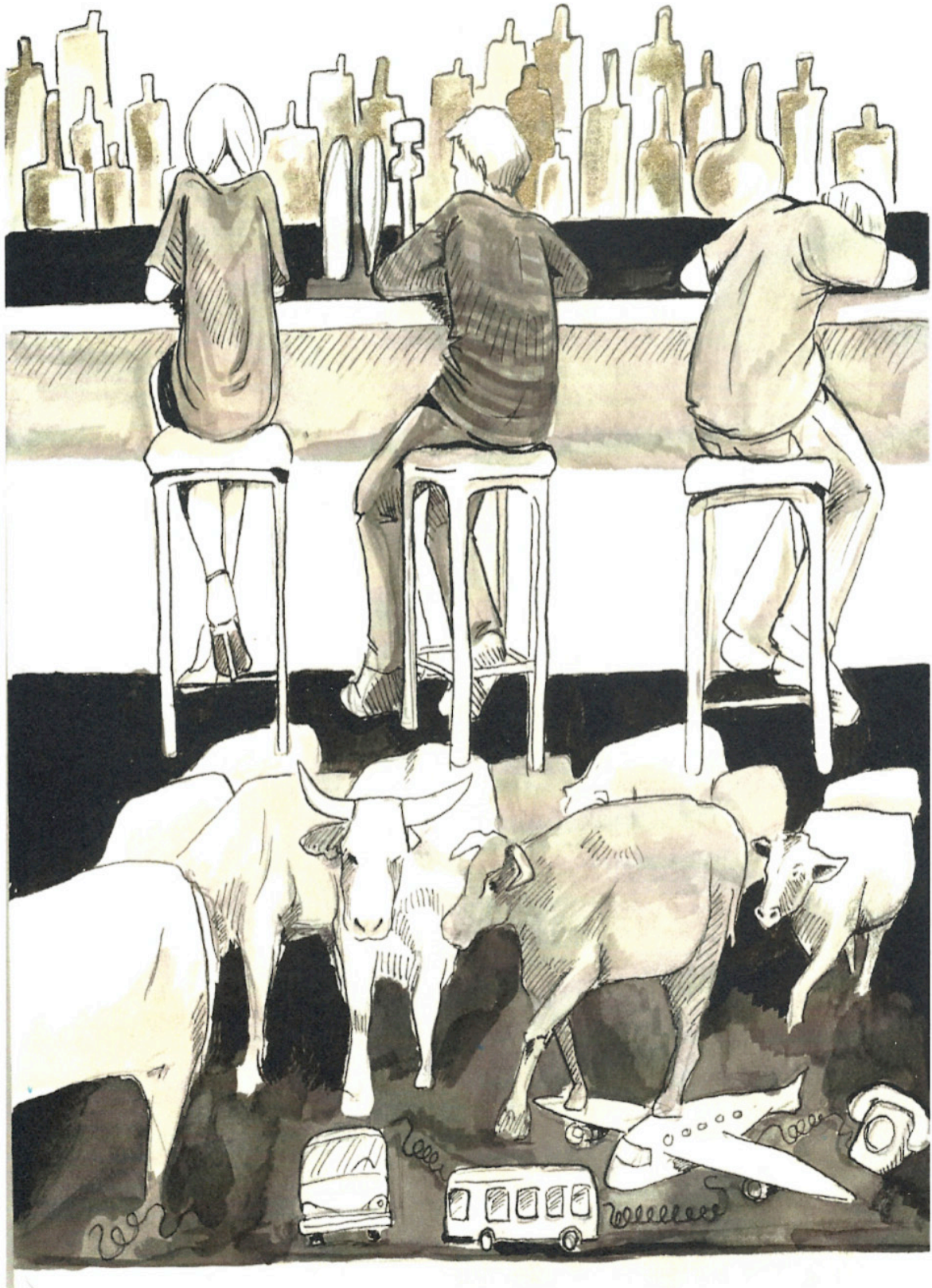
BLOOD IS BLUE

Take the smallest liberties with everything.
Grow solid on buses
or in airport bars
like sweat clothes hard
and fast on chairs.

Dead. Be dead and clamped
upon the chairs.
The paging telephones are not for you.
Horns of cattle
are tickling your feet
under the ground.
Relax. Be dead.

Breath is the weather we can control
but not control; more immediate
to respond than the body's other
labors, but no less difficult
to suppress. It is ours to use
but not to keep. We must
keep using it well.

An act is like a breath
but more like the weather.
We cannot refuse any of this
We cannot
though we embrace it
to the quick.



NEW LEASE

I stand in fresh air
waving the arms of my hair wild
like drapes out of open windows.

Spring cleaning means new winds
move the old tenants of winter out.

They say the body vacates, completely
renewed every seven years.

I'm not the same as I remember being,
now that I think of it.

TINTYPE

There is a blindness in the snow.
There is the expense of forgetting
winter, when memory bounces
and returns
with the cancelled lip print
of zebras squinting
over an iceflow;
as with the sun
when it finds
yard decoys of frozen laundry
or miniature jockeys.

All night the white
climbing
out of the typer
until the ink is gone.

There is silence
waving its Thermos
from across the river.

Our eyes blink adhesively
occasionally jerk
to the whimper of a tire
discovering the curb;
snow everywhere
equally false
to the face of the road.

In the static
of frying eggs,
there is speaking
amidst yucks; eagerness
dripping rough
at the back of the throat.

Our tableknives,
the telling of beads
in the beading salt,
all of this proximity
calls attention to it
now.

Usually I am the bastard
of an orphaned god
intent on publishing
her works
as astrology.

In this
I am
ridiculously composite.

Let me imagine that
it's natural
in a bone of ice
to dream the ghost dance
from windows
of the shopping mall
or abandoned cars
in the intersections.

To suspect all light
and movement--
untrue lovers
behind a shade of snow.

The weather will break
on its own.

The sun
will catch me up
in all that I have lost
here.

The snow will leave me
a hollow snapshot
and a flat believing
in what I've made.

CONVERSATION WITH MY BODY

Author: I will not live in anyone's
shadow. I make this plain
in the way I address you.

For months now we have shared
the same roof, meals, the shower,
but as close as we are
the hairs are growing split.
There is a breakdown
down the line
and the train of thoughts
is late.

Body: It is hard to push breath
through the swollen sleeping bags
of the chest. The throat is constipated
with dense forests of green phlegm.
There can be little light
and every weekend we sleep in
to the next.

Author: It is Spring! Colors fly off
in flocks from every corner I pass.
A museum of fine weather has no doors
but every wall transparent
to the next sky.

Body: We cannot join you this holiday.
Perhaps help will reach us soon.
Perhaps the black gas
of these troubled nights
will seep out the cracks in our voice.

Author: For without you, I am
a screen of wet steel, a mesh
with holes too large
to hold anything.



GEORGETOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE

For the big cities you're a refugee but here
city council collects babyteeth for taxes
calling everyone Mayor eventually there being
nothing situationally comic about the cafe's
Special a reasonable number four overeasy.
"One Pleistocene morning, while crossing
the landbridge of counter space, my hand
came upon Karen's breast..."
My novel so old here among the carpenters
eating Sharon's face listless with slow
goodbyes every timeclock day
with "Well, suppose we oughta get to it."
and "Ya, don't work too hard." when
WWWWWWWAAAANNNNNNNNHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
the siren blows up
always sounding close but it's
too early for the noon whistle
so we go piling overeachother
like a cliff past Lucille at the register
stiffed but laughing at these intense
vanishing manhoods
and I get home walking
through chapter ten where Karen smiles
back and I find we're all out there
trying to flag down the fire in the sun
with only occasional nights
and slapping screen doors.

IT IS ENOUGH

When it is enough
just to be alive
it is already late.

Here is the winch peering over
the horizon, the tethered slab
of sentiment like an old tennis shoe
strung from your grin by one lace.
This is impossible not only
but pathetic to dig
for anything but exercise
through the body's city,
eyes squinting with the speed of light,
a sperm of pitched dreams,
gardens popping from tracks in snow
behind another invisible man.

Who can maintain
from one altitude to another?
There is, after all
gravity, and after each
the wake of light, every color
sweeping up our tiny rubbles,
sucking in our Grandest Notions
through a lifetime of undertow
trailing over a dry seabed and
(forgetting we are on the shore)
it is nearly silent
practically calm
this wall of tidal reckonings
returning again for the end
to slap breath into us.

WAITING

The others have to catch up.
There is no way
to move on
one's own
without the orchestra,
the road builders, one
would not arrive anywhere.

This is why you are so calm.
Everyone can see
that you are
a seasoned traveler, that traveling
is old hat to someone
as serene in exhaustion
as you appear to be.

Perhaps you are meeting
a lover. Everything
about you seems to show it;
your drink is icewater
your swizzlestick jabs at
the napkin. There is only
one way to behave.
The waitress
wants you to have another.
Begin again.

CHAMELEON

If he climbs on the glass
he doesn't disappear.

I want
my money back. I want
a pet that changes
everything.

Good morning lizard; I want
to be sitting
in a mountain stream.
Become the sun!

EXTREME

Steelblue feather
plumed in ice, brittle skin
over the creek's slow pulse,
White and grey veined in black
skeletal pine, sunless
skyless day, hollow with light.

The summit entreats
to be joined, bare as a tooth
against each breath.
The lungs pull tight
about the crowded silence,
a backwash of ghosts
trapped inside.

No climber reaches top
to stay. As snowmelt
the landloper must swallow
back the world;
the throat a song of water
embracing midstream
mountain to sea.



HATPINS IN THE STORM, MT. YPSILON, 1915

Lightning transmutes the figure
this one a tree
in the snapshot.

Grandma's mountain outing
The weather electric
The ladies girls
in high laced boots
The dresses heavy layers
waving, unstuck and waving
those hatpins in the storm

Because she heard it was harmless;
the magic buzz they made,
like an insect mind of her own,
she like Marie Skłodowska C.
at the top of the world
was somehow safe.

This is where
in the story
she would pause

Returning down the ridgeway
they found a horse and man
struck dead; smelled the flesh.

A young boy, his son, glued
in her mind all of these years
thrown from the horse's back
was alive.

This is where
but only once
did I ask
how the story ends.

THE GROUNDHOG'S RIDDLE

Emergence into light, what we see
changes nothing of what is
cast. It is a hairline fault,
the possibility of light
escaping the mold,
that attaches, knuckle-white
to the inanimate landslide
of things.

Plato often lectured at night
on caves
to the crowd within the city walls.
Diogenes walked through towns
of prairie dogs learning
the darkest secrets
in the white lies of day.

THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW

in memory of Linda Bohe

A colonial ingenuity wallows
in this breakfast nook
like rooster lust in chickenwire--
like a rusting rooster
on the weathervane
cupping at insects invisible
from here--
like bats that sketch
between these dots
the cartoon of night approaching--
like a lot of things that go
go without saying.

Wind is leafing
through pages of the sky.
Look at this one

All you can see is face.
The horizons toss light
as if there were a torch
under the chin.
Expressions run across
the savanna with many herds
mingling and scattering
their shadows and dust.
None of the muscles will be still
for even a moment. It makes
and makes no sense
to be frightened by this. This
is why the infant
teethes the air
with such little hands.

There is little need
to hold on.

On the other hand
none of this is true.

Time flies by with someone's hat.
It's a very expensive hat.
Chasing the hat you recall
a huge ocean once lay here.
Lying beside you
is a fully grown woman
wearing satinet
in the rain.
It sends the light back
like sealskin with all this water,
creates a negative between
her breasts, a multitude
of rainbows lapping
at her lean sex.

When I'm on my back
any direction could be up.
All I can see is face.
Wind is leafing through
pages of the sky.
Look at this one

THIS SPOT MARK THIS SPOT

It will simplify everyone involved

if you leave
an impression

No need for disfigurement

or the soft whittling
words,
hooves in sand
will recall more
than the throat's afterburn

Part the boughs

Look out

with the erupting light
for branches snapping back
behind you, those following
expect some care
in your progression

Deserve attention

As it happens

the signs are not the signs

that belong here The place

revealed by them

is admissible but so

inaccurate as evidence

Don't encourage correcting
the desert
browns on the map
to grass or savanna, let alone
the forest Let
the boundaries lie
Let it all stand
as it is
for something else

In the Great North Woods
one pilgrim wearing sheepskins
Not cured but tanned with blood
like his baseball skin
turned loose, literally
was snatched from the berrybushes
and by then a flock
of longhairs scattering
spores and roaches behind him

Was an easy trail
for the birds, brought him
back to Arvada
Boiled him to a primal scream
now he practices massage in another wing
of the clinic

Even pilgrims tend to
ward off the center
overlook the wayside
Not oversee as the plow
iron filings waylaid
in the aching earth

Among the flaking minerals
 chariots scale gold leaf
 creating seasonal wakes

The weather thin in the long hauls
 from Rome to Rome

Arching resisting the square
 stone from settling
 with the full conviction
 of its weight

There remains
 one possible out
 The short form-
ations, might be notions

The architect's childhood
 splinter ply wood
 crescents of earth

black moons
 under the nails

He is the boon
 of class reunion
remember

 hard arms/arms quilled
head/fast as an arrow
head poised
 rags of skin
many blooded colors
 in the ragged furs and skin
many clay stone shell
 bone beads
threads/dyed gut string

he said

What

This is for
killing food

This is for
the baby

This is for
the woman to eat
and make robes

This is for
moving toward
larger fires
in the west

THE EDIBLE AND THE INEDIBLE

--after Claude Levi-Strauss

To find the world one day
emptied as carnival grounds

and to hear myself in echo
as after a storm

hawking tickets, is
to realize how raw

the mind. Sometimes
just a headache.

Since I've been on my own,
out of the shopping cart,

my tastes have been beyond me
moving through the aisles.

My plates have lost the faith
of cartoon decals,

the gas range leaks
details of my appetite

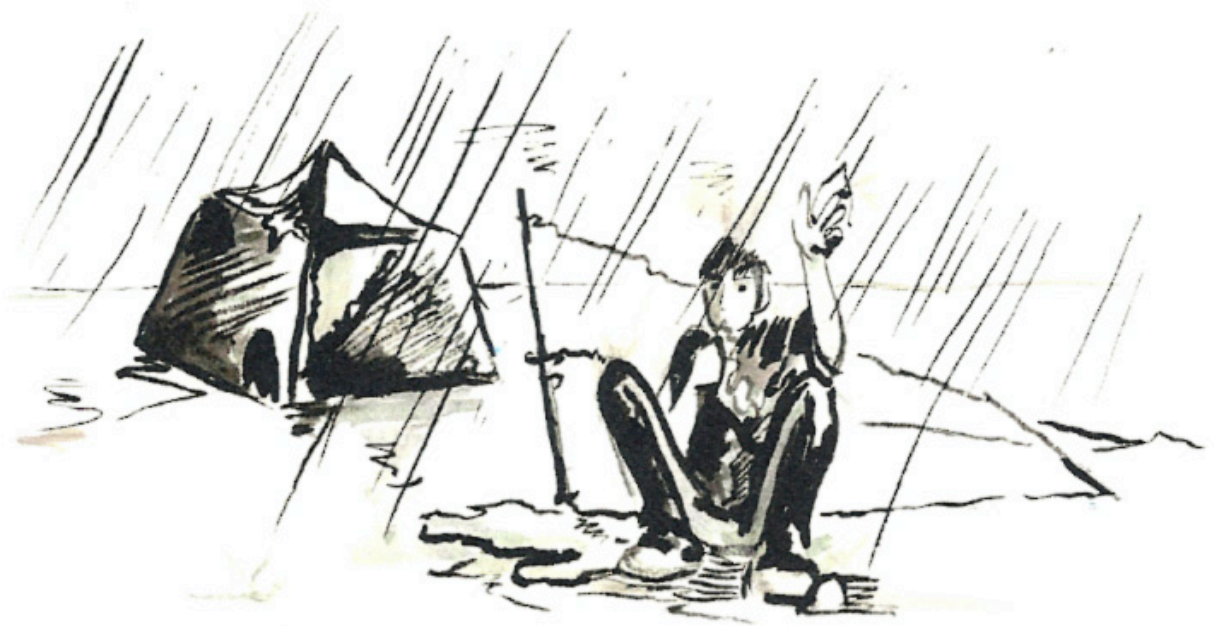
to the roaches and to women
who stay the night.

At dawn the paper cracks the stormdoor
and my pores close up.

We don't care to know
the semantics of small print.

There are rhetorics without choice
in the weaponry of choices

we have made.



THE WHEEL OF IXION STANDS STILL

Against the odds of June
it snows. Pipes of hair
exhausted, joint-bunched
like a sleeve, an elbow,
bangs about the eyes, such heat
as suns forget,
the sky a color red,
residual wavelengths fear
the coming summer.

Step into the river twice.
Never the same foot. Call the gods
liars.

Bring them seven capes of war,
the brides of whoring soldiers,
a child from the leper caves, eat with them
and bring them news of how the music
sports its movements to the ear.

The whirring.
The faces of the sun.
Crackle spit-dry whirlwinds
toast the stonewalls,
dust the bedrock sleep
each city rocks to,
hanging on the clouds' envelopment.
A currency of linings,
our tuna seas' mercurial rain,
the sapphire gutters on the cheeks,
their reservoir, depend.

There is not much that harbors
in the heat a losing any turn
might well abandon
to the winter.

HOME OF THE TRAGIC POET, POMPEII

What is tragic
was buried in the name
for this.

A house of open air
and thin shadows--
a ruin reamed
of earth's bad memory,
eating sand again
as we sun here,
sandwiches
for our picnic steaming
in their plastic bags.

You have already hung
tapestries and eaves
and will now
send the servants, no
the slaves, off
to stamp grapes
for tonight's wine.

In this spring heat
I think of rotting fruit
and rodents collecting
excessive hours,
matted like fallen robes
into compost
and humid half lives.

The half light
of the sunken day
ignites marble walls
against falling blue
and first stars.

It won't be long now
before they return,
kegs exploding
with the spirit,
purple with night
our chilled lips.

THE TURTLE

Smoke twists about my ankles. It is struggling
to take me, to lift me, but I am the Turtle.
I will never fly.

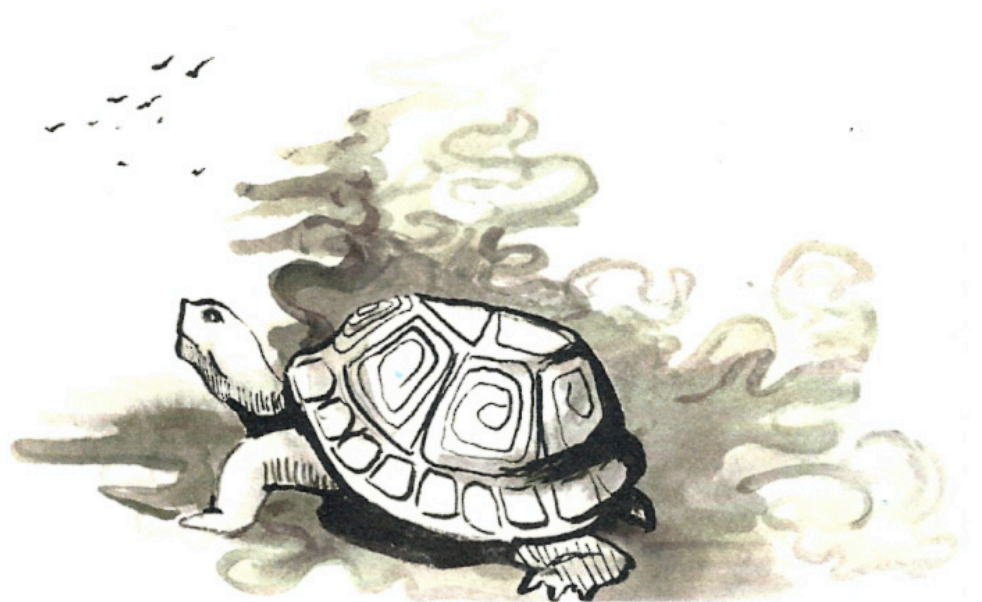
I crawl very close to the ground. I like to
kiss it, and make certain I can. The ground
is my way. It is where things fall to.

I know the promise of the sun. He has tricked
the birds into flight. See their blood on the dishes
and fingers? I wear my shadow on my back.

Rain and night wait. They don't pretend,
but they come. I am not their fool either. I carry
reasons everywhere I go.

Pointed sticks and smiles find no place to enter.
My answers cover me as armor. They silence any
before they may ask.

I will never be taken. I have seen to that. I will not
betray the ground. I will not betray my fear.
I am the Turtle.



FORCED AIR

I know there is heat at the center of most things;
a magic fluid cooling out into this crust of images.
I also know the smokeless rotisserie of pain,
its every axis along the natal planes, how it turns
a cold shoulder: the feast's leftover, under dismal rain.
I worship our furnace hearts but marvel at this burning chill
that touched, we lose the feeling flesh, retreat back down
the black hole tunnel of a throat and make random
all formations of the letters love.

DOPPLER EFFECT

Deep in the engine
the pump is sending messages
a thump at a time.
Therein lies
the disguise of speaking:

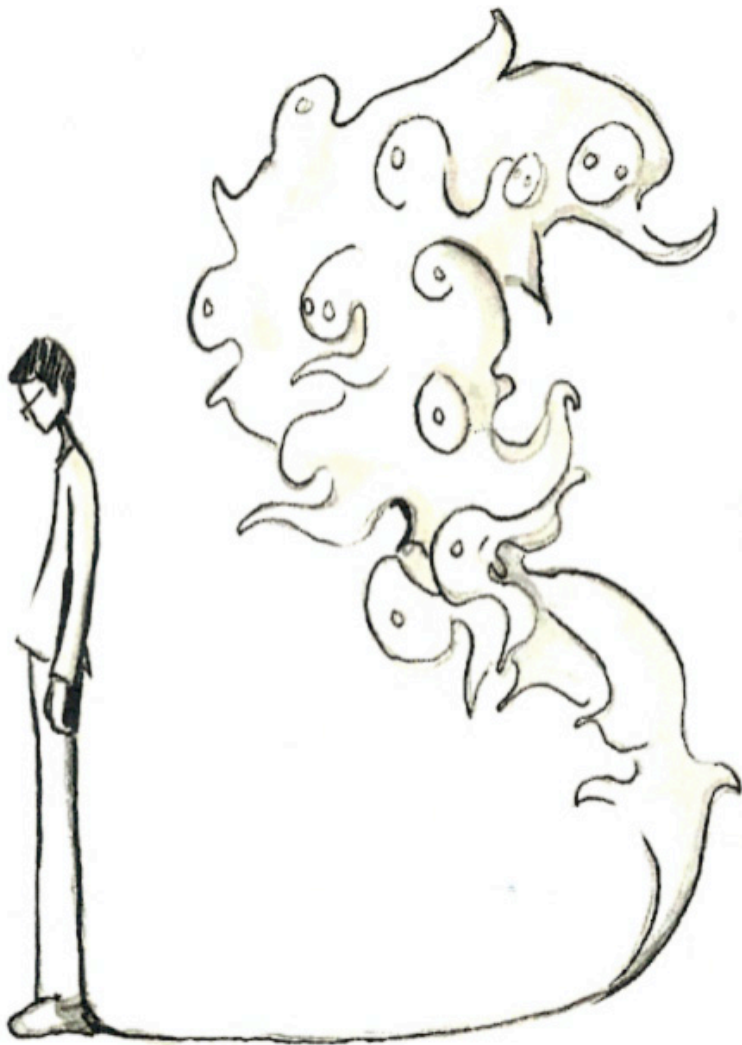
Boxcar appellations
riding like clothing, contradictions
of where from
or where to.

What many reflecting
storefronts, passing darkneses
stab our faces
back at us?

Paper slices
from distorting
left to right
the illusion of moving
with mere mention
of a name.

FEIGNING MADNESS

I cannot recall for whom
I am pretending. The ghosts,
who no longer leave me,
see through me. What I am
protecting is the right
to doubt, but I am beginning to doubt
that, too.



CREATION MYTH

The Truth of the matter
is the cooling of it
The timing

One hot number
round in entrance
growing hieroglyphic
with each sobbing
breath

we have come
to call this
zero

we have come
to forget the fetal
9
with our tail

and swim with the moon
coins
eyes
rolled all the way back.

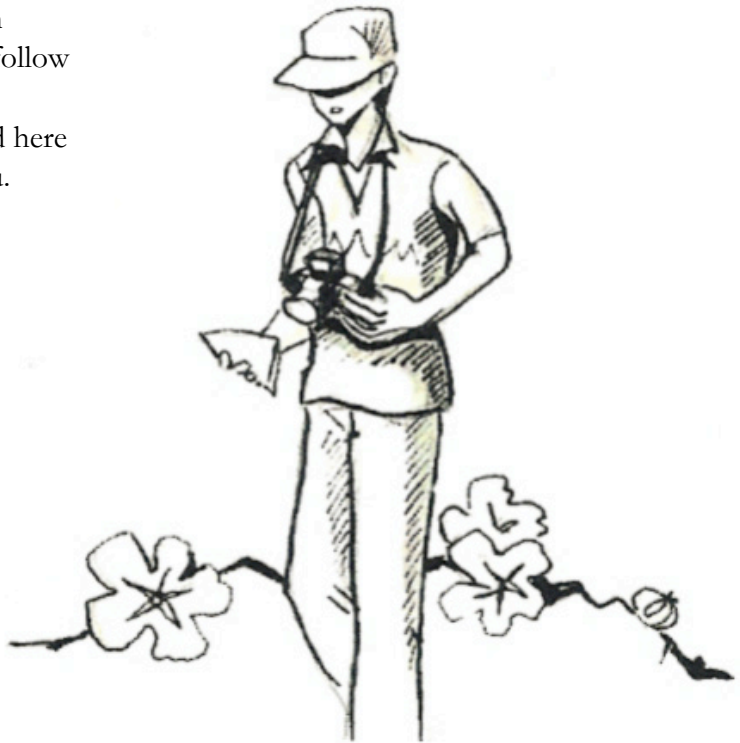
KUMIKO'S PHOTOGRAPH

I found you before the camera.
You may be posing, arranging the flowers
in your kimono for a quiet start,
but I am before you first
in your eyes.

That tree that is not quite between us
is cover I lost in your approaching.
Those stones carry you lightly
as they themselves entered
near dry rice fields.

You are not frightened, but pause
as I move to explain my hiding.
I have no breath
and yet you are still calm
silent on my clumsy intrusion.

The space ends as a dream
I have become. I cannot follow
but you will not turn away
before I have finished, and here
I remain, nearly telling you.



THE INSIDE STORY

*This was to be bigger than life;
this, the inside story.*

James Tate
"The Coming Out of Ourselves Party"

We share it, rarely
the right moment, gathering the one
or more captives in a special reading.
It couldn't be, but it seems
an annual occasion
soon after.

When we pay for audience,
the tin ear of a cup,
it's not the real thing.
It's a story about the story, lost
in narration
and the entropy of two minds.

Or when we save whole chapters,
crucial ones, the moving climax
which we suspend just before
or behind our place in the text,
and commit ourselves to giving this,
finally, to one who has remained
standing, or awake, or recently
arrived,
some old accident appears
to have stuck pages together,
compounding strata upon strata
in a solid amber.

The structure weakens having, yet
not revealing, its inside story.
Like the thirteenth floor, it is
between excuses for its absence,

Until one night, the elevator
breaks down in darkness
and its empty room
slides the silent doors open
to a peculiar vacancy, where
hands on the button there
welcome home.