

Autobiography · *Dennis Hinrichsen*

The city of my birth
is renowned for its mathematical
confusion of streets. Each day
they merge until they become like hands
that can only point in one cardinal direction at a time.
These all point down.
And there are always creatures lining up
on them, juggling their wares,
applying their make-up for the one or two lines they will speak.
How to tell them
that their lives have become as unassuming
as the underwater life of rivers and lakes:
hard to believe anything really exists there
except heat at the edges and weeds
until the random splash or swirl,
the exaggerated shouts of a fisherman
as he hauls a forty pound catfish,
one of this earth's truly ugly creatures,
out of the river.
They will insist, I know,
on auditioning in ill-lit rooms,
reciting from memory the exits and entrances they have loved.
How to tell them I've moved.
How to inform them of the growing similarities
between the cities of our country and the country.
It would make them a little nervous,
I know, and unsure
of their professions.
They would stop repeating to each other
the famous stories they keep
and begin on themselves—
a little out of sync yet touching,
like anti-bodies
relegated to the inner rooms.
I can't go in there.