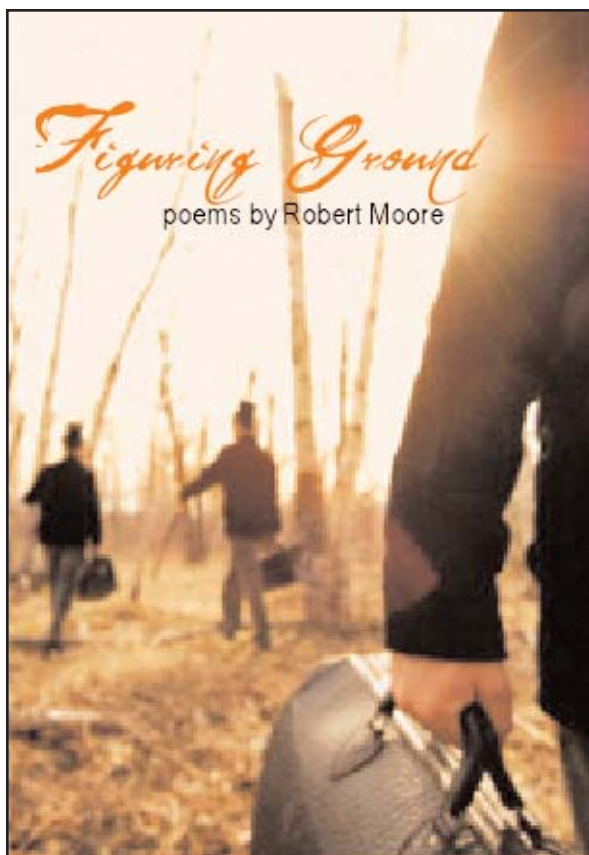


“The farmer is not your
friend.”

- Robert Moore



WOLSAK AND WYNN

The Stories Your Parents Tell You

The stories your parents tell you of how they met
and fell in love fifty odd years before they passed and
one after the other came to know cremation
are nothing if not true.

For instance, my mother truly did just happen
to look up from her table at the International Harvester
Fall Fling late in 1952, while her two best gal-pals, Marge
(the genuine riot) and Joyce (a real scream) leaned in
over the ends of their cigarettes to breathe in
the closing moments of the joke about the dwarf
in short pants who promised to teach the natural blonde
the secret of life.

Oh sure, years later, none of them could put
the punch line back together again.

But even you'd agree the story bore the stamp of truth
if you'd come to know the girlfriends as I did: as unlikely a pair
of cupcakes as you've ever met. Ankles thicker
than a ten-year-old's neck.

Furthermore, in the professional-looking photograph
taken of them that night, the angle of each of their cigarettes
set among the various sets of polished black nails
is exactly what you'd have a right to expect. Absolutely dead on.

Speaking of which, don't the hands of the man
who'd become my father a few years later look capable
of almost anything, to say nothing of the shoulders
a suit like that demands?

His signet ring, however, is a different matter:
the camera's flash has turned it pure white,
rendered it fantastic as a flake of star.

So hot every face at the table
is turning to ash.

And Counting

*A landscape of possibilities populated by
a megaverse of actualities.*

Leonard Susskind

One: the strong statistical likelihood that every drop in England's drinking water now contains at least one molecule of Oliver Cromwell's piss.

Two: your typical four-ounce hamburger patty is packed with the flesh of between 50 to 100 cattle. Eat two hamburgers a week and in a year's time you'll have partaken of something on the order of 10,000 cows. Moreover,

science calculates the number of stars in the universe at 10 to the 24 th power.

To put that into perspective: suppose you're in hell and your punishment is to count the number of grains of sand on an average resort beach in the Caribbean. That's not counting the extraneous grains sequestered in the syrupy creases of bathers casually strolling off the beach at dusk, their laughter settling on your pale and high-ribbed back like a curse.

Assuming a stay in hell of sufficient duration to complete this task (a fairly safe assumption) you'd eventually end up with a figure nicely situated somewhere in the universe's starry ballpark.

This universe, that is, for according to one school of string theory we're only one of 10 to the 500 th power of co-existing universes.

That's a helluva lot of ballpark. Finally,
just to bring things back down to earth, 138, 420 people die every day;
1.6 of us dragged through each second's pinhole
and introduced to the infinite.

This poem is approximately 73 deaths long.

Maybe it should have been shorter.

Cottage Life

Small lakes, having nothing else
to measure themselves by, simply assume they're oceans.
A temptation hardly worth resisting.

The absence of galleons or whales or icebergs
only deepens the faith. Heaven keeps its distance,
face buried in a text.

Streams are proof of nothing.
Say river in their presence one fine morning
then closely observe what happens next.

And really, wasn't it about time we all stopped mewling
about the source of the sacred Nile?

Today your past, as explored, was a grand hotel,
right out of *The Shining* – arterial
hallways, carpets tortured by endlessness, windows
fungal with neglect. But how fitting the air there was,
as on one of those home planets the bright ships of the future
touch down upon; science we were destined to breathe.

"I miss my parents," you said, disappearing
around a corner, lost in translation,
sitting so still beside me on the deck.

The sound could pass for water imitating glass.
Or the other way around. We're none of us
in a position to draw anything but conclusions.

It's Terrible Parting

but keep in mind we both come from a long line
of people born to part under circumstances worse
than these. It helps to think of them, don't you find,
beside their dense, smudged satchels, paused
inside Europe's train stations, breathing
the nineteenth century's ferrotyped air.
Or at the end of cold piers. Beyond them,
in weakening light, the black Atlantic shifting its surface
but never its weight.

I never told you: my great, great uncle, desperate
to get off the boat from Scotland, jumped into the St. Lawrence;
entirely misjudged the distance between the ship and the dock,
and thereby made a name for himself: Not-Quite-Dan, as he was
forever after known. So you see, my people have long been
poor judges of the gap between past and future; such an ordeal
for us to secure proper footing in the present. Right now

I'm imagining how to say goodbye to you when the time comes.
Even as I picture you turning away I have us turning back,
hand-in-hand, to re-enter the past, keeping together
the way couples in old family photographs do; the distance
between them constant, so fixed that neither ever quite feels
the need to blink or breathe again.

Not-Quite-Dan arrived in Canada stillborn; greeted
the rich future he'd planned for himself utterly empty-handed.
His wife, Agnes, is remembered on her knees in Montreal,
kissing his blue mouth, refusing - for god knows

how long - to let him go. But then, how might one most needfully
address the departed at such moments? *Goodbye*, inevitably delivered
too early or too late, can't help but fall short, especially when
there's so much cold truth in *hello*.

Identity of The Whitechapel Murderer Partially Revealed!

Andrew Patrick, the man who sold a Walter Sickert
To the crime novelist, Patricia Cornwall, is not at all happy

With reports of the treatment the painting received at her hands:
"If as is claimed a painting was cut up, well, that is very wrong."

Detail: grime of lampblack soiling vamp & tongue
Of beauty's mock-satin right shoe. Artist unknown.

With his hand-sewn discretion, his pancreatic silhouette
Running the gutters of Invidious Street, his titian

Mist of polluted blood, his winning streak of infamy.
Telling the girls, Yes, he might partake of a little himself.

Don't mind if I do. Knives wrapped in an early modern
Canvas of the actual scene. His mother, mind, never forgot

His real name. I know it. You know it, too. Isn't any
Thick description of London in 1888 clue enough for you?

They never found the heart of Mary Kelly. Ah, one part of your
Dollymop always keeps true. And them what necropsized the mort

Done so without her consent. Easily the least agreeable,
Avowed an ashen Dr. Bond, it's been my privilege to do.

According to one novel theory, a curious defect in the penis
Of Master Sickert rendered him feral (i.e., simply mad about

Quim). As rendered in The Guardian Unlimited, Cornwall states:
"If a jury then had seen that, they would have said 'Hang him.'"

Excerpts from *The Golden Book of Bovinities*

A cow equipped with two fully functioning horns
is like two monkeys fighting over a sharp stick.
Only backwards.



The sun and the moon in the same sky
always makes us nervous.
It's like a cow in a leather jacket:
a shining example of overkill.



A male calf still in possession of life and testicles
is nothing if not the promise of things to come
undone.



For a cow, two is not so much company
as a further extension of the self.
Especially if one of the two cows in question
is missing.



Cows still manage the occasional jump over the moon.
Not that pale imitation hung above us now.
No, the other moon, the real moon
made of dried baby formula and dirty fingerprints,
flattened in their storybooks, drawn from life,
thin as the edge of a gutting knife.

About the Author:

Robert Moore was born in Hamilton, Ontario and now resides in Saint John, New Brunswick. Currently a professor of English at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John, his poetry has appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *Wascana Review*, *Ink Magazine*, *The New Quarterly*, *Canadian Author*, *Prairie Fire*, *Maisonneuve*, *Pottersfield Portfolio*, *The Gaspereau Review*, *CV2* and *Quadrant*. His first book of poetry, *So Rarely in Our Skins* (finalist for both The Atlantic Poetry Prize and the Margaret and John Savage First Book Award, and long-listed for the ReLit Award in Poetry), came out in 2002. His second book, *Museum Absconditum* (2006), also long-listed for the ReLit Award, was published in 2006. He is also the author of a dozen plays.

