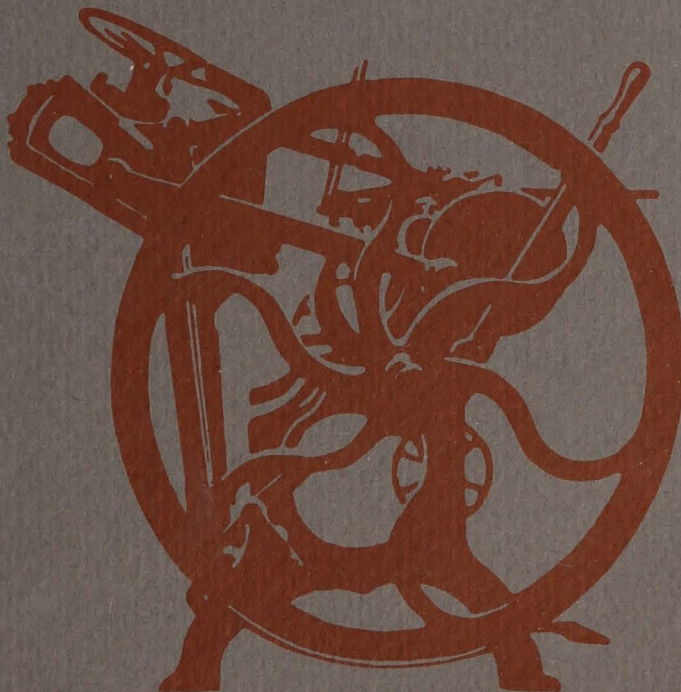


BREATHIN' MY NAME WITH A SIGH

Fred Wah

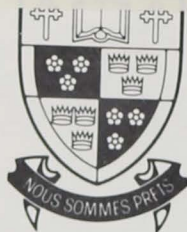
Second Draft Jan 1979
Coach House Press MS. Editions





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Wah, Fred

Breathin' my name with a
sigh

BREATHIN' MY NAME WITH A SIGH

Fred Wah

Second Draft Jan 1979
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I like the purity of all things seen
through the accumulation of thirst

note. These poems are a series of pieces which are
thematic cycles. 'breath' and 'sound' are parts of
an overlapping reference with 'death', 'heart',
'family', etc.

or through loss to the rivers & endless breath
which was never the promise of life
I still have a name 'breath' it
with a sign

I like the purity of all things seen
through the accumulation of thrust
forward especially the vehicle
container maybe/or 'thing' called body
because time seems to be only it appears
to look into the green mountain valleys
or through them to the rivers & nutrient creeks
where was never the problem animal is
I still have a name 'breathin' it
with a sigh'

Be careful story. Father, when you died you left me
with my own death. Up until then I thought
nothing of it. Now I see its clear cut
both genetic 'bag' as well as choice. I know
now I'd better find that double edge between you
and your father so that the synchronous axe
keeps splitting whatever this is the weight of
I'm left holding.

Such things and their ideas
danced in my mind as also
the door opened at the door of the warm house.

I wonder if I can ever pay attention like that
to my own life and the simple or bare particulars
of what is life's number without making up
some other cruel paragon to swim around in.

I feel the spring in me and the water running
but I don't know how it does that
or where.

I thought where I came from we grow up also
only to reach heaven
and/or what our bodies dictate to us.

Sometimes I remember the 'hinge' too late
or what's called the 'fence'
having crossed from side to side.

Such 'things' and their ideas
demand me return as also
the dogs scratch at the door of the warm house.

I wonder if I can ever pay attention like that
to my own life and the simple or bare particulars
of what is it's number without making up
some other cruel paradigm to swim around in.

I feel the spring in me and the water running
but I don't know how it does that
or where.

Are origins magnetic lines across an ocean
migrations of genetic spume or holes, dark
mysteries within which I carry further into the World
through blond and blue-eyed progeny father's fathers
clan-name Wah from Canton move east across the bridges
still or could it all be lateral craving hinted
in the bioplastic cloud of simple other organism
as close as out under the apple tree?

when I ran up the road this morning
out of breath

yet that is what I want to know

its only information

I mean what leads up to what?

I lie here and wait for life again

no one told me this happens

not death but a consequence of it

the physical isn't a world
at least it wasn't

when I ran up the road this morning
out of breath

yet that is what I most desire.

Its only information

I mean what leads up to death is.

What else was there outside in the dark but
night which has always been and is an answer trick—
prescence to the daylight you've seen every day you'd think, eh?
and not simply everything all over again forever & ever, right?

No foolin I thought I was gonna die
just about every day so much the mountains
air clear blue sky & hum broke up I believe
as pieces each of themselves I was separate from
larger than life the thought my face all action
bigger my picture of head arms fingers sens
ation at first something from mother my eyes
at sleep birth
swelld up just like the stung finger head
and that was the first time in McNaughton's
January 1974 to know its true even
the enlargement now remember more
things

Now know why you missed dreaming
for so long how could you sleep
in the darkness without a sphere. I believe
I'd better get back there pretty soon myself
or shift off the surface each of us lives upon
for ourselves day to day. Can't get it
or at least its hard to hold on
until I think of her and her return
or look up behind our place into the field
full of cows and apple trees take the whole
thing and run outside with it
from the night into the day with promise
of at least an echo.

Not so much all of us dying
or nobody else living or even one
one shining master of light
but a procession forth
into I like the movement
in our syntax goes
something like a river Daphne
so its still 'how' we do what
and give a punch we hope
words to take off on us
dying to do that the best way we can.

KEEP UNDER THE RAIL
(THE RAILROAD RAIL)
LOOK LIKE YOU DO
DO WHAT YOU'RE DOING
FISH IN THE RIVER ON SUNDAY
LIVE NEXT DOOR
FIX THE FENCE

INSIDE
THE HOUSE YOU ARE SO YOUNG
OLD DOESN'T
YOUR DAUGHTERS DO, THEY GROW UP
AND THERE YOU KEEP STANDING WALKING
CHISELLED INTO THE CANYON
THE TOWN THE MOUNTAINS ON YOUR BACK
RIGHT TO YOUR GALE
TO HOLD YOURSELF IN
NO SNAP NO OTHER WAY
THEY GO AWAY DIE
THEY'VE ALL DISAPPEARED
BEFORE YOU OUT OF YOUR WAY, ALL
OUT OF YOUR WAY

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO HOLD YOURSELF IN
TO SETTLE FOR THAT
A WHOLE LIFETIME
NO TIME NO CONNECTIONS (CONNECTIONS)
HOME UP THE HILL AFTER WORK LUNCHBUCKET
EVERYDAY ANOTHER DAY
EYES GLAZED UNDER THESE MOUNTAINS
SKIN TIGHT
NEVER WENT

PLACE NOPLACE

TO HANG ONTO
KEEP UNDER YOU HAT
(THE RAILROAD HAT)
LOOK LIKE YOU DO
DO WHAT YOU'RE DOING
FISH IN THE RIVER ON SUNDAY
LIVE NEXT DOOR
FIX THE FENCE

INSIDE

THE HOUSE YOU ARE SO YOUNG
OLD DOESN'T
YOUR DAUGHTERS DO, THEY GROW UP
AND THERE YOU KEEP STANDING WALKING
CHISELLED INTO THE SIDEWALK
THE TOWN THE MOUNTAINS ON YOUR BACK
RIGHT TO YOUR GATE
TO HOLD YOURSELF IN
NO SNAP NO OTHER MEN
THEY GO AWAY DIE
THEY'VE ALL DISAPPEARED
BEFORE YOU OUT OF YOUR WAY, ALL
OUT OF YOUR WAY

If I don't pass the impasse what'll happen?

Maybe I can just stay here

until thinking about it
settles like dust through the sunshine
and gives it all back to me

so I could
just pack up each day like that maybe
no one does anyway
at least look like they do
do what they're doing.

leaves rustling the branches

and water

a river of it flows (fall) to the south

(the Yangtze, the so-called)

Green

Ocean Ocean

lick

the shore, (the shore?)

Words fly from our mouths as leaves
fall to the ground from the trees in fall
'We eat, Everything
stares back at us.
All this hunger
is what we call the World.'

Wind and rain
 (no pain
just a storm at the cave-mouth howling
leaves rasping the pavement
and water
a river of it also falling to the mouth
(the Yangtse, the Columbia

Ocean

Ocean Ocean

lick

the shore. (the Shore?)

this is a gash
this one's also about breath
the last five hundred miles
up a mountain for example
I have this warning, six toes
and a mouth three arms
and a head with hair
called power
I wait for the dance to start
but I know it will
and end up all turned round
again slice across
the size of my head
much larger up there
mind doesn't tell me
how to do anything for myself
until now it starts, 'time'
and again, here
I'll own up to it
image-works
spewing out and falling up
through the sky like houses

death stick's tool
each of us the implement
extension arms legs mind
think it out fingers not killing
but planning I've meant to do that
all my life

a chunk true yr teeth
teeth

yr song
shattered on its own words

words in the mouth
chew, chew

words which mean
is are here

taste, broken
bones

dead fingernails
hair, voices

he said he wiped his mouth
on his sleeve.

Flesh, as if
to eat it up
fresh surface
hair on my arm

a chunk from yr cheek
teeth

yr song
shattered on its own words

words in the mouth
chew, chew

words which mean
is are here

taste, broken
bones

dead fingernails
hair, voices

he said he wiped his mouth
on his sleeve.

next spring
I'll go out to the garden
and with a stick
plant myself
and eat me in the fall

longs

words, everything,

but pictures

stitches

wounded

knees.

A form
container

my mind
dialogue

loqus
words, everything

but pictures
stitches

wounded
knees.

from her
living from her
naked now
near my handstraps, flash
sitting (at winter)
from her

outside its snowing
they're skinning the bear
its snowing
a small she black bear
symmetrical paws

knife

slit
down the inside thigh
to the crotch

careening

single sound

flys from her

from her

the snow falls

from her

flying from her

naked now

bear pig hamstrung, flesh

a little fat (winter)

from her

scattered

clouds in the sky.

Loki Death Dog Died
from out of his stomach
death uuyh uyh
cousin mountain
died
his death
along his right side he lay
uyh uyh
inside his dream
running running
uyh uyh
with his mouth
and his hunger/love
with his twisted stomach
he runs (I run)
along the road
to the trees/sky
uyh uyh uyh
such a hard breath
from the pit of the stomach
hard
death
scattered
clouds in the sky.

my father hurt-
ing at the table
sitting hurting
at suppertime
deep inside very
far down inside
himself
because I can't stand the ginger
in the beef and greens
he cooked for us tonight
and tonight again
that look on his face
appearing now on mine
my children
my food
their food
my father
their father
me mine
the father
very very far
inside

Brother then brothers
number / age
a matter
of penetration

the three of us
someday take that on
each one of us
older

than father
brothers

the first bridge was in Trail B.C.
and it crossed over the first river
full of fish and it moved with weight
not speed the first mountain
a hill of sand and scrub brush
Ernie's dog Mickey died
its where Donnie was born
the Trail Smoke Eaters
were the World Champions

close

careless

loss

most

moist

remove her

mutter

mummers

mummy

maybe

habit

made-up

puddled

mud

cleaver

sie

calamity

dust

wax

because of her

house

window

Saskatchewan

radio

air

breath

quiet

just

kary

baby

lady

cream

swede

more-to-me

names

remember

corrine

kar en

clean

heart

core

mother somewhere I remember you living over me

remembering me as your funny bunny out side a moist loss

caress & love

mother
somewhere
remember
whoever
forever
to fly over
love her
pleases her
caress
close
careless
loss
most
moist
remove her
mutter
mummer
mummy
maybe
habit
made-up
puddled
mud
cleaver
pie
calamity
dust
wax
because of her
house
window
Saskatchewan
radio
air
breath
quiet
just
Mary
baby
lady
cream
swede
more-to-me
names
remember
corrine
kar en
clean
heart
core
mother somewhere I remember you flying over me
remembering me in your tummy mummy out side a moist loss
caress & float

Breathe dust like you breathe wind so strong in your face little grains of dirt which pock around the cheeks peddling against a dust-storm coming down a street to the edge of town in Swift Current Saskatchewan or the air walked out into the fields across from Granny Erickson's house with a few pails of water to catch gophers over by the glue factory downwind of all the horses corralled their shit and hay smell whipped over the grass and the smell of prairie water as unmoved water doesn't move is stale or even rancid but the air along the prairie road by Uncle Corny's farm first thing on a clear summer Sunday morning and in winter how the snow smelled like coal when I maybe later in Trail B.C. up the alley behind our place my mother needed water to melt on top of the wood cook stove so she sent me out with my sleigh and a galvanized washtub to collect the snow so dirty in the city I scraped off the top few inches before I put my shovel in and then packed it into the tub and back to the house and stove air hot and steamy pink over the stove my mother what did she need that water for I don't know but where somewhere the snow smelled like coal or is it back in Swift Current the cold so cold it smelled of cold I don't remember maybe we had oil there we did later in Nelson and I had to go out into the shed and pump a bucket of oil from a 45-gallon drum for the stove in the living room but the shed had a coal bin too coal for the stove in the kitchen at night coal dust even later filling up Pearson's furnace hopper every three days move it shovel full across the basement the dust even later in the summer play anywhere someone's coal bin settled into my nose and the oiliness of it on the skin I rode down the hill outside the house on Victoria on a coal shovel I hit a rock and had the wind knocked out of me I was dying and couldn't even tell anyone as they walked by but stood and waved my arms and flailed the message without air

have to do
he has to do things
today
many things
think about
he's looking at him self
doing
he has to
have to
what does he have to do today
and to do it before he does it
then he looks out the windows
through the trees and up the hill
just he, it, that, there
out there
everything have to do with it

the build-up

how I listen to myself make it

'hold on'

so that the day remains open

the next collision in the light

and I catch up to the breath

breathing somewhere

the air

as it comes out ahead of me

h h
[wah , wah]

Its not enough. I think it should be.
To be able to. That's all I need.
To do anything. Complete.
How does it go? Did it?
I want to know. I'd better
what's going on. Or it
I shovelled gravel today. I hoped
that would be enough and then afraid
I wouldn't be there right then but
somewhere else far away in the mountains alone
I thought working hard in the hot sun
I know how that goes. I would just breathe
but away from myself. Out. Give it all back.

Where does it come from orange

voice voice mouth tongue creek
move into picture of perfection pan ridge of colorful clothes
sine

not tight sin a little color too the flame curl
but clear and right / clear and light
especially water, creek, tongue, mouth, voice
voice

set the draft

the draft

the draft

the draft

the draft

cut sweat and send the wool outside in the cold snow for
the winter

split and the light falling in the winter in the winter
in the mouth say it

vapours

breath in the air

to cool the soul

no, to cool the heart

he says (Aristotle)

on breathing

animal

firelight breathing eyes orange

get the wood ready

takes three logs, two won't do, have the flame curl

lick the bark edge of each birch log

set the draft

the night h

Sanskrit wuh

cut sweat and cord the wood outside in the cold snow for
the winter

split and the night falling in the winter in the winter
in the mouth say it

vapours

breath in the air

to cool the soul

no, to cool the heart

he says (Aristotle)

on breathing

animal

ok I get a sense of it now
breath can reach my toes
I can take there the thought
and breath goes with it
simple exercise mechanics
image disconnected out
beyond the foot
remember hw hw
question and answer remember
the only bird of poetry
the night
Sanskrit 'to breathe'
out only empties the container
a handful of dead toenails
hw hw
of over her forehead at night
his breath

horizon of sleep until and time
something like old sealskin
strip of seaweed carriage
box of cedar
air
you hold for me
till I get back

as he leaves her
as he moves from her
for the whalehunt
as he leaves
he blows his breath
into a kelp bubble
shaped like a small balloon
ties it off and gives it to her
to keep for him

his air
until he returns
or so she'll know he won't
when it deflates

 around her neck
she wears his breath
or over her bedpost at night
his breath

(horizon of ocean swell and tide
something like old sealskin
strip of seaweed necklace
box of cedar
air
you hold for me
til I get back)

sounds of o and ree
tryi-, try to make breath
sounds that make (sky)
mine (me) to breathe

(see breath
out in front of you
as a white mist in the cold air

or some school teacher reading us a story
about the arctic and how cold it can get
it was so cold someone's words were frozen in the air
and centuries later when it warmed up
language popped out right in front of them
right out of the air

breath
which makes sound from my body
air which flys out of me
through o and ree

oooooory oooooory
breaking open as spittle would crackle in the frozen air
(crystal

mmmmmmmmmm

hm

mmmmmmmmmm

hm

yuhh Yeh Yeh

thuh moon

huh wu wu

nguh nguh nguh

w_____h

w_____h

THE WIND

COMING THRU

Jack's Gloucester right beside Dante breaks
it all up wholly conceived little devils
evil little critters no two occasions can
not only identical actual worlds also Gladys
McLeod says its as goddam scary as saying genetic
memory genetic apple or remember Carol's dream
struck by how clear the stars and bright thus words
the colour of ashwood I'm starting to get it
out of it Mike says how exciting Lawrence is right
every worlds/mind

THE WIND

water

did you hear

water

water

water

water

water

WHEN I WILL BE WATER

was suh

in the distance

distance

ih-zuh ih-zuh

water

did you hear me

water

water

otter

h

[ah]

and each day

as we

now they

day every

for some

1. this

I like

at the

being

so whatever is left over
ruins

hard granite along the sides of the roads
shine in the moonlight above the water the highway follows to town
so whatever

snow
the seasons of

I'll tell ya what

ruined
she said

stoop

cut into 'breath'
heaves like that through her body at the worst of times
comes over her like you wouldn't believe jarring her head
you might say

so

people

when we can we do or have to

God's candor

something, something or other
the highway travels along the rivers and valleys through great
clumps of larch, spruce, poplar, pine, used to be fir, still
a bit of cedar

and it keeps us warm gets us there to the towns
and each others houses lights late afternoon the seasons
as we all grow up a little bit
now they're plowing the road as the snow falls a bit more each
day everybody is going

don't keep what is left over

for someone who wants it someone

I think I do needs it

I like the simple truth in Lawrence's ', really.'
at the end of his line
being alive he calls it.

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