

On the hottest day
In Oklahoma history,
With no shade or air conditioning,
In the grip of a cruel sun,

Shoes cast off—it wasn't Sunday—
Shirt, unnecessary baggage,
In cutoffs we called short pants,
I lay on my back

In a gray painted wooden swing
Made by my father's own hands,
Suspended in air by link chains
From rafters on our tiny porch.

Heat, like a merciless mother,
Pulled earth to her bosom,
Clasping creatures in a death grip,
Daring living things to breathe,

When, like a gentle lover,
A puff of wind
Stole across my flesh—
and was gone.