

# Traveling Instructions

Tina Schumann

Because I am feeling like a house today  
—all brackets and blueprints—you must appeal to the dog  
in me; the one whose snout travels the floor  
for any known scent, any signifier of home,  
over the dust that has settled into each mitered joint,  
past the oak molding sanded to a fine point.  
I do not tarry for I do not doubt—I simply turn left  
when turning left is called for. Because the sidewalk that buckles  
at the threshold to the house covers the roots of trees  
that meander under walkway and grass, twine the pipes  
and reach for the light of the backyards cool, you must appeal  
to the weed in me; the one whose roots run deep,  
whose face is neither fair nor friendly, but simply there.  
Because I did not know  
what I did not know—I traveled  
between desire and compulsion, yen and need, plan and arrival.  
I did not query for I could not answer, I simply left  
blank spaces along the way; an ellipse here, a dash there.  
Because I could not wait for the robin to sing  
he kindly sang for me, my mind held but just his wings  
and no more questioning. The ground, now soaked  
with weeks of constant rain gave way  
beneath my leathered soles. I did not stop  
to think twice, the earth is the earth after-all  
taken to burdening itself with all aspects  
of nature's wild ways. Because the dress I was forced to wear  
that Easter I was three was scratchy and poufy and far too yellow  
you must appeal to the child in me; the one who ran  
towards my father holding the camera and yearned  
to yell *I hate this dress*, but words of protest had not come  
to me yet, though they lingered near the base of my throat  
—awaiting their moment.  
But that is all in the backwaters of memory  
so you must appeal to the river in me; all bend  
and flow, brush and bramble, taproot and rock.