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Swamp Cooler

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SWAMP COOLER

for Tucson Joe

So hot we have to turn it on—
half strangle, half whirr, that ugly sucking sound.
Until stupid with noise, I'd go for the switch.
Make me hot again, make me give in.
John Cage would call it music, a loud
slush of grease above the stucco.
Can't even conjure snakes

or a flush of red flamingo
to understand this fever inside and out.
This town is not the tropics
though a lazy heat undoes us all.
Town of the luscious oleander,
a poison you won't need to taste.
Town that sings like liquor. And there's this man

with a mouth trained by some female god
who won't make me beg
though I know I'll tell him plenty.
Town of few sidewalks and bright air
and red ants so big they own
every crack along the road. One fan
blows over a wet dripping mat on the roof.

The dictionary calls this cooling
a form both primitive and effective.
But over the roof will soon come the angel of sunset
with its lovely bruised trombone.
And over my mouth will slide this
other singing mouth. The body
of nature wants us back.