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## REVIEW

**Jim Moore. *Lightning at Dinner*. Graywolf Press. Saint Paul, MN. 2005. 1-55597-425-2 paperback. \$14.00**

There's something gentle and humble in Jim Moore's perspective on the world as seen in *Lightning at Dinner*, the poet's sixth collection of poetry. Part of that gentle and humble outlook comes certainly from the loss of one's mother – facing her Alzheimer's, decline, and death – the topic around which much of the poetry revolves, the subject which provides the tone for the book. This loss, felt at the intellectual, mental, emotional depths of the book, speaks to other forms of loss as the book develops: the momentary loss of a lover when she leaves the bed, the loss of the world, the renunciation of the world, that a monk chooses, the loss of things in the natural world. By writing about these losses with such beneficial characteristics about them in the same context and tone as his mother's death, Moore conjures a mantra repeated in these poems of loss which helps to heal the loss of one's mother. In this way, the book acts as a spell, meditative to ward away fear, away sorrow, away the eminently human pain of attachments to things which are lost and must be given up.

If some writers go to the root of controversial issues, Moore instead goes to the heart of them. Though the poems inhabit the space of mystery – the small, secret moments of life – these moments also bring in the public sphere often, notably our country's wars, past and present, and the chaos of this state of constant war. In the poem "Seven Invisible Strings," there are helicopters flying, "reminding me of that old war / where one friend lost his life, / one his mind, / and one came back happy / to be missing only an unnecessary finger." So much doesn't make sense here: the poem "What It's Like Here" uses the device of having the speaker talk as an alien to this planet, reporting about what it's like on planet earth, and when seen from that distance, so much random violence and misery and power extorted to cripple the weak: "There are people who are paid well / to ruin the lives of others. There are people strapped down / to chairs, then a button is pushed. Smoke rises sometimes / off their bodies before they die." That tone of objectivity only lets light in on how cruel and brutal these things are, homelessness, punishment, the actions of the powerful, the senseless misery created in the world.

In this tone of loss and of meditation, Moore achieves great clarity, great depth of voice. He is a poet to watch – more interesting to my ear than the growing raucous crudity of some new male voices. This delicacy and subtlety is engaging throughout. Recommended for public and academic libraries, especially collecting contemporary poetry.