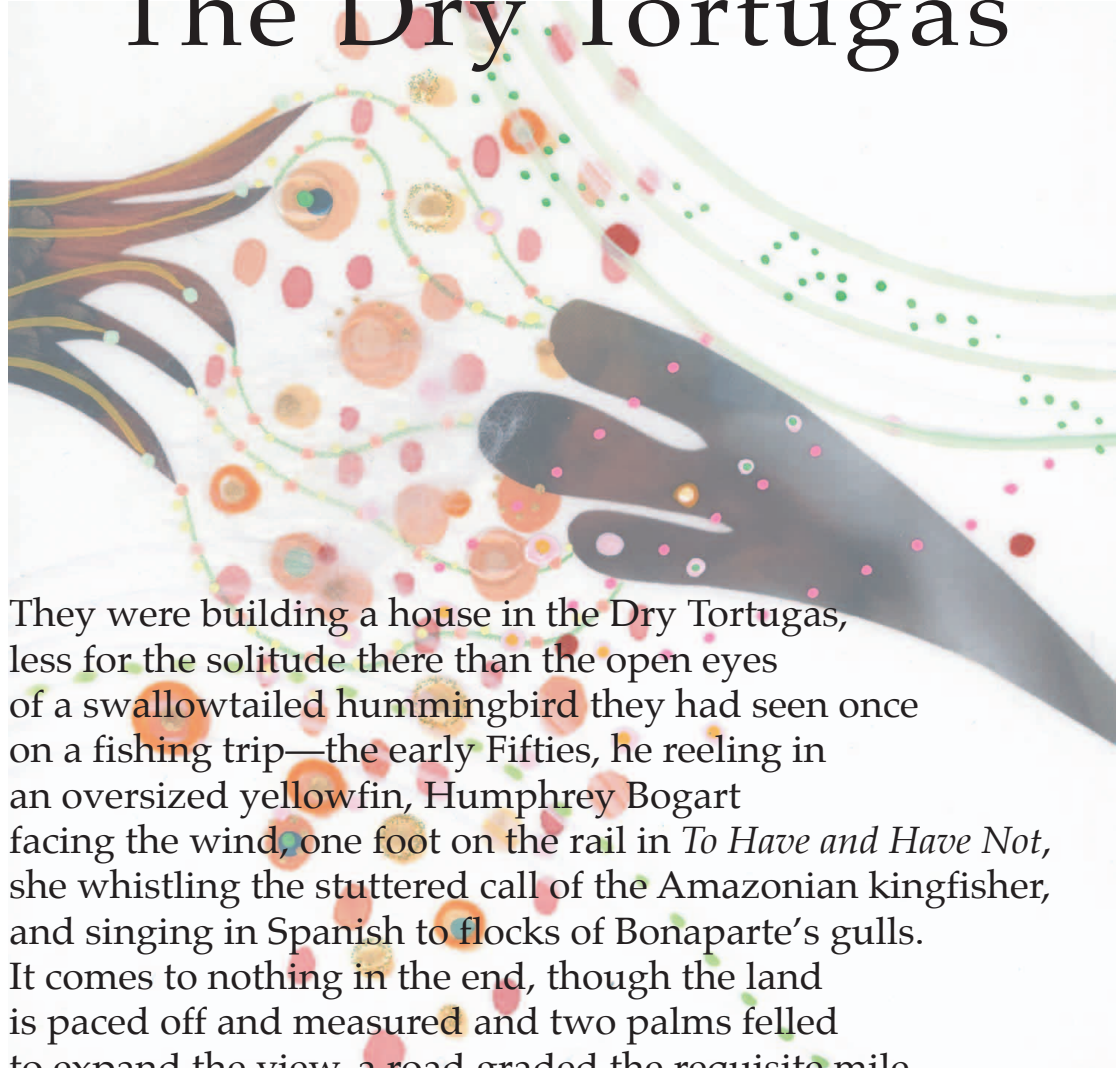


The Dry Tortugas



They were building a house in the Dry Tortugas,
less for the solitude there than the open eyes
of a swallowtailed hummingbird they had seen once
on a fishing trip—the early Fifties, he reeling in
an oversized yellowfin, Humphrey Bogart
facing the wind, one foot on the rail in *To Have and Have Not*,
she whistling the stuttered call of the Amazonian kingfisher,
and singing in Spanish to flocks of Bonaparte’s gulls.
It comes to nothing in the end, though the land
is paced off and measured and two palms felled
to expand the view, a road graded the requisite mile,
and some of their friends fly down from New York
to surprise them, circle the islands all morning, gleeful and chic
in their 4-seater Cessna (he’s something exalted at Chase),
and later the bottles of Myer’s and Appleton Gold sweat
dark rings on the terrace flagstones, and someone’s pink
lipstick makes delicate kissprints along the rim of her glass.
No one has told me what happened—his heart
attack in Guatemala, her premonition about the wide
and empty view, or the world swinging in
with its usual brazen distractions—but they framed
the architect’s plans of the house, and this
is what I inherit, a rendering in colored pencil:
what they were dreaming before I was born.