

## Second Nature

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With so much to say on  
 nothing, and nothing to say  
 on plenty, I struck forth  
 with some errancy about my limbs -  
 "some spirit" in its window.  
 All hands to deck drifting  
 in half-subsumed arrogance  
 (wherein necks rock empty -  
 a pin on leaf pointing north)  
 and I, paraphrasing comfort, drew  
 up my mouth by drawstring  
 and left the porch. There was,  
 all about me, a sentinel of means  
 looking back at its own  
 signal - that mouthwash taste  
 of distilled outcome  
 residing in an investment  
 solidly perched on its negation -  
 I felt I was looking through it.

As "modern positivism  
 consigns it to poetry," so an "it"  
 remains the "anything" of no  
 thing that cannot remain  
 and I sensed, as lunches were  
 taken on the balcony with  
 regularity, that my task was  
 to speak to some residue  
 not of nature but of the absent  
 mythology of effort  
 through which taste, like rain,  
 is the sudden regression

of interpolation into dexterous  
 art. If little counterfeit  
 howls claim their ready-made  
 miscarriages - as in a *Très Riches  
 Heures'* "metaphysics of beauty  
 (in Plotinus, for instance)" -  
 then the end implicit in beauty  
 is the absolute currency  
 we hold time to (like waiting on  
 the train or waking just before  
 the alarm calls out).

Theophilus' regency calls it  
 a kind of present-perfect  
 as in a perpetual past, and though  
 some are gearing up for  
 change in weather unlike  
 weather, they know neither their  
 own half-life nor their  
 pocket's lasting virtue -  
 rain always rotating through  
 the day on a periodic  
 spectrum we were convinced of  
 by St. Paul's accent. Late  
 strolls through present  
 Greece make us weep  
 into our jacket's Water-Wicking  
 sleeve - tired of life  
 proceeding without stops  
 for art's less-than-natural  
 neutrality - I felt, stepping  
 from my door to drive,  
 that a cool debt was moving  
 through me as sun  
 warmed my soft-shelled  
 skull and left itself under late-  
 trimmed fingernails.

Then cries I always mistake  
 for owls occurred in a  
 kind of backwards time  
 like tomorrow's Sunday -  
 just as leaving a porch  
 in the morning makes  
 it mine because all retreats  
 into labor own their  
 interrogative artifice -  
 rain continually retreating  
 out of itself, or how in  
 packing my lunch I planned  
 not for a meal but for  
 a moment's reprieve inside  
 the day's terminal sun-  
 spotted center chamber.  
 Of course I tired preemptively  
 of noon's elongated jounce  
 as I was already fixated  
 on the day's derivative:  
 "This is one way to say  
 that affection hinges on dis-  
 placement" or "There's  
 no warning sign that isn't  
 already cornering itself  
 through preservation" -  
 one way's elongation set  
 at right angle to another's  
 paucity makes it political  
 insofar as it sutures  
 change to apocalypse.

In polls, in perfunctory  
 insights about change's aid  
 to "life in the future," we  
 dare it to arrive from out  
 of the past and try, we taunt,

to take us back to gathering  
 what we live on on our own  
 time - as to divide one's  
 time is to incite a calumny  
 wherein fact becomes  
 an integer's plainspoken  
 positive misprision: mis-  
 matched socks on the opposite  
 feet, or feet we nailed to one  
 another mistaking our own  
 magistrature for a cross.

While I would not for some  
 comfort come clean - smoke  
 parsing wind as the wind  
 navigates mostly its own  
 parallel termini - but rather  
 look preoccupied for moment's  
 sake - so in moments'  
 exhalations, I would keep  
 reaching out for a foretelling,  
 some out-of-the-way truth  
 that neither smears  
 my window with light nor  
 washes itself of pollen it lives  
 through. "I know now"  
 forestalls iterations of some  
 disquiet while others move  
 like boots through a morning's  
 planetary luster: not knowing  
 and yet hoping, not knowing  
 and yet desiring some  
 willing martyr out of nature  
 for nature - a glass eye gazing  
 at everything at once, and  
 the orbit around  
 the center I left behind  
 on the porch's wetted pallet. //