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Biological Clock

Robert McDuff

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Biological Clock

We turn everything clockwise in our culture,
the corkscrew in a quart of burgundy,
the on-and-off switch on a Windex bottle;
we wind our watches and walk in circles.

Things are best when they're not static,
when they move like starlings flocking,
three birds taking the place of three in a line
on a fence, in a puddle on the ground,
orbiting black electron clouds of feathers.

Sometimes it's good to slow down, the times we need
time to sit among the trees and think,
sit in the shade and watch the sun circle.

She never sits around. She gets in her car and goes.
Her caprice never carries her far.
But when she is capricious I can almost smell it,
smoldering like a pile of leaves, musty,
her words like names of perfumes, subtle
like a thin film of scent on a glass stopper.

Sometimes I talk in circles like a tribesman
rhapsodizing around a snapping fire, singing
my song again and again. I vary the story
to suit each audience, speaking the same way
as the ones I want to impress. Sometimes
I don't remember what I say.

I often feel awkward at her house, sitting around
not knowing what to say like a date that overstays
his welcome. Visiting me she never stays too long.
She comes and goes. Her smell on the sheets lasts
longer than the visit.

They say she's had a lot of men. I met one once.
To her he was only one in a crowd, a passing man
she wouldn't recognize or know how to describe,
a man she could not identify in a line-up.

Sometimes I think of her and wonder where she is.
I see her sitting on the sofa wondering where to go.
The music's loud, the lights are low, the wine is cold.
She hears her alarm clock tick, watches the second hand
circle the dial, and wonders why she never had a baby.

Robert McDuff