

The Rhythm of the Cows

by Catherine Davis

A cow wanders onto a roof and falls through the skylight. It's a calamity, but such an innocent mistake. Mightn't you amble onto a rooftop once upon a full winter snow in Vermont?

Another cow climbs a gravel mound in Virginia, perhaps to see what it can see in its little corner of the world. Not much gain in elevation, then that sinking feeling. Up to its armpits when I spy it from the road. Good job on saving that cow, my friend tells me later, after calling its owner to inform him. You know Junior's just going to go whack it over the head with a hammer, and there's dinner, don't you, he says.

Once there were cows in Manhattan. Here a cow, there a cow. All dressed up to proclaim their individual fiberglass selves. Essence of cowness, very hip. How little I knew: you need to get out more.

Rushing dizzy into headlights out of the late rural blackness, a cow, stock still staring, in the middle of River Road. Collision averted by the skin of my teeth. Few seconds further, reconsidering, I do a U. The cow is booking it like nothing you'd believe when I catch up. Cow herding by Volvo, but then it turns into a field. Mississippi 911 is blasé: where is it now? I don't know, I say, but it's fast.

Three cows grazing calmly in the median, after Katrina. Snatched up by the vortex, like Dorothy's house, then deposited in a strange elsewhere. Or what? Whatever, utterly unperturbed.

Or this cow, curled by the fence a few feet from the sparkling aqua pool where I swim. This cow is white, all its friends are white too. Beauty beside beauty within beauty — yes, this *is* France.

One thing. All over everywhere, cows train in a single direction
across vast pastures, guided by some silent, inner compass.

