

## Making the Porch

It started in a dream of woods,  
Sequoia, Douglas Fir, and Cedar,  
The giants in this Western earth,  
Blending down the coastal range:

I lay on moss in redwood valleys,  
Looked up through tiered branches at worlds  
Of birds, insects, three hundred feet,  
Touched long-grained shingles, whole and scented  
Though cloven and stacked for eighty years.  
And up the hills were darker fir  
With limbs like ladders crowding up  
Until I could glimpse the silent sea,  
The same cold current from Oregon  
Where Indians carved sixty foot canoes,  
Massive lintels, forests of totems  
From the buoyant, spirited cedar logs.

I chose the wood in the dream's retreat,  
White, close-fibered fir for strength  
In the supporting beams and joists,  
And for delight the redwood heart—  
Soft, buried for its centuries  
Inside the living tree, the grain  
True in sixteen foot lengths, and graced  
With patina for deck and rails,  
And for variety, above,  
On the balcony, seen from below  
As well, the knotted cedar planks  
Whose grain bleeds rich, brown in the rain.

My daughter helped, clumsy but calm  
And careful as the structure grew  
And rhythms grew upon our minds:  
Evenings lengthening into June,  
The ritual of measure, mark, and cut,  
Driving each nail with four slow strokes.  
We planned and changed and found our way,  
Fitting the dream to what was there:  
Supports bolted to brick spanned out  
To posts for rails and steps, one joist  
On the stump between two trunks of a tall,  
Three-pronged juniper we'd saved.  
The sap of juniper and fir  
Melded on the stump, welding house  
To tree. We molded the decking free  
Only an inch for the trunks to sway.

The whine of power jarred against  
The rhythms, so I sawed by hand;  
And even speaking slowed until  
We moved on silence in the dusk,  
Increasingly obsessed with fit—  
Spacing, adjusting lengths of scrap,  
Spare cedar from another job,  
So that it seemed mere time would hold  
And let us make the pieces blend,  
With only sawdust left, to feed  
The earth—and us, to lie on wood  
And make a dream again of dreams.

—Eugene England

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