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## Southern: Narrative

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*Southern : Narrative*

I

If cut, it comes back, the crabgrass across a slope, or under the screened porch, comes back, irregular as first letters, or the mower's first stammer. A narrative takes shape after small suburban lawns: first distance, then circumference: *in the language of Scottish law, the experimental apparatus is both 'art' and 'part' in bringing about that which appears to happen.* If cut, and appears to happen, the letters take shape.

II

In the courthouse square, the sculptor cuts a limestone slab beneath Tory oak where Otto Woods was hanged. This is history, circa 1944. This is monument, an arrangement of space, the development of a discourse. While the weather permits, the sculptor cuts a limestone slab beneath the Tory oak. Crabgrass extends from trunk to courthouse. Storm clouds gather, then quickly disperse. Potentially present while as aperture, rupture, passage, the discourse develops from cell to cell.

III

The girl with the bluegrass guitar sings of Otto Woods. "The southern Jesse James," they say, never had a chance, they say, so sings of difficult weather, sings of dying stars. The classical observables diverge at each glance: *the whole body capable of any form that the next daring spirit may brood upon.* Snow falls over palmettos. Crabgrass spills the courthouse walls. So sings, and sings, of stars.

#### IV

A train track rusts in its field of used cars where Otto once hid his crates of whiskey. Crabgrass fills the spaces between the tracks. This is the commonly held view. An alternative form concerns the uncertainty between energy and time: fermentation, calcification, decomposition. I should have already said "someone stole Otto's watch, and he vowed to steal it back." This is how the story began. I should have said *lightning has damaged the Tory oak*. The view was never better, has never been better.

#### V

Happened all at once, they said. Jerry yelled out "the son of a bitch got a knife." Should have seen it coming, they said – as if a fundamental constant – only a matter of time, they said – as for the speed of light or the force between two masses. Otto nearly cut his leg in half, they said. Happened all at once, they said.

#### VI

When in flight, Otto followed the Yadkin River from Wilkesboro to Winston-Salem, from valley to basin, in precise mathematical operation, or a range of chance formations, in the way, for instance, the weather demands migrations, or the way their lines of flight withstand the weather. Patterns emerge after the initial variables: pressure, fifty-seven cents, a list of debts. Primarily, he traveled from valley to basin.

#### VII

Whether the weather is over tarmac, chickenwire or salt marsh, each measurement forms a sign that must be interpreted: 4x8x10 cross poles kept Otto's camp intact during the September storms. From here, the positioning of the singular cloud resembles a limestone slab: begins again as cell membrane: the word following after is partial weather, partial committee, the sum of it said elsewhere, and from another view.