

The History of Costume

The first article of clothing was the fig leaf,
pure nature to modify nature,
to say *reproduction is not enough*.
Although the fig leaf's heavy fuzzy sweetness
compromises this rhetorical purity.

So the second was made from animal skins—
nature knocked on the head with a big rock.

This was risky, so we got out from under our rocks
and developed agriculture: plants and animals
were grown, plucked, spun, woven, worn.

Mastership attained, we then desired
removal from nature entirely, and boiled up vats
of polymers, and clad ourselves in them,
sweating valiantly under our perma-press trappings
as we sat on plastic chairs in our sharp-edged enclosures.

Of course, this couldn't last, was incompatible
with flesh in too many ways to go into here.
So we turned back to nature with watchmaker's tweezers,
tinkering and substituting genes
till *the sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn*
had a new meaning entirely.

And when sheep walked around with a foot high growth
of powder blue wool, like huge cotton candies,
we didn't give up but advanced to the next technology,

submitting ourselves to the genetic injections,
to make our skin cells secrete their own raiment,
perfectly sized and flattering, though somewhat
difficult to remove for reproduction.

The next step was obvious, using the long defeated
mechanism by which carcinomas develop
to make the skin spawn a second skin,
wonderfully colored and patterned, breathable,
yet able to be shed like a snake's
when the tempting smell of fig trees was noticed.

When this success was marred by the return
of carcinomas in more worrisome form,
we went to work again to make new clothes.
The earth was warm by then; we only had
to go straight to the source and modify the visual cortex
so the naked bodies of all appeared to be dressed.

And so our highest development was attained
in which we all were naked, all unashamed.