

## It Once Was Thought

it once was thought  
even in circles of the wizened  
that the heart of every mammal, large and small,  
beat the same number of times.  
a skittering field mouse  $x$  beats  
likewise, a lurching ungulate  
and whales and wallabies and humans and all the rest --  
the difference between them not the *number* of beats  
but the *rate*.

this is to say  
that (at least in these circles)  
each spasm of the heart was akin to a unit of currency  
expended within a sprawling bioeconomic web  
by improvident shrews  
and thrifty elephants  
with the rewards of prudence being long life  
and presumed satisfaction.

but --  
(though I cannot speak for a field mouse) --  
it seems to me that I measure time less in heartbeats than in moments  
the accumulation of which is unpredictable  
and does not tend to correlate with the flex of any particular muscle.

could it be that in the six months it lives and breathes and beats its heart  
a sunda rat accumulates a life's worth of moments?  
perhaps one day it climbed to the crest of a hill  
and gazed down at the unbroken quilt of forest below  
and felt the hot sun on its back and the caress of wind against its cheek  
and thought of its loved ones  
and considered its history and goals

and perhaps  
for the sunda rat  
that moment was enough.

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