

*MADHUR ANANAD*

## **Hill Country, Old Mercedes, and Parturition**

There's a new index for predicting catastrophes.  
It's the decreasing rate of recovery from small  
perturbations. The critical slowing down before  
a tipping point. Like taking a picture when I leave  
out the wire fence and then move in for a close-up  
of the Brangus cow standing right behind it. I'm taught  
she's been bred for her disease resistance, tolerance  
to heat, and outstanding maternal instincts. I look  
for the three-eighths Brahman, traces of shared ancestry.  
It's autumn. I've flown to Texas to meet my future  
father-in-law. The vistas are simple and golden.  
But then this brown cow appears, stands too still, becomes time,  
consuming. That's when I see signs: she's just given birth.

*From A New Index for Predicting Catastrophes, McClelland & Stewart/  
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