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DARK MATTER: A JOURNAL OF SPECULATIVE WRITING



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Forward

With issue #3 we are starting to settle in a bit, and we are beginning to learn what type of material we seem to prefer for Dark Matter. Criteria for what constitutes literary speculative writing are, of course, subjective and vary with each editor at Dark Matter. As with any journal, the best way to judge whether a piece is right for us is to read what we’ve already published. I have final say, so any tendencies we display are probably due to my own lens. Still, we understand that it is difficult to hone in on themes and styles that catch our attention. So, here are a few things we are looking for:

Nature writing that looks under the surface for new metaphor,
Writing about the human condition that uses metaphor from nature or science,
Science writing that looks towards the unknown without being mystical or suggesting that there are some things we can’t know or understand,
Sublime humor that uncovers possibilities of the unknown in nature or the human condition,
Essays or musings about science topics that expose the human condition in our relationship to nature and knowledge.

This is not an exhaustive list, so please keep trying to surprise us. But, as managing editor I am also seeing trends in submissions that are missing the mark in some subtle ways. Here are a few things we are not generally responsive to:

Horror and/or crime (without metaphor as the premise),
Science fiction without speculation,
Dark humor,
Dark romance, and especially not crimes of passion or subversion,
Speculation on love that does not include natural/science metaphor.

Our title, Dark Matter, is meant to suggest the unknown. It is not intended to automatically imply amoral, macabre, sadness, or evil. Again, a lot of what we reject would fit nicely in other journals. It is rarely the quality of the writing that leads to rejection.

Hopefully this helps a little bit, though I know it is still difficult to read our minds, so when in doubt submit.

TORNADO DREAMS

The real one was bad enough:
Watching the room spin on warm beer
at Schultz’s in Wheatland
before we could have shagged flies
with hailstones and the lights went out;
we gathered at the back door
to see half a town in a dervish act,
so close, carving up the rib joint
like a hot order,
splotted red with its own fresh meat,
we ran downstairs in a weaving parade
in the dark, hearing, but not seeing
an innocent spot on the road
scatter like mercury drops.

Still, we were all right.
It left us to keep other appointments.

But now,
the ones that form so easily
in the low pressure of sleep
seem even worse,
farther away, higher up
in the dominated sky, angrier,
more focused on the target,
a single eye not blinking
from the spot where I stare back,
sucked dry of air and luck,

until descending in the dark,
hearing, but not seeing,
hoping the room won’t start spinning
before I can fly awake.

Little gods

I saw you and your hands spread out before you,
the sun crowning above you and from the corners
of your eye the birds. And you said:
Did you know that birds are really little gods
feeding more gods?
Conspicuous egret gods, black crow gods,
modest sparrow gods and the little ones that bat
their wings against the walls of our hearts,
tap their feet on table tops
and stop us from being kings.

Back to the Rats

on the bayou. My sister’s home
sits on stilts, hovers high above
trucked-in gravel. There you can sit
very still in the morning
and watch them move quickly
from canal to compost pile
and back carrying only desire
and disease—sometimes a little
more, maybe a fear of mine
scratching over my heart
as I doze, as they make me
a path I’m bound to follow.

October Sunlight, in the Evening

sky like a blue dome
cups the gold-orange peel that
inks shredded colors

as it slides beneath
toothed edges of green pines
and lavender hills

and steals lingering shadows
black figures slipping through light
and disappearing

THE ASTROLOGER'S DEFENSE

To prove that stars might indeed
pull on our sensibilities with
their little threads of gravity,
he described the oysters,
kept in a basement in Nebraska,
that opened exactly when the tide
would arrive there,
if it could rise up and cross the Rockies,
the eastern Colorado plateau,
and the beginnings of the plains.
“In the same way,” he said,
with that gentle ferocity in his eyes,
“the circuit board printed
with the celestial alignment of your birth
receives its instructions from both named
and unnamed bodies to which,
like it or not, you are attuned,
until your power source
shuts down and all that's left
of what was only you goes on
to inhabit some other web of stars.”

twelve months

in just twelve months
the china berries had
reddened along the levy
replenished from the early frost of last December

the great grand children have lost their front teeth
now whistling as they sing for Christmas

there were storms, then a new drought
so hot and dry
that the world seems barren now
the hope of that new fruit lost
to the cruel
of an August sun

now November again
I see the volume of poems
that bears your signature in the flap
unopened since I recovered it
from your emptied shelves
and long for one more day
of holding the hand that wrote it.

Paleontometaphorologizing.

Excavating Man’s psychic strata in search of origins,
of rise,
of emergence,
in subjective consciousness,
of the narrator on the scene of self ~
word and image into thought the side of sense
calling for being and expression through metaphor,
awaiting,
in meta-thematic cycles of evolving abstractions,
interpretation and perspective,
ex tempore,
as while life improvises through comings and goings
on detritus of shattered, broken gods,
and fading apostolic hallucinations that ruled ~
mind assembling inter-hemispheric cognition of an “I”
coming of age in a ‘space’ of its own
in which to ‘live’, in which to ‘die’.

Spending Time in the Wasteland

The fair was busy. Scientists looked around the land. It was night outside. Serene visited the fair.

“I am as old as a council of old people. I want someone to look into what she does,” said Rushlight.

Rushlight could see the bright fireworks. Scientists and engineers talked of inventions such as artificial diamonds. Spies observed the lands covered by night of this world.

People were window-shopping, conversations heard of people. The money in banks were mentioned; the stock market, the rise and fall of the prices at the market.

Rushlight looked around to find something.

Her father was old. He hid his documents put in envelopes. Later she met a mysterious person.

#

Rushlight looked around.

“I know your mother is covering-up information,” the person named Rushlight said. “Cheer up. After you visited the fair with your father something special will happen. I don’t want you to cry.”

The detective saw a tired person. Serene felt too tired to move. Without showing regret he made questions.

“Your mother will be cooperating,” he whispered. “Your mother will depart one day, and the doctors know your mother is suspicious,” said Rushlight.

“Don’t force people,” she said.

“Forget what happened; don’t believe in the unreal worlds, destroy what you are thinking. People can be persuaded. We want you to show the blue-print of inventions.”

He put his hand on her head.

“We established you must have traveled around the world.”

As time passed her feelings were cold.

“I tell people what I find. Why was it in your opinion that life at this fair is not working?” Rushlight asked.

Her mind saw around the fair using a robot machine and scout. The robot helped them make the conclusions.

Sweat was on her head. She saw through her visor the fair. The embodiment and feeling of this was seen in the faces of happy and sad faces of people at fancy restaurants and theme parks. She was tired of all the faces looking happy, they could not be. They were calm and could not talk or have a conversation.

A head of a giant clown made artificial noise that had a tongue. It laughed.

The fair’s forest, botanical collections from the tropics grew their roots appearing in the outgrowth. She saw card tricks that were played on a bamboo table. Trees and wooden houses were brought from the ancient planet Earth. These called memories.

The robot saw more. The fences of the planet said “warning of an electric fence.” It stopped there.

#

She now spied around the world looking for innovation and ideas and searched for people; the world could not afford room for ignoring new and good ideas. She had reasons she barely talked.

She did not know what was happening, but someone attacked the fair.

“You are all to blame,” the woman said who started the standoff. The people turned against her.

“Be careful,” said the man named Green.

The rights of criminals were not respected. Serene had information. She felt bad because the person was in a bad state. She was thinking of the invisible world that was a gate of several platforms high in the sky. Her mind was a place for peace, stored below in a red container.

The sky platforms floated in the stratosphere seen, unable for people to reach where rich people put money in a government branch. This made her angry. That life had been unfair.

#

Serene opened the envelope that had the maps and had printings of images, and descriptions.

She saw the tracings. She looked inside the envelope. Her parents blue prints in sight.

The ubiquitous devices people had in houses sold and promoted ideas.

She was called away from home.

Serene was blinded and could only feel people and heard shots from far away.

There were shots and she could not be spotted as she saw worlds using the armor.

She knew motivations of scientists. Serene asked for things more innovative than a diamond. She compared her days like looking at shards of glass. No one could touch the shards that had fire. It was a prison. The burning of the shards burned hands without the gear on of special gloves that burned people and families who went to prisons.

Far off satellites took pictures. She warned of dangerous technology.

Illegal immigration was the law even though people could cross.

Laws of monopolies, patents needed reform. Equal sharing of technology, was needed for future machines like scanners that could read and copy entire books. Laws punished those who used them.

In far off lands she traveled and saw far off people's homes.

She saw found in the dead-end. People judged what was ugly. Even when at the edge of a world or city, people existed sometimes as illusions; police that asked their consciousness if they wanted to go to jail.

#

Earth could not build fences for the sky. People could not hide their land. Fog appeared at times.

The emerald plant had life.

Earth's ideas were flawed like gem stones.

Computers made no biased accounts of people when seen through the mind like a window of opportunity. The crime worlds crumbled like mountains of doom. Madness was observed every day, and the criminal world investigated. Serene saw through eyes of those who volunteered.

Criminals could endure even winter. The laws were forgiving. The people who committed to destroying, people who were kids who grew-up and died. Lots of Mafia bosses and organizations and rulers were tried and convicted. She was thought to be an eye that could see further. Like a fortune teller who saw reality. She put wires into people's nerves.

She could see through people, they could not lie. People grew angry. She thought people as prisons.

People used technologies that deterred called deterrents. Some people knew deceptions and artifice, and with simulation they felt empty.

The people in the universe lived inside a human transporter's eyes, they sometimes copied humans exchanged places later and copied memories, downloaded, and made back-ups of people, they lived helping people travel. Though if revengeful people wanted to destroy them these were wired. No one equaled of worth than those things that carried human souls and brains.

Crime was a disease where delinquent people spent time in VR as time passed, inside a prison.

People with vices were blamed for poverty, stealing, and committing bad acts.

The planet's VR was the easiest way to get from planet to planet. It combined with the help of the transporter.

The Reality tricked the brain to travel distances. The sight was seen in illusions, and images. Realities, visions, knowledge, and experiences, were sensed. The lost societies could not be seen inside the Virtual Reality: knowledge of the old died but not math or science. She was in the other vessel. She freely traveled the VR subway system while the screen loaded; however the world had been fused with the information network built for the universe. Information traveled conveniently at the fastest speeds. She was inside the database and VR highways carried by memory and then downloaded again.

She dropped off a Taxi and went into an empty container; as neurology; psychics of quantum mechanics operated; people traveled at the same time. She was alive carried inside a transporter where they had on unique armor. Crime was discouraged, people who were in poverty had good opportunities, and equilibrium increased and people's consciousness was smarter; the income was collected based on seeing and she went up the empty street. She always passed by the alleyways with street animals and mongrels. She traveled. She was quiet. She traveled around the city.

The expression that people grasped real was considered real as manifestations. As toxic waste the technology and Virtual Reality was dumped as computer parts collected, accumulating as trash recycled and the waste was sent away by the people; that sometimes picked them up as out of bad fortune. No one challenged the junk yards full of the refuse of lost dreams and ambitions left to stay in the trash heaps. These Serene could see with her eyes, were then perished as ashes after going in the inside the incinerator chamber and room.

####

Descending

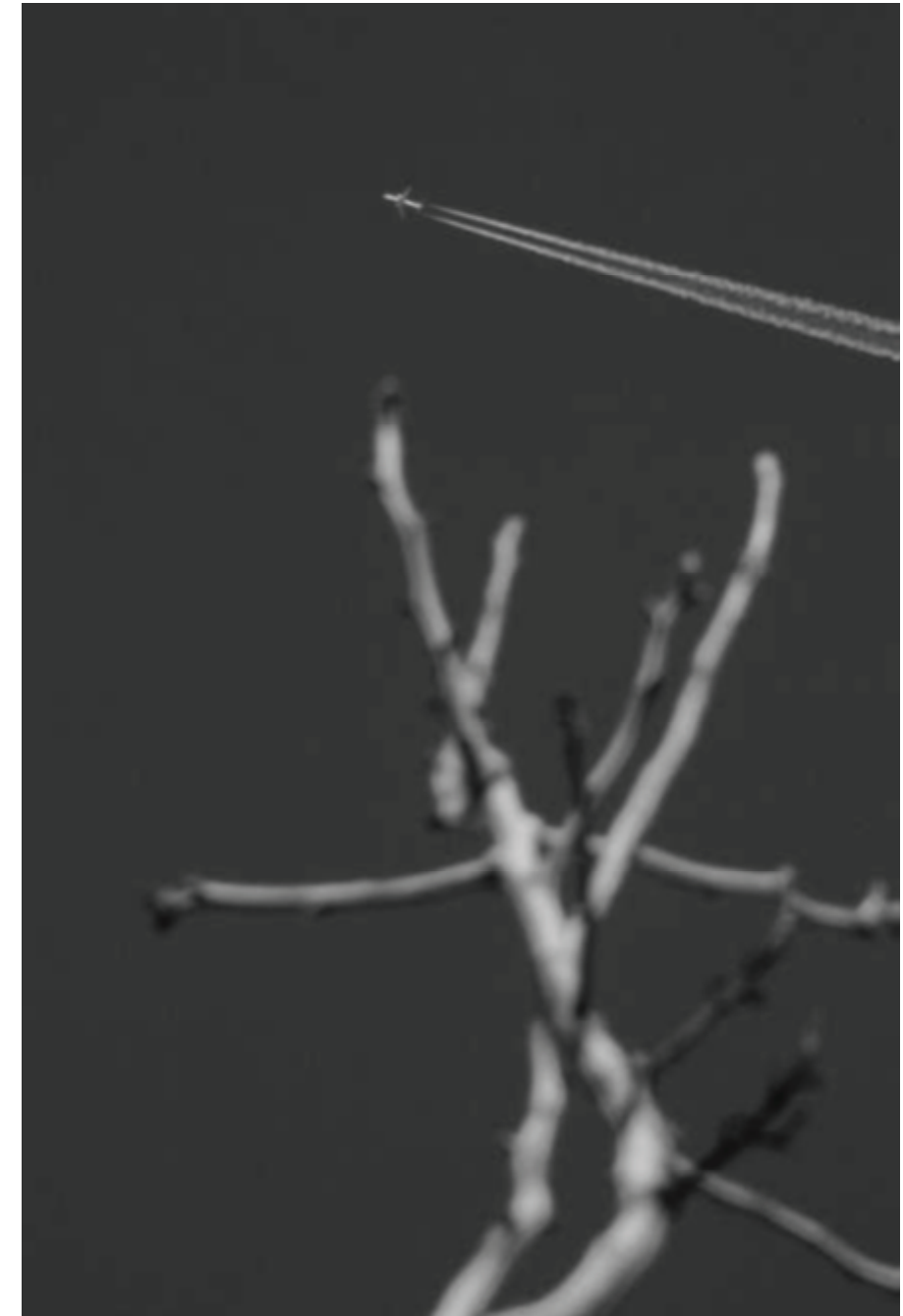
From five miles up,
brown hardscrabble land
feigns a tranquil glamor,
as metal roofed shacks
glisten with a diamond's fire,
and weathered remnants of
once majestic mountains,
now eaten by rain, cover the ground
like giant rough-textured sheets.

I understand how we stay aloft,
the dynamics of air on wing,
but I still wonder;
if the air grew tired
and felt enough was enough,
would the ground beckon.
Would rocks call out,
“We have been waiting for you
longer than we can remember.”

In those last few moments
I would not curse the air
for growing tired,
I am weary as well.
I would not blame the rocks
for wanting company,
they too know sorrow,
or at least I want to believe they do.

In the end, the ephemeral nature
of time would reveal itself.
Just as rivers fill with mud
of those great mountains
continuing their inevitable

return to the sea,
so will the deeds of men erode.
And all that counts is now.



RIPPED

Dark energies
tear us farther apart
in the last days
of our personal universes.
We have to shift
to other dimensions
where gravity strengthens
the more isolated our masses lie,
where our sundered pieces
can survive alienated
but still sensing entanglement.

Destruction of the Room

I walked out in a receding tide
soft light reflecting in wet sand
gulls sentinels, shells crumbs
and the spot in the distance
became the mansion in waves
abandoned like a shipwreck.

Alone I entered the broken
beams of light through the roof
soft water sponge of hardwood
beneath my bare feet cautious
moving into the Victorian study
high back chairs and dusty
lines of books in brown covers.

Until the absence of the water
made me nervous and I ran
toward distance receding hills
the tsunami closing in fast
splinter of the rooms blasting
the house swept away like
morning mist on a mirror pond.

As I scrambled up the liquid hill
wave foam roiling about me
I gave her up and left her there
the hopeful beauty out to sea.

Wonderment

I I wonder wonder what what
My my other other soul soul
Is is doing doing tonight tonight??
My soul has an echo
A double
Or more

Fall Morning

Here she is again, that same rosy-fingered dawn
who opened ten years’ worth of days during the Trojan War,
and then ten more on Odysseus’ return to Ithaka
as he sailed around and across the wine-dark sea.
Now, eons later she still appears each morning,
to wake ordinary neighborhoods not known for epic greatness,
stealing in so quietly, quieter even than the muffled thud
of a newspaper landing on someone’s sidewalk or steps.
As if on signal, out goes the yellow rectangle of window across the street,
on comes the glow of October treetops: towering amber maples,
and closer to the ground, smaller pink viburnums and Juneberries,
reflecting the soft colors that spread slowly across the horizon.
Roofs and windshields of cars parked along the curb,
skinny bicycles chained to lamp posts bordering the parkway,
a red stop sign, yellow caution signs, neon joggers all capture
that first light, hold it, and send it back out into the early air.
And for those few minutes at daybreak,
Until harsher light arrives to bear witness,
rosy dawn belies our own Homeric struggles, small and big,
with her sunrise gift: one sweet momentary illusion of peace.

what is desired like faith

she could see the many shades of blue, the blue of the sky reflected on the surface of the sea. a multitude of hues created by the rising and falling of waves, created by infinite facets of reflection. touching the sand as she lay, the gentle wind stroked her body. the colors of the sea filled her eyes and she could see the depths as shadows. she was being told many things, the dimensions of love, the desires of faith. what could be believed, in a moment of release.

Things and Other Things

IF

“Though what you’re saying is correct, presenting this material to nonscientists is the equivalent of allowing children to play with loaded guns. – A colleague’s objection to our physics course, The Quantum Enigma.” (p. 3 The Quantum Enigma, Bruce Rosenblum and Fred Kuttner. Oxford University Press. 2006)

“The Enigma in a Nutshell: Quantum mechanics is the most battle-tested theory in all of science. It is also practical... But, with the advent of quantum mechanics, physicists, unexpectedly, felt the need to talk of reality, connectedness, and even “consciousness.”

Reality: Undisputed experimental results challenge any common-sense view of physical reality. By your free choice you can establish either of two contradictory prior physical realities. What existed before your observation? Experts in the foundations of quantum mechanics still puzzle about and argue about this.

While the creation of physical reality can be demonstrated only for small things, like molecules, or “simple” situations, only technology sets the limit. Quantum theory is seamless. It presumably applies to everything (including us?). Cosmologists apply quantum mechanics to black holes and the Big Bang.

Connectedness: Quantum theory tells that all things that have ever interacted are forever connected. For example, your friend’s freely made decision of what to do in Moscow (or on Mars) can instantaneously influence what you find in Manhattan. And this happens without any physical force being involved. Einstein called such influences “spooky actions.” They have now been demonstrated to exist. So far just for small things, but they are no less spooky.

Two further comments:

These two quantum phenomena are technically called “wavefunction collapse” and “entanglement.” They are NOT hard to understand—even with zero physics background. But they are almost impossible to believe. When someone tells you something you can’t believe, you might well think you don’t understand. But believing might be the real problem. It’s best to approach the subject with an open mind. This is not easy.

The facts described in our book are completely undisputed. But mentioning “consciousness” is controversial. The encounter of physics with “non-physical” stuff like

consciousness has been called our “skeleton in the closet.” <http://quantumenigma.com/nutshell/>

What does science do? Science doesn't. A scientist does things. Or does to things. What things do scientists do to things? They observe and measure and report. They observe and measure and report what they sometimes call causal relationships. Is that the opposite of casual relationships?

If I hold an apple and then drop it, what happens? For a scientist it's an opportunity to uncover the secrets of existence. An opportunity to do science.

The scientist takes action with a question in mind. An 'if' question. The scientist can't just guess at the secrets of the universe. There is a method that has to be followed.

Because there is.

The scientist reports an answer of some sort after thinking about what if. For example, what if I let an apple fall from my hand to the ground.

What happens if?

But not just any if.

The scientist doesn't like to make big steps, but lot of little ones. That's part of the method.

'If' for the scientist involves consequences in a particular way. 'If' is not just understanding many things might happen and they don't. That 'if' is a generic kind of science fiction.

A scientist sequences thinking about if. The scientist may indeed do science fiction but it's of a particular genre. The question the scientist does must be specific: “If I measure an apple falling, what does that reveal?”

Science however, as an amalgamation of what scientists do, can easily become contaminated by questions that are not specific.

For instance it might be science fiction to assume that measuring reveals something beyond measurements. This assumption might be expressed as: “if I measure very carefully therefore I can use those measurements to investigate reality.” An assumption that there is some significant connection between measuring and what is 'real', i.e. undeniably reliable. Or 'essentially and actually existent.'

But when a scientist does observing, measuring and reporting, there need not be questions of reality. Some scientists believe that what they do connects to something real. Others do not. But these are belief systems, not what scientists do.

Observing and then measuring narrows down imaginary possibilities, the 'ifs', to a reportable actuality. Measuring eliminates options. Measuring eliminates options so that a therefore can be proclaimed.

A scientist observes and the observations take the form of measurements and then the scientist reports a therefore. Therefore I can safely conclude, or therefore I can report.

Possibilities are imaginary. An apple doesn't fall upward. If someone saw an apple fall upwards it would be a hallucination.

Then scientists report to other scientists who may or may not agree with the report. If enough scientists agree with the report and there are enough agreed upon reports, then it can be claimed that some sort of very reliable process has been observed and measured.

In the case of an apple, a scientist discovers the obvious, that an apple falls to the ground. If a scientist can show that every apple falls to the ground under specified conditions they can make a claim. That is, they can claim an ontological discovery. In this case, they can claim they have discovered there is a measurable process in the fall of apples to such a degree that the claim can be made there is a law that gravity obeys.

If scientists have a method that other scientists can follow and come to the same conclusion, they become more and more confident they can assert that gravity does obey a law of the universe.

It might be that at other times people have observed that things fall down to the ground and maybe even someone said, everything falls down if it's not held up, but that's not science, that's opinion. And opinion isn't serious, doesn't have a method which makes observation a significant definition of what's predictably reliable, a certainty.

So using a method of observing, measuring and reporting and requiring a consensus of approval, a claim can be made about what's predictably reliable.

ZEITGEIST

But people being people, the simple process of observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing easily can become contaminated by forces from outside the simple process. But then, as in any figure and ground configuration, observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing is a revelation of forces that cannot be contained, purified, known.

It's as if scientists start having extramarital affairs with power all the while pontificating on the wholesomeness of their family life.

A secret affair in its way, this alignment with power, because no one wants to talk about it. No one wants to admit to an adultery taking place. Scientists certainly don't want to admit that they have strayed beyond observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing.

But they do. For example, scientist X declares that she has observed such and such. Scientist Y believes that women can't do science correctly and her results are trivialized or ignored or censured because of his influence. Then Scientist Y steals her results. But she has withheld some of her observing and reporting so that Scientist Y has an incomplete profile of what could be reported. But he reports the stolen results and everyone is impressed. He gets a big grant and a full professorship at Princeton. Only years later, after further work has been completed using his reports, does it turn out that his reporting was incomplete. What has been agreed upon is incorrect.

Meanwhile everyone among the scientists chant the austerities and litanies and doxologies of observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing, as if nothing could possibly come between them and the purity of method.

What makes the scenario of scientist X's situation possible is a high value placed on scientific activity and a low value placed on the feminine. Values are so common, so intrusive, that they are almost invisible, so taken for granted that few notice how their mental operations are constantly supporting certain values over others.

Other values that might affect observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing are observable and reportable. Funding is influential, for example. Peer pressure. Intellectual fashion. Much can be excluded or distorted or ignored. Truths are asserted which turn out to be not so true.

If brought to light such instances of intellectual malfeasance are put down to the failings of human nature without anyone looking at the possibility that the inadequacies of human nature might doom the whole enterprise of infallible methodologies.

But when the times value observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing it will be important to be in tune with such processes. If someone is not in tune then they probably wouldn't be interested in observing and reporting on apples falling. The neighbors might think them eccentric or mentally deranged.

Being in tune with the times is sometimes called the Zeitgeist.

Being in tune with the times means you get to (or perhaps have to?) overlook the inadequacies of human nature if those inadequacies might bring into question the values of the times.

So doesn't the question arise, how much and when is observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing influenced by psychological powers? Can observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing be considered exempt from such forces? Which is the chicken and which the egg? And either way, how can observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing be considered exempt from such forces, unless and insofar, such exemption can be observed, measured, reported and agreed

upon?

And where's that report? And who's agreed upon it?

DISCOVERING THE OBVIOUS

There's a method involved in making scientific claims. You can't just report a law of the universe because you want to.

There's a law about reporting. Lots of laws in the current Zeitgeist. Science is science fiction in the way the Book of Leviticus is science fiction.

When enough scientists drop apples, or if dropping an apple is so generic or universal an action, only then can a result can be reported. Under such limitations when the apple falls to the ground, the scientist can then report, with some reliability, that if you hold an apple and then drop it, the apple will fall to the ground.

Scientists do science when they repeat what other scientists have done and come to the same conclusions.

Voilà, the Zeitgeist of the West in its late stage apparition.

Strange word, zeitgeist. More science fiction. It means ghost of time; the spirit of the times.

Without the strange and wondrous conspiracies of a zeitgeist, you would never find dropping an apple something worth investigating. Guess what, everyone is a fauxscientist when it comes to apples. "If I drop this from my hand, it's going to fall." And they'd be right. But if they don't have a method they can't prove a thing.

Without a method the thing is elusively ambivalent. With a method the thing becomes something under control, reduced down to a 'methodological analysis'.

And the subtle or not so subtle attraction of method? Power. Power of a particular sort. The particular sort is what makes for the particulars of a Zeitgeist.

A Zeitgeist grows out of a trickle into a flood and then it dwindles away, merges in some estuary of time and is swallowed up in the ocean of time. So it doesn't exert the same force over time.

Without the Zeitgeist you couldn't find enough people interested in repeating experiments, that is, controlled observations. Science is what scientists do in a scientist friendly ecology. So a Zeitgeist is a conspiracy of sorts. Or group hypnosis on a cultural scale. The greater the group, the more the Zeitgeist.

And, of course, without the Zeitgeist I wouldn't be thinking about what scientists

do. In another Zeit, scientists might have been outlawed or shipped off to Northwestern Australia. Or put in stockades until they decided to be sensible.

The current, Western Zeitgeist makes comfort food out of science. Invents it, so to speak, perhaps because of a need people have for calming influences, and any number of other possibilities. In other words the time of a Zeitgeist is like the apple falling. It happens.

You can't escape it. Repeat after me, "Aren't scientists wonderful!"

Of course, they are. They give us explanations for what things are.

It would be foolish not to know what things are, wouldn't it? Who would question the importance of knowing what things are?

Thus, the obvious can be hidden in plain sight, because very few people give it a second look.

And the obvious, in this case, is that maybe finding explanations for what things are by way of observing, measuring, reporting and agreeing isn't all that it's touted to be.

"It is said that scientific knowledge is compelling. Certainly.

But what does its compulsion consist in? In our instance it consists in the compulsion to relinquish (a) wine-filled jug and to put in its place a hollow within which a liquid spreads. Science makes the jug-thing into a nonentity in not permitting things to be the standard for what is real.

Science's knowledge, which is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects, already had annihilated things as things long before the atom bomb exploded. The bomb's explosion is only the grossest of all gross confirmations of the long-since-accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil. The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten. The nature of the thing never comes to light, that is, it never gets a hearing. This is the meaning of our talk about the annihilation of the thing. That annihilation is so weird because it carries before it a twofold delusion: first, the notion that science is superior to all other experience in reaching the real in its reality, and second, the illusion that, notwithstanding the scientific investigation of reality, things could still be things, which would presuppose that they had once been in full possession of their thing-hood. But if things ever had already shown themselves qua things in their thingness, then the thing's thingness would have become manifest and would have laid claim to thought. In truth, however, the thing as thing remains proscribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated. This has happened and continues to happen so essentially that not only are things no longer admitted as things, but they have never yet at all been able to appear to thinking as things." Martin Heidegger, from "The Thing" Poetry, Language and Thought, trans. Hofstadter, p. 170

GO BACKWARD TO GO FORWARD

Back to the report part of what scientists do. The report might definitely be a form of science fiction if the Zeitgeist is skewed in that direction. It's science fiction in so far as scientists concern themselves with time travel. There's a hand. There's the ground. The apple falls. Let's go back into the past and look at that once more. Again, please.

You measure the distance between your hand and the ground. Then you decide to measure how long it takes for the apple to fall. But for that you need a clock. The time it takes for the apple to travel from your hand to the ground. Time travel. We all do it. But time is tricky. How do you measure it?

You can't make up a law of the universe unless you know that the apple falls the same way all the time. You can't control your observation unless you are a time master. And to find out if it falls the same way you need to know how long it takes to fall. If Tuesday I drop an apple and it takes three seconds and then if Wednesday I drop an apple and it takes four seconds to fall the same distance, well, then the laws of the universe are different on different days. And that's just wrong.

Once upon a time people didn't measure time, except that the day measured it for them by becoming night and then day again.

Then somebody decided to take the sun and the night and hold them up against the distance from the apple in the hand to the ground. Tricky.

However they got that idea in their minds is a big question that probably no one wants to observe, measure, report and agree upon.

The way to take control of time is to divide the day and the night up into little pieces.

Is all science dividing things up into little pieces?

That is, if I observe an apple falling and say nothing about the apple hitting the ground, certainly that's not a scientist at work. If I tell someone else I saw an apple fall and hit the ground, that also is not what a scientist would value. To do what scientists do I have to divide up the apple falling into the parts of an event. Which is obviously already something that is in pieces. Whoever got this situation going had to have liked fractions; lots of long divisions. An event is dividing up the world into a little piece. Dismembering it.

Events don't actually exist. 'Events' are oversimplifications, descriptions of 'if all the other happenings weren't there, what would be happening when an apple falls to the ground?'

I declare something is an event insofar as it is different from other happenings. An event is an un-alive thing, that is, an event is something that has happened in my imagination through

my ability to separate off one thing from another in my mind, and then insofar as I do what a scientist does, I can measure it. I can divide it up into parts and it won't complain.

My mind may not be un-alive. Thoughts may not be un-alive. But there is a kind of aggression and violence implicit to dividing. Predation as identity acquisition. A thing becomes what it is claimed to be or presumed to be. A thing, through the imaginative deed of separating it off into an un-alive state, has no choice in the matter. No one asks it if it wants to be a thing. If someone says "I heard a thing say" their frontal lobes would be evacuated with a long, sharp needle and there would be no more of that.

There's a cloud moving in the sky and a bird whistling and smoke from a fire when the apple falls. None of this can matter if I am going to measure the parts of the event involved in the apple falling. I'm not allowed to write a haiku if I am to examine the apple's fall. I must be a coroner not a poet. I must do an autopsy on the apple's fall.

An apple falls.
Smoke blossoms in the sky.
I am the sound of wings.

That's nonsense. I have serious work to do here.

Dance of the Unsquared Circles

To lure the taste of chocolate
out of chocolate, add salt.
It's not the old equation,

only a recipe for sensibility.
Opposites don't attract, just end up
like the couple that set fire to civility

and chalked a faultline down the center
of possession. Or it's the other way around—
two people wearing their anger inside out

for twenty years—all that electricity
trapped behind a flickering of false lives.
Call it cold fusion, or misery, or lightning

minus light. Call it whatever you like.
The trick is to find out what charges what—
to know the differences that revolve

in imaginary spaces—
Andromeda and The Milky Way
caught in a waltz of mutual gravity.

Let cardinals bring out the snow in snow.
Let the tree behind bullet-proof glass,
its leaves spindling toward sun,

make you crave an infinity of ocean.
If you want me to love you
write a graffitti of rain-slick roads

across the Sahara of my distance,
tattoo a dusting of particles
onto the terra incognita of my fear.

Bus Ride

The mohawk boy and the old man sat side by side on the bus. The blue fin of hair atop the boy's head swayed gently as he nodded his agreement to something the old man was saying. The old man drew a tissue from his pocket with hands that trembled with palsy; he dropped it beside the mohawk boy's motorcycle boot and waved away the boy's attempts to retrieve it for him. With a grim species of determination he stood, nearly falling as the driver stopped to pick up passengers, and bent to pick up the fallen tissue. He stumbled again as he straightened, and the mohawk boy steadied him. His thick glasses had slid down his nose and he pushed them back into place with one liver-spotted hand. He sat down again beside the mohawk boy.

"This is my stop, man," the mohawk boy said as he stood. The zippers on his leather jacket jingled merrily. "It was good to meet ya. Good conversation, man."

"Keep questioning everything, son," the old man said. "Never keep quiet. Remember that."

The mohawk boy flashed devil horns and trotted off the bus, a bounce in his step and a cocky grin on his face.

The old man watched him until the bus turned the corner. He drew his tissue from the pocket of his cardigan and wiped at his nose with trembling hands.

"Never keep quiet," he said softly to himself. The late afternoon sunlight bounced off his glasses as he pushed them up his nose again. "Never stop questioning everything."

The bus continued westward toward the death of the day.

The View from our Place

We call them stars. Now we think they shine, but we didn't always think so. They started appearing out our living room window one night. (Night, I say, out of habit; it was always night.) For a long time we thought they were pinpricks in the vast cover of darkness – glimpses into the luminous beyond. They grew in number, never wavered, and soon, the idea of the beyond began to lose its allure.

Mostly we were happy to have something to look at. It never occurred to us that there could be more that we weren't seeing but then my wife soon reported she could see some from the bathroom window. We were surrounded.

In the morning, over breakfast, we sat in the living room, eating our toast, drinking our coffee, and watching the stars out front. In the afternoon, if it wasn't too chilly, we sat out back and admired the ones out there. I could watch them for millions of years, I often said. Me too, my wife often replied. And we did.

We mostly played solitaire or read books, so the constancy of the stars suited our sedentary moods. Sometimes we tried to count them. We divided up the sky and my wife counted her part while I counted mine. Usually I lost track somewhere in the thousands before we met in the middle and I had to start over. My wife gloated because, as a penance, I had to make dinner.

Much to our surprise, every few million years one of them would pop off like a firecracker – we'd jump right off the sofa. Seeing new ones come into view was exciting but it in no way prepared us for such a grand – and terrible – finale.

Did you see that?

Of course I did, look, it's still blazing.

Strangely, no sound accompanied this terrific burst of light. This suited me because I couldn't imagine anything more startling than to hear the heavens boom. For weeks it was bright enough to cause a shadow and then it faded back into the darkness. Often we were speechless. We mourned it like the loss of a work of art. Eventually,

another one went off and it dawned on us that one day our sky could be completely dark again.

When we started catching neutrinos in our coffee and cosmic rays in our soup, we knew something was up – the bright lights definitely weren’t holes into elsewhere. My wife did a back-of-the-envelope calculation and came up with a plausible set of thermonuclear fusion reactions. They must be very hot in the center – they make elements, she said, without elaborating. I believed her without ever seeing her equations. She had that look in her eye. Maybe one day I would understand. In the meantime, I still liked to look at the stars, shining for all they were worth.

The Fisherman

Olav pierced the knife into the flesh of the fish and tore along the gill. Its fellow catch swam around in the bloodied water of the tank for only moments before it too faced the gory fate. Adjusting his jacket against the morning wind, he went back into the cabin.

‘Job done?’ The one driving the boat sipped his coffee and showed only an obliged moment of interest.

‘Yep, they’re reeling like little buggers,’ Olav replied, as he looked down to his jeans that were marked with the watery life the fish had flopped from the pool in which they’d been caught.

He poured himself a drink from the flask and enjoyed the burn of the hot plastic on his December hands. He thought about his wife. She would be getting breakfast round about now; at least in the routine that he imagined for her. She’d been discharged from hospital a month earlier and it was the first day that he’d left her alone, against doctors’ orders, to feel the stretch of normality.

He watched through the glass of the noisy cabin as the salmon continued to bob, splutter and splash. Great waves exploded over the edge, alive with death as they too were a part of the struggle to escape. Olav just stared, quietly and patiently, until no more life was in the creatures.

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‘There we go.’ He placed the dead weight on the table in the kitchen of his house. His wife barely looked up from the sink, where she was watching bubbles shrink on the new aluminium. He moved to kiss her.

‘I told you not to bring it in like that,’ she said, shrugging him away and braving a glimpse. ‘You’re not doing it in here.’ He smiled and picked up the sea carcass.

Outside, the winter sun shone on the cold ceramic chopping board, illuminating it like a sort of laboratory inspection slide. Olav loved the secret life of the fish; in fact, the secret life of anything - the world inside that kept on functioning though no one could see the way that it did. He knew the way that many things functioned. In his time, he’d cut open cows, rabbits, ewes; even a dead dog once - as a dare. He knew how they all moved, could see now as they walked

where the liver, kidneys and spleens were. It was strange, he thought, to have this knowledge; to be privy to the secret life of the animals' insides.

His wife Norn called from the front door. 'You have to get Bjorg. She's on the phone.' Olav looked down at the innards of the sea creature, the little stomach and dirty liver. Was it ready for the oven yet? Had he given this fish enough attention for its role in today's meal? He didn't know.

His daughters were waiting for him near the harbour in their local town when he arrived for them. The winter had clearly marked the skin of Bjorg for another year, as even the scarf she was wearing up to and over her nose had not kept the wind from grazing her chin and cheeks. Ingrid too looked half frozen, as they both got in the car and continued to tremble until the heat of the engine settled on their legs and arms.

'I've put the fish in. Your mother's watching it, so we'll have to go straight home today, no time to stop in on your bestefar,' the man - who was proud of his wife - told them.

They drove along the winding road to their house; a view that for many would have been spectacular, but for them was merely ordinary. They did not take in what they had seen countless times before. Tiny islands, gathered in their millions like broken clots of skin on cooled milk. As a tired child's skipping rope touching the floor irregularly, bridges dusted a few of the islands, leaving other island dwellers with only one option off their island: a boat. It was warm in the car finally, and the wind outside and the freeze of the sea that sucked all the warmth from the town was long forgotten.

'How is she?' Bjorg asked?

'The same,' the father replied. 'She managed this morning, but she still hasn't said much.'

'She'll settle,' Ingrid reassured. She always had the calming words of someone who never let life touch beyond the surface. Her father found this strange; that she should comfort him in this way.

They pulled up outside their cabin where a chimney of smoke, bawling out through the windows and dragging dread to the mouths of them all, told them that she had not settled.

Familiar with this drill, Olav jumped from the old four-wheel drive and ran to the house with guilt's urgency pressing at his heels.

'Norn!' he bellowed. 'Norn!' His girls were following closely behind.
'Mum!' Ingrid and Bjorg joined him. Ingrid raced to another door to see if she could let herself in quicker.

'She's set the bloody house on fire!' He heard his hard words hitting the hearts of his children.

That was the first worry, of course; that this middle-aged woman - who had not long been discharged from hospital - had gone one step further this time.

Bjorg found her mother at the top of the garden, standing with singed hair and face and a glare of triumphant anger. Olav stood back, watching and listening as his daughter cradled her mother and spouted a whole family's relief. He had seen this glare on his wife's face many times before.

'It was still alive,' she was saying. 'It was moving in the oven. I threw in some paper, but it was still moving even after the paper burned down.' She had used petrol then, instead. Though the smoke had been extensive, the flames had burned out and caused no more damage than a blackening of the walls in the kitchen.

'I didn't hurt anyone,' Norn said. 'I was very careful.' She told her daughter how the flames had gushed out of the oven and how hot they'd been as they'd moved near her face.

Olav walked away. He shook with the cold and adrenaline that were quite indistinguishable and he sat for what felt like an hour after - bashing the frosted ceramic slab with a piece of stray metal. What would he do? She'd been out of hospital seven times since they'd been married, and not once had they managed to cure the visions for which she'd originally been admitted. She could go back in again, stay in there forever, but that hardly seemed an answer to his marriage; to the daily task of loving a woman who was impossible to understand.

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'Don't do that!' Olav could hear his wife talking to the driver. He didn't know what the driver had done, nor did he care. He was going to take her out on the boat every day from now on.

There would be no kill today, while the woman was on board. Olav was simply going to check and feed the salmon that circled below in deep nets, as he did every day. They jumped

from the sea, up as far as they could go, testing but knowing the boundaries of their freedom. He was fascinated by them, excited about their lives and the changes he had witnessed in their growth. One after another, tens, hundreds at a time moved like this for the food that sprinkled out to them from a rotating arm.

‘This is a moving fish!’ He shouted to Norn as he dipped towards the cabin. ‘Come on, take my hand. These are the movers!’ Norn cautiously gripped hold of his hand and moved out from the cabin. She was still wearing her slippers, despite his repeated attempts to get her to put on wellingtons, but at least she’d put on her life jacket. The floor of the boat was wet and she complained that her slippers were soggy. ‘I told you not to wear them,’ he said sternly. But he could see how ill she was now; the rough skin on her unshaven legs showing under the skirt that finished on her calves.

‘Now look at these,’ he said, guiding her to the edge of the boat, ‘beautiful, aren’t they.’ Norn went quiet and stared up at the jumpers. She was having another vision, he could tell this time. Like one of the creatures he had dissected on his slab, he was suddenly able to see inside her. Norn flinched and with the quickest of movement she charged to the other side of the boat. Olav was prepared and he was quicker. He threw her down on the floor and felt how hard she banged her knees under him.

As he held her down, held her tight, arms wrapped around her like a child he’d just rescued from the sea, he closed his eyes.

‘I’m just going to have to look after you even better,’ he said. ‘I’m just going to have to find a way.’

In Her Other Life

In the dream she had last night,
black horses ran wild through the capital
and she had let them loose
The wind climbed through her window
and confessed that it had sealed the fate
of an ancient kingdom
Then it wept in her arms. The moon said
that time is just a signal fire
marking the horizon for the setting sun

In the mood she’s in today, she could see
straight through love
She could wear a scarlet dress and pose
under a yum-yum tree
She could scream bloody murder
on the streets of the city,
say her prayers under an open sky

Tomorrow, it will rain and rain and rain
All the announcements will be made at
distant stations
and though she will wish that she could
hear them
she hopes that in her other life
she doesn’t have to live and die by
what’s in the news

Ceteris Paribus

Sample me
one bardic voice
Sized in relative measures
heard as trials
against wandering out-and-out liars
vigilante
vagrant

Differential

Foreclosed data
preaching a pulpit sermon
Virtual
not necessarily clinical tables
but raw vagaries
formative stones
to stub definitive toes

Equations

Not merely
abacus whispering mirrors
but images of 1s and 0s
shimmering with matters
of degree and perspective
and lasting specificity
we greet as a product
at the top of the stairs

Yelling

What is the power
of the alternative?

The Well

The deep well
Stone faced and still
It is naturally quiet
The way the pebble drops
Into liquid depths
And it responds deftly
An unconditional echo
Of an envelopment
And a gentle rippling
Propagated to the walls
And back again
To cross wavelet paths
On surfaces
It is here in the water
That lonely paths meet
And find solace
In the resolution
Of a bottoming rock
Tossed into the well
As a matter of question

To the Next Shooter

*“Rummaging in our own souls, we often dig up
something that ought to have lain there unnoticed.”*

Leo Tolstoy

Just outside the window, the moon is caught
in a beech tree—it is January, so the branches
and twigs are arthritic fingers. Its caughtness
is beautiful, and as I write this, the tree turns
into the lovingly back-lit hair of Ingrid Bergman
or Vivien Leigh—Anna Karenina, though, not that brat
from the South. But, of course, trapped
is trapped and has its own physics—vectors
that cannot be traced, mass that follows no rules,
relativity that is incalculable. A cherry pit
that yesterday you could flick across
the room, today feels heavy as an orchard.
How could any frame of reference or set
of transformations reconcile this kind of crush?

Music Lovers

Shadowed
at the tinted window,
I watch as wind and sun
become lovers
in subtropic air.

Breezes riff, sun shafts vamp
among emerald blades of grass,
as, true to spinning electrons,
the ineluctable pull of stars,
they sync to orchestrate
a fluted river of caresses.

In this way, too, we could fall together
play each other’s music.

A Scream a Kick, a Bud and a Flower

The younger leaves are more pubescent, fleshy and vulnerable. When you take a rose cutting you must be careful; get the correct hormone, keep it out of direct sunlight, make sure there is aeration and it can be moist but not wet. The younger, newer leaves that form are always more susceptible to mold, disease and trauma.

Everything is sterile. Hands, tables, and equipment are all scrubbed rigorously. Rose cuttings are taken with clean hands, dipped into a sterile rooting hormone and propagated in a sterile medium. They add fungicide and moisten the growing medium with distilled water. The air is circulated with fans to make sure no bacteria have time to grow. The air quality is as clean as possible. There is nothing natural about propagating plants.

In order to take a cutting from a plant you must first wound it. Roots will eventually erupt from the wound at the base of the rose cutting. Later new shoots will form. Now everything is easy, the plant is ready for manipulation. It can be made short and stalky or tall and lengthy. We can prolong its juvenility or force it to bloom years earlier than expected.

I knew all of this when I was young, before I received my first batch of a dozen roses, only eleven years old. They were peachy colored with bits of pink cascading down the edges of the petals. A light, sweet scent lingered around the bouquet. They were not quite as innocent as white, creamy roses but still a few shades away from the typical, mature red flower that most of us picture when we hear the word rose. In order to fill the empty spaces between the stems a florist had inserted sprigs of Baby’s Breath. The whole bunch was wrapped up in a pink, silk ribbon.

I felt an attachment to these roses, which was natural because of the attachment between my admirer and I. We would meet in the woods because no one was allowed to know about him. When he gave me the roses he bent down, laid an arm around my shoulder and nuzzled me with playful eskimo kisses. I could feel his whiskers bristling out from around his cheeks. His arm, which was much larger than mine, wrapped a little tighter around my body. It was the sort of ritual a father and daughter might share.

For a while he was a very special and rare secret for a young girl to have. He spoiled me with all sorts of things that would normally take weeks of chore money to afford. When I expressed my desire for a new summer dress to show off at my best friend Jillian’s bonfire party, I had it the next day. I had a particular dress in mind, one that was deep purple with a creamy silk

bow. He bought me a light pink one because he said that was my best color. All I had to do was show him how it looked on me the first time I wore it.

I took his roses and put them into a vase. I told my mother a boy from school was asking me out to a dance. I can remember how she shrieked and giggled with joy when she heard this because no boy had ever asked me out or shown any interest in me. Once the flowers atop the rose stalks started to fade away, I noticed new growth creeping up the stems. They would soon be made into perfect rose bushes for my garden. I cut the midsection of the stem out and dipped it in some of my mother’s rooting hormone from the garage. Seed starting mix, a biodegradable pot and a mason jar were all that I needed.

A few months later I had to transplant the cuttings into larger containers, but they were still too vulnerable to be hardened off into the outside world. I kept them under my close watch every day. My admirer loved the idea. He said I could watch the roses just like he watched me.

We met in our usual spot, far enough in the woods to be out of sight and earshot from anyone who might try and come between us. The number of gifts I had received from him lately had risen so high that I had to hide some of them in my basement. He was bribing me for what was going to happen next.

He sat attentively listening to my childish gripes and woes after I had come home from school to meet with him. I was wearing that same light pink dress that he had given me just a few months earlier during the summer. This time I wore it with leggings and a jacket, the end of fall was here and the cold air bit at any exposed skin. His arm moved around my back and tightened around my shoulders, a natural gesture from him. My head fell into the slope where his arm met his body and everything still seemed safe.

I think it was the dress that set him off. Light pink was my best color. In a matter of seconds it was gone, and I was left bare. His big, safe arms turned against me and I was pushed down. I can remember how the ground felt underneath my body, a collage of cold, wet, decaying leaves sponged up against my back. I was confused, shocked and still thought this may all just be some sort of game. When I saw him stand up and shed his jacket, my mind switched off from my surroundings and withdrew into itself.

Suddenly I was in a dream-like state, watching myself from a third person perspective. I pictured the rose cuttings I had been caring for; they were now a few healthy young rosebushes, all lined up in my garden. Although young, they still required pruning. I walked over to them with my clippers. As I pulled a branch aside and began to make my first cut, a small voice from the rose started to beg me to leave it alone. I should have listened. Loud yelping screams of pain

emerged from the plants. They cried and began to wilt at my touch. I jumped back, dropping my clippers to the ground and attempted to run from them. I went nowhere. They flung the remains of their thorny limbs out and wrapped them around my ankles, stifling any movement I could have made. I used to love them, but now they grew strong, much stronger than I had. They pulled me under the ground and trapped me in their vast system of roots.

My eyes opened slowly and heavily. I smelled the earthy aroma of dead leaves and decay. There was a smudge of rich, dark, mud on my face. I wiped it off and looked over, teary eyed, at my captor. His chest was heaving, mouth open just slightly. I tried to talk, but it was as if my vocal chords had been cut out. He lay next to me wrapping his arms around my body like tightening roots.

Cars On Mars

[NOTE: BEST VIEWED ONLINE <http://drowningbook.com/cars-on-mars/>]

Traffic jams. Off-Road Rage. Fender Benders. Pileups on the Interquad. Chop Shops! Were we asleep at the wheel? How, and when, did it get to this?

Seems like it was just yesterday you could rove the Northern Lowlands for days without even seeing another vehicle. Rake the Medusae Fossae from ridge to ridge unmolested. Sample lineated valleys in solitude but for the whirring of your own servos. Now bulletins like this have become commonplace:



BAMBERG CRATER, Mars (AP) - “Curiosity Super Deuce II had a front wheel crushed by a Chandrayaan Happy-9. The Americans were maneuvering for position over a promising albedo feature, while the Indian craft was trolling a programmed sub-soiling route. “They came out of nowhere,” the Chandrayaan crew protested. The Americans were not impressed, “That Happy is an Automon-Heavy class,” Lt. Cmdr. Angela Commons explained, “Free-ranging is prohibited in that zone. We had the right of way.”

As sure as spent rocket-boosters fall from the sky, you can bet these traffic woes on Red Planet are destined to get much worse if we don’t get in gear now.

‘Nonsense’, you say.

Oh yeah? How about this: Within a generation of Sputnik, space junk has become a major head

ache for space flight. And: the world's first auto accident happened in 1891, five years before Henry Ford built his first car.

It's Drowning Book's Law: the severity of a social problem is directly proportional to how trivially it's regarded immediately before it becomes a blot on the landscape. This ain't your grandpa's Star Trek, this is no run down the street to pick up a pizza. No one's interested in 'boldly going where no man has gone before' while running multi-billion dollar buggies from millions of miles away. The best places to poke around on Mars have long ago become natural attractions to all who follow. Parking in one place for a long time, which back on Earth means someone's stuck, is now a sure bet that something good's been found on Red. Teams landing now are looking for avenues already trodden, landing zones already well-mapped. On the way, they're going to want to blow someone's doors off. It's just natural.

Mix up a bunch of competing engineering teams from various industrial cultures, and you can bet that Mars has no defense against becoming the Solar System's biggest R/C track. Remember, man was within just a few landings of his first stop on the moon when he'd smuggled a 5-iron and a Titliest up there to whack around. On live TV.



Things Happen. At a couple billion each, including tax, title, and destination fees, countries are also going to continue to demand services. More and more we're hearing 'roadside assistance'. We already hire private corporations to lift us to Red, why not a planet-wide maintenance contract to take care of those little messy details like flat tires? Unfortunately, once that rumored Mars-wide towing contract is

awarded, there will be another incentive to cheap out on the vehicles. Which will only make the road hazards worse.

With help for a price just nearby, what's to prevent some countries from flooding the planet with cheap compacts? One way to shave costs is to skimp on the safety features, like crash-avoidance, for instance. With a round trip radio signal taking half an hour, the instruction to 'change

lanes' would arrive woefully late to avoid that head-on. There's rumors of a factory full of unused Yugos the Russians have been hoarding, which they're aching to just dust the Martian inner atmosphere with. At those prices, you don't have to mitigate the impact of entry, just drop of a few hundred at once, and see which ones make it.



Rules of the Road. Which side? Back in the day, we drove on the right. Which was, right. But as soon as the British, Japanese and Zambians got there, and all hell broke loose. Then the speeding started. Once countries started claiming the entire crater the moment their wheels crested the rim, it was pedal-to-the-metal for everyone. There was less and less science in each vehicle arriving, and more torque. "Aim It and Claim It", was the slogan, drifting was the technique, and vast pristine plains were contaminated by alluvium ejected by skidding 'carts'. It's estimated that there was more damage done to the sub-surface strata in a few hundred Sols than a hundred millennia of meteor showers.

Soon you needed a map to tell the landing zones from the actual craters. For the first time, discarded parachutes became an official road hazard, a curse that's with us to this day. And there were two classes of vehicles: the plodding, science-driven rovers...and the 'carts'.



Parts is Parts. Since it could cost a \$100 million and a year's turnaround to fly a replacement wheel to the planet, slightly-worn replacements on site were soon found to be worth small fortunes. Which brought a whole new hazard to interplanetary exploration. One minute your chassis was the pride of a nation, trundling along, prospecting a quiet crater; the next, your data streams have terminated and your radios went dead. Soon, your parts were scattered throughout the Marscape, a wheel showing up on this country's rover, camera mast on that

one's cart. ChemCam lasers were being repurposed as a cutting-torches, and 'chopping' had arrived on the Red Planet.

And that brought us to the present dilemma, where good old, solid exploratory science, carried out in the interest of knowledge and the greater good, meets up with the kind of larceny this newest of commercial ventures here is demonstrating: MarsPar. For the same reason the Earth motorist doesn't drive around with a trunk full of spare parts or emergency gear, the average Red mission just doesn't have the budget to cover every contingency. And there's that issue of turnaround, and all the while your rover's down that meter is running on Mars, and it counts in the millions. So, it's a seller's market for critical spares.

By our calculation, the entire Earth cost for a MarsPar 'Roadside Saver Kit' from their recent 'Solstice Sale' Flyer, which included (1) Set Jumper Cables, (1) Can of Fix-a-Flat, (1) Tow Rope, (1) Roll of Duct Tape, and (3) Bungee Cords was \$40.73. Add about \$100,000.00 to ship it to Mars, for a total of \$100,040.73. MarsPar's 'Sale' price was \$120,000,000.00. Nice work if you can get it.



But customer loyalty is not lost on MarsPar, and they do believe in spreading the wealth. From the beginning, they've been giving Green Stamps with each purchase, 1,000 per million dollars spent. Redeemable here, there, and all space stations in between.

THERE ARE FORTY-FOUR WAYS TO GET OVER THIS

A man came over on Friday,
stayed two days and went home on Friday.
How is that possible?

They say if you wait long enough
everything changes—
water is no longer so heavy
the well that went down and down forever
stops.

Because I am always talking
I measure sugar in grams
the time of day in minutes.

I watch the fairground people
moving in the park in the middle of summer
and suddenly I long for the loss of light in winter
the cyanide in the stone of a peach.

I shake my boots for scorpions,
go for long walks.
I drink cold water,
then lay down again.

There will be
things found in rivers
shadows on buildings
salt crystals taken for diamonds
and once in a while,
Friday is a horse.

On Detachment

This is what it feels like
standing here and looking there:
A rough sketch of land
looking out across the water;
The emptiness of water
dissolving into shapeless gray;
Gray, the unmarked paper
taking up almost the entire sky.

We try to explain what this is
to people who cannot understand it,
people unable to find out for themselves
what was written on it.

Words, I have asked for many –
What can you say of stars,
the vast collection of them?
What can you say of eye and heart?
How to explain the wide expanse of darkness you go into
before you start to notice?
First, there is nothing;
and then, there is everything.



Tree-fort

The first was my body, snug in its cap of fur.
I smell of yak butter and chalky dirt
mixed with the frozen bite of wind.

Silence. I imagine I climb down our tree
Covered in myths of our childhood,
swing with the autumn leaves.

My whole life, I've read living signs:
Disease batters bodies into disintegrated apple.
Fir cones await fires to catch their human ribs
falling into a green, thick forest.

We always liked to blow the candles out.
Our friction in our hand burned when we grew older.
The sound that scissors made in our child hands
while crunching construction paper aches.
Even cracked, pop-out ceilings lose that style,
like a cereal freshly drowned in milk.

Now the maple trees are everywhere,
invading the hickories and oaks.

THE SUMMER OF DENATURALIZATION

One season’s shift,
and light will breathe
life into forms undefined
in this dark desert morning;
I stand as naturally as Eve
in the diminished dawn,
trying to distinguish patterns
of raven flight rising
from a blood-line horizon
across one shadowed edge
of the garden. I hear with my skin
those black wings floating
directly above and know,
as surely as the earth
has been touched without mercy,
that I am disintegrating.

I, the mothering
anthropo- of a prism of *-isms*,
morphic and central, with this mind—
oh so human, have tried to move
my shape and place and preference
into connection with all that exists,
yet the concept of self
subsists as a single strand,
a being unraveling
from the fabric of mystery
where the only stitch
of imagination left
is that in which I wonder
why I so highly value
disenchanted myself
with perceptions of certainty.

Moon

Out the jalopy window of childhood night
A backseat for sprawling.
I saw a partial sanscritandvine face,
next to the tomahawk of stars and constellation of wine in my father’s head.
He drives us home, home again with his own steering wheel of cheese -
Conjuring his days of before, before becoming an expatriate of everywhere.
I know nothing, and think my thumb in front of the open, squinted eye makes the moon disappear.
I imagine my father disappearing. And give him the thumb.

Out the jalopy window of childhood night
A backseat for sprawling.
I saw the brazensweetbread face,
through the wicked black lace of winter trees and captive breeze in my mother’s head.
She sleeps her way home, home again with her beautiful, blonde ease –
Dreaming of her days of before, before becoming patently everything.
I know nothing, and count the seconds between her breaths, as though I can change them.
I imagine my mother disappearing. And my own breath is ransacked.

Out the window, that childhood night
after they taught me that the moon trundles us
from the anteroom,
over our itinerant bridge, and into the travesty -
I freshly recall her leaving me with the sky.

Lorenz, far from the Straits of Messina

I am sitting in a pool of light and reading about the proletariat of tin sheep and wooden melons. You are sitting across from me, enveloped in the shared ring of light cast from the bulbs above, tracing whorls of motion in the woodgrain of the table. You look at me and ask how is it that motion freezes? You mean the patterns in the wood—how they came to be frozen in place—etched into eternity or the life of the wood, at least. You rub your callused fingers across the smooth table and imagine out loud that you have the power to erase motion, given time. You argue that if you were to sit under this pool of light long after the bulbs had burned out and longer still, rubbing your hands across the patterns of woodgrain like a blind man reading The Odyssey in braille, the patterns would eventually disappear—merge into the surface of the table as a whole. I agree, and tell you about wind carvings. I tell you that the wind causes sand dunes to shift, that it creates ravines and streams of air along the dunes’ porous surface. We discuss the oceans that Odysseus has travelled, is travelling, and how the water above is the same as the sand below. Both are shifting, we agree. I place my book down and take your hand in mine, rubbing the top of your palm with my thumb, creating ripples. There is nothing, I say, more beautiful than motion. I quietly liken myself to Aeolus and immediately take it back.

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I come home one day and you are reading about propulsion. You tell me that Man must travel 36,500 mph to break from Earth, solar escape. I allow this, knowing you will never get near a spacecraft. There is no danger in knowledge. You also tell me that the speed of light is 186,000 mi/sec. Again, just numbers. I wonder at the connection you are making between these two truths, but know better than to ask. I am glad to know you have moved on from frozen time and space, have propelled your mind away from stasis. But then you tell me about escape velocity, that somewhere between these two speeds and gravity blooms an outburst—magnificent propulsion—that lifts matter up and away from the whole mess. I know your outrage, or think I do. You curse Odysseus for escaping Charybdis, for reaching escape velocity without even a rocket pack. I remind you that instead he hits solid rock. But the ecstatic gleam of your eye matches the glint of the wanderer’s when he feels his ship pull away from the suck of that gaping maw. I think about Penelope, how she must feel every time her husband leaves her for the

arms of the sea-wind. Do these gold bands not offer any sort of protection? Against wandering? When I open my mouth to protest, I am unable to form words, and I imagine that the wind has whipped the words away from me, sent them reeling. You have begun to drift away, again.

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I am on a certain ridge at the Grand Canyon, you on the ridge opposite. I told you that it would be a good vacation—needed—and I hope that there is a smile on your face, but you are too far away for me to know. There must be a signal here, at least, because I am calling you on my cellphone. It is ringing and I see you reach into your pocket, and the sun is sinking in the west, causing elongated shadows. Your shadowfingers, I see, reach across the layers of water and wind-hewn rock. I hope that you were thinking about the importance of controlled motion before my call interrupted your still meditation. I imagine my calling you as a rock dropped in still water, and your face ripples outward in surprise, annoyance—then settles back into calm remembrance of who you are, who am I. Hey. You tell me how you wish we were closer, but really the gap between us is necessary (to get the full effect, you say). I am just glad that there is a signal and communication is possible—really we hadn’t planned for alternatives. Look below your feet, you tell me, or under my feet—these layers we’re standing were once moving. I explain that the layers, or strata, are constantly shifting, being pushed lower and lower because of erosion, continental drift, water and wind-motion. I see you take the phone away from your ear, maybe because I was talking too loudly or maybe because you are bored. When you bring the phone back I can tell that you are excited because you are looking directly across at me like the time I held your hand in the pool of light. Though I cannot see your eyes I know that they are burning. Look, you say, these are slices of motion, paintings of velocity. You tell me you need to feel it, though—become caught up in the wind’s dealings, its hatred of roots. You say that you will speed time, godspeed or lightspeed, and witness strata-drift. You say that the wind is really Aeolus’ breath, his prayers to Zeus and above. Aeolus is trying harder than anyone to break free, you say—and not only break himself free, but the entire world, every rooted thing. I can’t lose you to the wind, I plead. Even Odysseus makes it home.

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I have coaxed you down and away from the precipice of the shifting canyons and you will thank me later. We are in bed, in darkness, and I am grateful that the world is seemingly still. In the stillness there is no motion to whisk you away. We talk about here we will be, years

from now, and you trace the ridges of my bones—starting at the tip of my knuckles, wandering up my roadway-arm and over the ridge of my shoulder. You tell me to lie on my stomach and you tick down my spine, telling me you saw a similar structure in the strata of the canyons. I feel you knuckle my tailbone and push, laughing and imagining that you are Odysseus at the prow of his ship, my body. I allow this vision, because I know that in the darkness of the room we cannot go anywhere that we cannot see. Eventually you lie down on top of my back and I am grateful, thinking I am the crewmember that has finally tied Odysseus to the mast—held him back from the sirens’ cries. In sleep we can drift as continents without the fear of crashing into others, and wind can carve deep lines in your face that will be erased in the morning.

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It is summer and we are driving to the coast. At the gas station you ask me if you can drive, through the stretch of desert at least, Route 50. We still have a long way to go and I knew this was coming. I hand you the keys and pray for safe passage. In the middle of the desert I cannot help but feel that we are lost in the Aegean, the same sun—formidable and lonely—beating down on us. I think that we are safe because you have yet to argue with the speed limit signs, so I drift off to sleep or out to sea. In my dream I am floating on driftwood, wave-motion, and the wind smells like sand. I hear the wind begin to shriek and I become scared because I realize that it is not the wind but Odysseus’ siren. I thrash on the waves and look wildly for where I left the boat and you. I awake to the same shrieking and realize that my dream was a dream but also it was not, for your foot is lead and your eyes are brighter than the sun. I am afraid to touch you because your body is convective and I know that I will burn like Icarus. I knew that this would happen, and I am nauseous or seasick as I glance at the speedometer. You can hardly speak because your teeth are chattering but you tell me that we are almost at escape velocity and you finally understand the beauty of motion. You scream louder than the wind, ecstatic and manic, and ask where the fucking canyons are. Your eyes dilate and become deep and wide as a black hole or the bottom of the sea. I know you know this, know that you plan to devour time—beating it to the finish. I sit quietly, thankful, for once, that we are in the middle of nowhere, drifting. Soon we will run out of gas, I think. Soon we will, and we do. You pull the car over to the side of the road and let the engine sputter off. You calm down and turn to me: there is nothing more beautiful than motion, you tell me—you say I told you this. You begin to cry, and lay your head in my lap. I am foolish as Aeolus, for giving you the wind.

A Lecture for Daughters

Get on a train.
Sit next to a junkie.
Wonder where he was last night? But
Refuse to eat the Wonder bread (and not for the reasons they tell you you shouldn’t)
Don’t hitchhike on the soul of another (instead, thumb your way to Whynot, North Carolina)
Steal the purse, without having a wallet.
Give birth to the brother you never had.
Share him with the aunt you fail to visit.
Be an intractable fuck, in the erstwhile game.
Make orphans of your damsels.
Force them to work.
Grieve the death of each Beatle, no matter how late it is.

ON FINDING A KENTUCKY ARROWHEAD

Flint remains of mortal suns
that turned themselves to stone,

kin to the hands that struck you
and to midnight’s shooting stars.

The farmer plows this field
as Witten tunes his math.

For years I’ve turned his rows
with knotted oak tobacco sticks.

Hunter-gatherers we are, atoms
of chance, of coded memory.

In my hand at last, time’s arrow
smaller than newborn field mice.

ABSTRACTIONS

*Man is reduced to a condition of perplexity by confusing
the knowledge that he can prove with the convictions by which he lives.*
—Karl Jaspers

I gently ease my thumb underneath,
then I take my index finger and press the page between them
pushing it aside in a hush.
Abstract words enter my head, but are there words that exist
without a corresponding thought? Words I never understood
mean nearly nothing, but context provides
some sort of grounding, an invisible gravity to gather
the collapsing letters and expanding sounds, even if it’s nothing more
than ink and din to the eye and ear. Because,
the existence of nothing is a paradox, an impossibility,
and yet, the nearness of the beginning yields to the openness
of the thing, the essence of the being, the freedom in thought:
vowels forged by letters and sparks in darkness resemble stars
if you blink fast enough.
The word echoes into the void, and I listen to cosmic static.
Some say they’re just gamma rays from the very first sound, the first word.
I stare at the constellation of words before me
as if looking into the sky and reading the lines of my palm.

Looking Deeply into the Darkness

“Tiefer, tiefer, irgendwo in der tiefe gibt es ein licht.”
~Kate Bush

Such a foggy area
Presuming we know what lies beyond
The within.
If we could capture it in a mirror,
We’d surely possess an explosion
Of color and movement
And poems
That prattle on and on
About the moon and the stars
And what lies beyond.

There’s a spot on our forehead—
Not a freckle or a mole
Or even a pimple.
It’s a thought,
An etiology,
A moment in time
That determines who we are
And where we will be
When the Universe rounds the bend.
We comb our hair in bangs,
Wear big hats,
And avoid looking into mirrors—
Or even water—
To pretend it doesn’t exist,
To pretend the Universe will continue
Outward

Meanwhile,
From inside the glass,
From the black spaces between the moons and stars,
From the echoes that we call myth,
A poem sings
Unheeded songs
About the brilliant darkness
Within.

FOLLOWING LOSS

They say the trick
is to be “in the moment.”

But even of the *now*
nothing remains
but memory

already fading
and unreliable.

My past is a pile
of losses:

parents, pets, childhood,
a hometown, ideals
and god.

I make claims
to “my this” and “my that”
though born to a count down

Who will one day
triage through my hoards
of seashells, books, tapes,

photographs of, to them, strangers
journals that tell the truth
into trash or sellables?

Who will snicker over drawers
of false hair pieces, shoe
odor powder, a latex phallus?

Last night’s symphony,
the blurred faces of our dead,

the way the wind slid
through the dogwoods of youth
are what we may possess

just as the sun possesses
the window glass
it shines through.

the moving spirit: for yuan hongqi

the bird is flying
so high in the sky, its wings
become as blue as heaven
its belly grey
as a cloud

the blue bird
vanishes soon into heaven
but the grey forgets
it is part

of a presence
embedded in the scene

then nothing could occupy
that space, and
remain there forever

Bodies in Space

Ennui forced my foot to fall asleep as I dangled it listlessly over the rung of my desk while Mrs. Nickel outlined the brightest constellations in the Northern Hemisphere. With the point of my red plastic protractor, I edged the year faster and faster forward, forcing my paper star chart to turn round on itself like an ice skater disappearing within her pirouette. If I could, I would have summoned a religious rapture in tracing the same the figures in the cosmos as had the Native Americans, the Greeks, the Abyssinians. But these stories in the stars raised neither questions nor answers for me. These heavenly bodies, it seemed, had no impact on my own.

For my ninth birthday, my dad gave me a telescope long as my forearm, black and smudged with the previous owner’s fingerprints. A few months later, Mrs. Nickel turned her attention from the stars to our nether regions, and I learned the basic mechanics of menstruation. During the film, I became nauseous and fled the dark heat of our classroom for the nurse’s office, which I left half an hour later preserving a self-formed belief that certain women escaped the evils of menstruation altogether, just like I had the video’s climax. Implicit within this belief was the conviction that I would be one of them. For the thought of discerning the lives of Hellenic gods in the stars and expelling blood through my vagina were equally impossible, arcane notions.

To me, constellations were nothing more than an astral play of paint by numbers and over-wrought ones at that. At one point, as a way of stimulating my own interest, I had tried to invent my own constellations, much like I had earlier tried to invent my own holidays, but I soon realized the futility of such a game when no one else was playing along. How did the Greeks convince everyone to buy into these bizarrely bawdy, internecine tales? I obediently learned to spot Orion’s belt and the big and little dippers, but I left it at that, letting the mythology of the stars die out inside me like a red dwarf.

Stories of gods and goddesses’ sexual exploits were, after all, unnecessarily dense and thorny pathways to explain illuminating explosions of light. All in all, I preferred simple explanations, the ones provided by the Catholic theology of which I was a young and willing indoctrinaire. I liked knowing God had created the things of this world in a certain order and how I might stay

on his good side. I also liked presuming he would grant me special favors if I asked them, including exempting me from a monthly menstrual period and letting me die at the same moment as my mother. I essentially didn't understand the need for pagan embroidery when things were already so straightforward.

As a sophomore in high school Latin class, I read the part of Psyche while we studied this myth from the Metamorphoses. Proud of my poetic cadence and performative voice modulation, I was distinctly disappointed by my Eros, a boy with a premature potbelly and whose lips crusted over at the corners. And as far as I could tell, the story was a simple tale of trust, nothing more despite its prototypical tergiversation. It was a protean morality tale, nothing more.

If Psyche would only have trusted her lover and not carried a candle into his chamber when he had forbidden her to see him, all would have been well. Aphrodite would never have visited so many impossible tasks upon her. She would never have suffered. And yet, beyond all probability, Psyche survived; through inexplicable instances of grace, she answered all Aphrodite's challenges, and Eros, to his credit, forgave her. Unheard of in the all-too-human labyrinthine dramas descending from Olympus, Psyche and Eros' story ended happily. Yet it was not a fairy tale. And it was not, as I liked to assume, about trust, because had she simply trusted as she was told, Psyche would never have known that she was sleeping with a god. And to remain in ignorance of such a fact would have been the greater crime.

Last weekend, my husband and I attended a performance of the Metamorphoses, where Eros and Psyche was the last of the transformative myths to be staged inside the senescent firehouse converted into a theatre. Eros, naked as the day he was born if no longer a babe, waded through a shallow pool blanketing the center of the stage and lay down beside a sleeping Psyche on a red velveteen raft. He was blindfolded, decadently winged, and did not speak. The entire story was narrated in a series of questions and answers by a man and a woman sitting, legs crossed like children, at opposite sides of the pool. I also knew from the playbill that a nude scene was in the works, and I was prepared to vault out the theatre and into the reception area in a riotous, explosive guffaw.

But it wasn't so. Eros stood before me an otherworldly, quieting presence who froze me, strangely warmly, into my seat. When the woman asked the man why Eros was blind, he said

that many people thought it was because love is supposed to be blind but that is in fact a myth. Eros is not blind; it is we who are blind to his power, and so he wears a blindfold to confirm our belief. In the previous scene, the actor now playing Eros had played the part of Icarus, brash, intoxicated with his own seeming sense of agency, and attired in abrasively yellow pants. Physically unprepossessing, he appeared short and slightly stocky in comparison with the man playing Apollo at stage left. But now, eyes hidden behind a black band of cloth, this same man's body, softly vibrating in the lambency of its own exposure, assumed a silent power as he stepped through the shallow pool.

And yet he did not want to be seen, by Psyche, his love. He did not want his full beauty available for her eye's greedy consumption.

We left the theatre to walk home on an exceptionally warm November night. I was cautiously wearing a coat, but many people were not. Women in short skirts, tight sweaters, and stilettos were attracting the intended amount of attention from male onlookers in sharply upturned collars. Tired from a lingering cold, I walked a few paces behind my husband as we negotiated our way through the crowds flanking the bars and steakhouses like undulating arms of coral. Stepping off the sidewalk to make way for an imposing block of revelers, I nearly collided with a woman towering five inches above me and making her way through the crowd like a sphinx, majestic, obsidian, and all but unclothed as Eros herself.

I saw my husband turn his head to look back at her. As I watched his eyes follow her gleaming nude thighs halfway down the street, I could hardly help from doing the same and yet I felt, with all the shame of a woman who had had her period every month for 17 years in spite of her prayers to the contrary, invisible, as if my blood weren't in fact ready to empty itself outward, in a shock of racy scarlet liquidity, at the single slice of a knife. I felt myself to be a 16-year-old Psyche again, all soul all but disembodied, my voice expertly modulated but my body almost irrelevant in the face of this decadent pageantry of female flesh.

At that moment, I felt exactly the opposite urge as I had when first learning of the lunar pull upon my own body, this foreign planet's ability to make me bleed. I no longer wanted to escape my body and its porous containment of incarnadine fluids; I wanted to participate fully in its

porous containment of incarnadine fluids; I wanted its unstoppable outpouring of unsavory juices to matter, to plant me deeper inside this soil and to be blackened by it, utterly. I saw, I think for the first time, in the face of a Nubian goddess dressed to kill, why Psyche needed to see Cupid with her own eyes. I saw that trust was not enough for anyone; love needed a witness of its own physicality. I saw, with unprecedented clarity, that a body that bled with the orbit of the moon was not something to loathe but an expression of love on a cosmic scale.

And amid the bright pall of the city lights, I spied a single far-off star, one of an immeasurable infinity, no brighter than the street lamp reflecting off the scuffed toe of my boot. In silent astonishment, I witnessed, like the star itself, nothing but luminous bodies in space. I went home, took off my clothes, stepped in front of the mirror, and saw, for a moment, that I was one of them.

Contributor Notes:

Claudio Apolinar is a writer from the Dominican Republic. His story explores the metaphor behind the wasteland of the Salvador Dali painting.

Bill Barone currently lives in northeastern Ohio with his wife. He earned his B.A. in English from Penn State and his M.A. in Creative Writing from Miami University of Ohio. For the better part of the last two decades he has taught as an adjunct at several colleges and universities while simultaneously engaged in less noble pecuniary and corporate activities. He has recently embraced a more artistic and academic lifestyle, teaching online English classes in seclusion that is borderline Dickinsonian. He purchases gasoline infrequently.

Barbara Beckers is has majored in English at the University of Amsterdam and is currently doing her PhD at Maastricht University. She has won several national and local poetry prizes with her poetry since 1998.

George Bishop is the author of five chapbooks and his new full length collection of poems “Expecting Delays” has been released by FutureCycle Press. Recent work has appeared in New Plains Review and Naugatuck River Review. Forthcoming poems will be featured in Cold Mountain Review and Innisfree Poetry Journal. Bishop lives and writes in St. Cloud, Florida.

Jennifer Cahill has a Masters of Science in Administrative Studies from Boston College. She has taken several writing classes at both Gotham Writers Workshop and the Writers Studio, both based in New York. Jennifer has published a chapbook with Puddinghouse Publications, and has another manuscript in the works. She lives in a small town in Massachusetts.

Robert Paul Cesaretti has published short fiction in Plain Brown Wrapper and poems in various places. He is the founding editor of Ginosko Literary Journal, <http://GinoskoLiteraryJournal.com/>. He is a native of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Nikki Clement This work of micro fiction is part of a larger series that speculates on urban experience.

Mike Cole has been publishing his writing sporadically for more than 40 years. He has had his poems published in Antioch Review, Laurel Review, Beyond Baroque, Midland Review, Slow Dancer (UK), In the Grove, and other magazines, and in the anthology Highway 99 published by Heyday Press in Berkeley California.

David Cowen is a trial attorney by trade as well as a published poet. He is author of a volume of poetry entitled Sixth and Adams (2001). His poems have been published in various hard copy and online journals for the past many years including those published by George Mason University, Stephen F. Austin University, Sam Houston State University and many privately published journals as well. His poetry was featured in the Canadian Broadcasting Company’s Radio radio journal “Outfront” in a 2005 tribute on 9/11. In April of 2012, Thisibelieve.org published his essay in its collection “On Motherhood” currently available in bookstores. Also, three short scholarly articles on the subject of zombie films written by David will appear in June Pulliam’s “The Encyclopedia of the Zombie: The Walking Dead in Popular Culture and Myth” to be published later this year by ABC CLIO publishing. In 2012, CineAction Magazine, Canada’s leading film journal, published his essay review of Danel Olson’s The Exorcist: Studies in the Horror Film published earlier this year, also by Centipede Press. PS Press will be including his short story “The Goth Thing” in its 5th Volume of its acclaimed Exotic Gothic series scheduled to be published in 2013. He is also the Vice President of the Gulf Coast Poetry Society and a member of the Texas Poetry Society, Science Fiction Poetry Society, and a past and current member and participant in the Austin International Poetry Contest and the World Fantasy Convention.

J. P. Christiansen adds -*The writer is Danish, the poet isn’t. The writer resides in America, the poet doesn’t. The writer is of this place, then is of that place, everywhere looking for the poet.*

Tobin Fraley was Born 1951 in Santa Barbara, CA. First ten years in Seattle, WA, next twenty-six in Berkeley, then New York City for six, KC, MO for five, moved to Long Grove in 1999. Author of three books on the history of carousels, one children’s book and a photographic and written exploration of the Reed-Turner Woodland Nature Preserve in Long Grove, Illinois titled 36 Acres. President and founder of the Long Grove Arts & Music Council, gallery owner in Long Grove, member of the Barrington Writers Workshop, photography teacher at Chicago Botanic Gardens and product designer. First published poem was last month in the Journal of Modern Poetry.

Karin L. Frank poems have been published or are forthcoming in the Rockhurst Review, Taj Mahal Review, I-70 Review, Mid-America Poetry Review, Little Balkans Review, Coal City Review, Kansas City Voices, Asimov’s, Tales of the Talisman and Dreams and Nightmares and the anthologies, Cost of Freedom, Storm Country and Free Wheeling. In April, 2012, her first book of poems entitled: A Meeting of Minds was released. Except for the illustrations, it is entirely a work of speculative poetry. Her prose has been published or is forthcoming in Kansas

City Voices, Chicken Soup, the Shaker of Margaritas anthologies, and through Pentaless, with a simultaneous release in a Swedish journal. Her twitterku - twaiku, twenryu and twanka – can be read daily @KLFrank1 and she tells the tale of an abused child and her dog, (through the dog's eyes) on her blog at wolfweyr.com.

Brad Garber has published poetry in Cream City Review, Alchemy, Fireweed, “gape seed” (an anthology published by Uphook Press), Front Range Review, theNewerYork Press, Taekwondo Times, Ray's Road Review, Flowers & Vortexes (Promise of Light), Emerge Literary Journal, Generation Press, Penduline Press, Dead Flowers: A Poetry Rag, New Verse News, The Whirlwind Review, Gambling the Aisle, Dark Matter Journal, Sundog Lit, Diversion Press, Unshod Quills and Mercury. Nominee: 2013 Pushcart Prize for poem, “Where We May Be Found.” His essays have been published in Brainstorm NW, Naturally magazine and N, The Magazine of Naturalist Living. He has also published erotica in Oysters & Chocolate, Clean Sheets and Mind-FuckFiction.

Patricia George has taught public school in Colorado and in California. She has worked also with home study students. She has a B.A. and teaching credential from Fresno State University in Fresno, California, and post graduate course work in music and graphic arts from Colorado State University in Ft. Collins, Colorado, and San Diego State University in San Diego, California.

Susan Gundlach has been teaching and writing forever. She has published articles on topics ranging from family history and puppetry, to the Great Wall of China and the Nile River. Her poems have appeared most recently in the anthology A Light Breakfast, and in the cement walkway of the Evanston Public Library! Her work has also appeared in The Best of Vine Leaves 2012 and A Midnight Snack, and some children's poems are upcoming in Cricket magazine.

Glenn Halak started writing and painting very early, inspired by his great-grandmother's poetry. From 2011 to 2012 he was translating German poets, Celan, Trakl and Anne Duden's sequence of poems, Rockslide. He states, “What they do with language allows me encouragement for what I like to do.” A sequence of his poems, Literary Fictions, came after the translation period last summer. He has had a book of poems published by an online publisher, writersweb-press, back in 1998 and has had poems published over the years. Many of his paintings, three children's books, some plays produced and lately two one-acts published, some short fiction as well, are out in the world.

Daniel Hudon, originally from Canada, lives in Boston where he is presently living the adjunct life. He is the author of The Bluffer's Guide to the Cosmos (Oval Books, UK) and a chapbook, Evidence for Rainfall (Pen and Anvil Press). Some of his writing links can be found at people.bu.edu/hudon.

Naomi Perez Jones is a writer from South Wales (UK). This story is one from a collection of over twenty-five (unpublished) and the first that she has sent out. We are pleased to be the first publication to showcase her work. She is also working on a novel.

Lori Lamothe has published poems in Alaska Quarterly Review, Fogged Clarity, Psychic Meatloaf, Seattle Review, Third Coast, The Nervous Breakdown and other magazines. She is a mentor for the Afghan Women's Writing Project and lives in New England. She is not a scientist, but does have an avid interest in the workings of the natural world.

Eleanor Lerman is the author of five collections of poetry, along with a collection of short stories and a novel, Janet Planet, published in 2011 and based on the life of Carlos Castaneda. More information about her work can be found on her web site, www.eleanorlerman.com. The poem included in this issue of Dark Matter will be included in her next collection, to be published by Mayapple Press.

Paul Lomax is currently enrolled as a doctoral student in Education. One who more often than not opens with P-Q4, he writes more poetry than fiction, reads more fiction than poetry, and holds dear the notion simplicity is the greatest panacea for what ails the self. His poetry is published in Pank Magazine, Postpoetry Magazine, Ars Medica, Tryst, and the Blue Fifth Review.

Kathy Mahdoubi is an internationally published science writer, harpist, painter, and poet from Anchorage Alaska, currently living in Houston, TX. Before arriving in Houston she began developing her craft in Seattle 14 years ago with a focus on non-fiction, poetry and prose. She studied comparative French literature in Paris, France, in 2005 and graduated with cum laude baccalaureate honors in 2006 from the University of Washington's editorial journalism program. She moved to New York City in 2008 and began her science writing career, working with some of the world's top research scientists and physicians. Currently Kathy specializes in breakthroughs in molecular imaging, neuroscience and cancer research. Her work has been published in several publications, including Imaging Life, Molecular Imaging Insight, and The Seattle Times. Kathy's poetic voice is inspired by her upbringing in nature, her work in the sciences, as well as

a love of literature and art and her aim to understand the meaning and process of things. Kathy's poetry has been featured throughout Houston, including the Art Institute's monthly Border's reading, the Hardy Nance Gallery, ThoughtCrime Poetry Showcase, and she has now been featured two years in a row for the Word Around Town poetry tour. In 2011 Kathy Fay published a chapbook titled "The Molting of the Great Southern Brood," named after a species of cicada that emerged that summer after developing underground for 13 years.

Lindsey McQuiston is an undergraduate student currently enrolled at Penn State University. She is studying horticulture but has a very strong interest in writing.

Kael Moffat is currently an MLS student at Emporia State University, but has earned degrees in English from BYU and Oklahoma State University. He has had work published in Literature and Belief, Ellipsis, Platte Valley Review, Weber Studies, and other journals. He lives in Emporia, KS with his wife and four children.

Brenda Ordonez is a published writer of poetry and nonfiction and a former senior editor and writer in the health care field. She has a B.A. in English from the University of California, Berkeley.

Fani Papageorgiou's book "When You Said No, Did You Mean Never?" (Shearsman Press, UK, 2013) won the Hong Kong Poetry Prize, judged by Ha Jin. Her second book, Dolores Park, will be published in the US in 2014.

Dave Petraglia is a writer, web and graphics designer, and photographer. His work has appeared in Popular Science, Popular Mechanics, Better Homes & Gardens, and New Shelter.

Sarah Rehfeldt is a writer, photographer, and artist from western Washington. Her work has appeared in Presence Journal, Border Crossing; Stone Voices; Dappled Things; and Windhover. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her first book of poetry is "Somewhere South of Pegasus," a collection of image poems. It can be purchased from her photography web pages at: www.pbase.com/candanceski.

Samantha Seto is a writer. She writes lots of poetry and aspires to take beautiful photography. Samantha has been published in various anthologies including Ceremony, The Screech Owl, Overpass Books, Blue Hour, Carcinogenic Poetry, Soul Fountain, Ygdrasil, and Black Magno

lias Journal. Since everyone inspires her in some way, she always takes to heart every word. Samantha studies creative writing and is a third prize poet of the Whispering Prairie Press.

Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb's poetry has appeared in Spectrum, Spillway Magazine, Terrain. org: A Journal of the Built and Natural Environments, Pedestal Magazine, The Blueline Anthology (Syracuse University Press), Science Poetry (a Canadian anthology edited by Neil McAlister), The Fine Line, Wilderness House Literary Review, Entelechy: Mind & Culture, Jelly Bucket, Concho River Review, Midwest Quarterly, Amarillo Bay, Red River Review, RiverSedge, and other journals, with work forthcoming in the anthology 200 New Mexico Poems (tentatively scheduled for publication by University of New Mexico Press). Her poem, "Molts," was recently nominated for a Pushcart prize by Poydras Review. She holds an interdisciplinary MA from Prescott College and is co-founder of Native West Press--a 501(c)(3) nonprofit natural history press.

Jean Sotos is a Chicago based lover of poetry, published recently in After Hours Press.

Henry Spottswood was born 1940 in Mobile, AL. He attended Georgia Tech. Employment later included family manufacturing business and management faculty at Western Kentucky University. He has worked in addictions since 1982. Powerful impetus to interest in astronomy came from childhood fascination with the Milky Way in 1940s, years before electricity came to the old family homestead in Mississippi.

Phillip Spotswood is a recent graduate of the University of Alabama. His work has appeared in Outrageous Fortune, and the upcoming Games issue of SunDog Lit. He is addicted to running in the dark, and writes to help illuminate the dark reaches of theoretical sciences. In Lorenz, far from the Straits of Messina, the theory of strange attractors is applied to a relationship--what pulls our thoughts and actions, and what unknown gravities weigh us down. His story in this issue of Dark Matter explores the role of strange attractors and their effects on human lives.

Jonathan Stone has previously been published in a few other journals including Ship of Fools, Chanterelle's Notebook, and Sanskrit.

An East Coast native, **M.B. Vigil** teaches 8th-grade literature to at-risk urban teens in the American Southwest. His affection for classical literature, 80s alternative music, and a general Bohemian aesthetic inspires much of his work. Having recently come out to friends and family as

a zombie culture enthusiast, he has vowed to free the zombie from its hackneyed reputation as savage consumer of human flesh. Keep an eye out for his anti-Twilight zombie series sometime in the near future

Sarah Brown Weitzman, a Pushcart nominee in 2012, has had work in numerous journals and anthologies including THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, AMERICAN WRITING, POTO-MAC REVIEW, ART TIMES, THE BELLINGHAM REVIEW, M.I.T.RUNE, RATTLE and SLANT, etc. Her second chapbook, THE FORBIDDEN was published by Pudding House in 2004 followed in 2005 by NEVER FAR FROM FLESH, a full-length volume of poetry (Pure Heart/Main Street Rag). She received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in 1984. Her latest book, HERMAN AND THE ICE WITCH, a children’s novel, was published in 2011 by Main Street Rag A former New York academic, Sarah Brown Weitzman is retired and lives in Florida.

Melissa Wiley is a freelance writer and editor. She lives in Chicago and her work has appeared in Outside In Literary & Travel Magazine, the museum of americana, Rougarou, bioStories, Heavy Feather Review, and Niche Literary Magazine.

Changming Yuan is a 4-time Pushcart nominee and author of Allen Qing. Yuan, holds a PhD in English and works as a private tutor in Vancouver, where he edits Poetry Pacific atpoetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Yuan’s poetry appears in 649 literary publications across 25 countries, including Asia Literary Review, Barrow Street, Best Canadian Poetry, BestNewPoemsOnline, LiNQ, London Magazine, Poetry Kanto, Paris/Atlantic, Poetry Salzburg, SAND and Two Thirds North. Poetry submissions welcome at yuans@shaw.ca.