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Stars Collaged of Gases (Or, We Are Not Lonely Anymore)

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STARS COLLAGED OF GASES (OR, WE ARE NOT LONELY ANYMORE)

by

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ABSTRACT

This work seeks to reconcile a variety of epistemological perspectives. Through six distinct sections, the poems in this book consider personal experience, science, poetics, and more. The book seeks to arrive at a place where uncertainty offers equal if not greater value than certainty in epistemological terms.
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CHAPTER 1 : [IN WANT OF AN IMAGE]

In want of an image

I am trying to reconcile my want of an image

with my insistence on only that

which is immaterial and wind up oscillating

between it’s time for breakfast and the world

is coming apart at the seams. Yes,

the asparagus stalks still shoot up every spring

but all that remains of them is their taste

and their magnificent green. I think

my real fear is that the brain is not a tool

for obtaining knowledge but for actively

misunderstanding it as in the cartoon

where Wile E walks off the edge of a cliff

and doesn’t fall until he looks down

and this is me looking down. Sometimes

I miss the days when cars used to speak to us.

Sometimes it seems there are just too many clues

and it takes until we assemble everything to realize

we should have been doing the opposite.

The clouds reincarnate themselves,
but always nimbus, cirrus, cumulus, stratus.

What I mean is that maybe knowledge
is like zero, useful so long as we pretend
it’s something that it’s not. Like how the word soul
sort of bums me out, but still is necessary
to explain this itch I have to pound
everything so thin it cannot be understood
in a three dimensional world. When did we start
to confuse truth with honesty? When did the real
become a cloud that cloaks the really real? Finally
we can zoom in and see the smallest molecules
of meaning, and I for one want only to marvel at the gaps
between them. The door is ajar, says the soft
mechanical voice and I close it without thinking.

At the end of the story is the promise of another story
I always have the same issue at the start
as at the end: it is impossible to be lost here;
and I say things like the concept of lost
is a prerequisite to the concept of found,
knowing full well I’ve had pizza delivered
three times this week. I understand pleasure
is a funnel and a funnel requires two openings.
I understand comfort is a bushel of pear.
It is easy to mistake the song of crickets for rain
and easier still to think we’re drowning,
but most often I simply want to go in whatever
direction I happen to be looking. Some maps
contain deliberate errors as a sort of signature
and this is how I try to sign everything. A fault
drawn through the center of town. Fingers seek
the thinnest part of the membrane in order
to break through, but sound also curves
around the ear. The way the brain appears
to operate under the same principles
as storytelling. For years I took comfort
in the laws of entropy, until it was explained to me
that chaos is endlessly predictable. Some mornings
I wake up and remove all the letters from my name.
Then I make breakfast. We’re hard-wired
to see causality in everything: the child
begging why, but the mountain must be
arrived at in order to understand it never existed
in the first place. But there I go confusing
meaninglessness and immortality again.
In water stones grow smoother as they age.
Nothing else in life works this way.
Cartographies of time

It was the little house you built. The coal black trax beside the stream. A rock cracked along it. In some ways light is more invisible than dark but I can see this lightness clearly, like the space left behind after the window opens and absence lets the world inside. And what difference is the window broken? The little planks clotted up with rot? The last plank dropped loose from its own withered weight. It isn’t that there aren’t laughs left or that time isn’t constantly cycling back on itself or that clouds don’t still sometimes look like barn animals or that smoke doesn’t still sometimes look like clouds. The planks built themselves up with moss. Sometimes it’s all we can manage that something be left behind.

Instructions for letting your pupils dilate

At one point the rain could be depended on for the occasional glimmer of solitude, before the concept of lakes and rivers, before we placed so much importance on clouds. Consider this: a balloon doesn’t always pop, most often it just sort of shrivels, and what then of the birds living inside it, their horizons smaller but endlessly more malleable. All day I have been trying to wrap my head around the idea of a singularity. I am at the point where I define it as a thing that’s opposite is itself. I am at the point where my only example is infinity,
but I am not yet at the point where I realize
infinity is a quality, not a quantity. Inside
the refrigerator, the orange juice shares its shape
with all the other elements of my imagination.
The more literate among us may recognize this
as narcissism, but the rest of us know it
is just another way of keeping our heads
above water. If the universe eventually starts
to contract, as some say it will, then the future
is also its own opposite, as past and present merge
into it. I am at the point where the landscape
is littered with facts. Even the trees here appear
to be them. But this is just the residue
of algebra on my fingers, just as that is salsa
on my shirt. I can never seem to satiate my hunger
without making a mess of things, hence,
my turn to poetry. And are facts the enemy
of desire? No, of course not. Those are monsters.
But it isn’t always about the surprise, sometimes
it’s about learning to live in darkness.

**Cartographies of time**

I was not necessarily attracted to the cover--but still--it was the cover that attracted me--
but still--it was the idea of the cover that let me get to sleep that night that--but still--
calmed me or to say allowed a calm to claim me or to say--but still--I held myself unmoving because it required holding because calm can only be pursued aggressively because it was the idea of the cover not the idea of containment the idea of being surrounded the way the present is surrounded by future past not to say contained to be contained means the potential of being spared and the present is never spared between the covers never spared--but still--there between those branches a bird’s flutter hovers suspended by its surroundings until the night consumes it until being consumed is the only idea I have of it and the idea is what attracts me the knowledge that nothing is ever spared.

**Unless I create it (how do I know that it’s real)**

Since the world did not conform to our desire for instructions, we took to naming things.

We began with what we recognized: family, sky, forks and spoons, then moved on to recognition itself. When it started to rain, the grass curled upward like perfume. It mussed up my hair with its stark physicality. I found a stick that’s shape could only be defined as *good*.

What I’m trying to say has nothing to do with the way treetops look like paintbrushes, but is wholly tangential to that. Often, I find, I am chasing down tangents. (Tangent, from the Latin *tangens*, meaning “to touch, to taste, to partake of.”) When
we exhale, we release more particles than there are
total breaths taken in the world, which means
I am always breathing in a little bit of you.
Something tangential to erotic. Speaking of,
I find quantum theory erotic, everything
being so small and unpredictable, it re-wires
the real of the world. If I had to pick an image
it would probably be tracing constellations.
The only things I can say with certainty:
our agreed upon fabrications: It is October.
11 o’clock in the morning. I have somewhere to be.
The breeze bears down on me a rash of syntax
and I aim to construct from it a perfect
absence, a vacuum in which all of these things
can be lost inside. To dismantle a scene down
to its rudimentary forces: pulleys, levers, whips
and chains. But when I try to put it back together
there is always something left over that doesn’t fit.
That outside of its system, doesn’t even have a name.

**Cartographies of time**

You can call it a train if you want to, but we both know if it doesn’t blow black smoke it isn’t. It’s not that I prefer the past, but to move through this world means we must emit something dark. I knew a woman once whose legs were lost boys. She said she had
heartbreak in her knees and every step she took would ache. The cold solitude of night gives way to the bright solitude of day. She carried pens around and wrote on everything within reach: *In another lifetime, I am a mermaid.*

**Everything in miniature**

I got a job making fake ice cubes for a commercial prop company. All smooth and plastic polymer.

The boss says the public doesn’t want to witness melting on advertisements or TV shows. He says we’re sick of everyone airing their transformative experiences. Message received. In my free time, I build miniatures: tiny elevators, robotic sprinkler systems designed to irrigate bonsai trees, which I breed smaller and smaller until they balance on my thumb. In their branches, I stick taxidermied birds with wings like insects’, feathers as light as carbon aerogel. We understand that power comes from a proximity to absence, which is why the stars astonish us. If I hold it near enough my face, my hand can block out the entire night sky. Scientists agree, what makes us human is our tendency to see patterns even where they don’t exist. I build a new sky from graphite and plant resin, holding
it high in the air, trying to shake loose
tiny droplets of rain.

**It never rains in here**

The day had finally arrived and the exhibition
opened. We wandered its hallways, wondering
what they used to pin all these clouds to the walls,
not to mention the hawks swooping through them.
By now I am accustomed to the way my fingers feel
dissolving into cloud, the way that accidents
bind themselves up in intention so as to form this
gesture we call play. In other words, it never rains
in here. The ceiling never deepens into night
but there must be a moon somewhere, or else
where did all this gravity come from? This is not
an occasion for conversing with stars. After
the clouds, a room tuned in like a bicycle spoke,
rattling out a bridge. Just because it isn’t literal
doesn’t necessarily make it figurative. Sometimes,
*shit hit the fan* is our best way of laughing. A room
empty, save the memory of a river. It boils down
to this: the world looks nothing like how it looks.
There is no appropriate response.

**For all those years I spent collecting information on dust**
It doesn’t have to be lonely. At least not yet. Let it be lonely later. This was the night I considered transcendence; the night the boat straps holding my car doors shut snapped and everything, including me, opened. We can say this: ruin is a reminder of where we come from, but let’s admit we don’t understand the passage of time. You see, even space is filled with it. Dust, I mean. And its movements are essential in the formation of stars. Call it significance, insignificance. Cut flowers turning toward the sun. Call it violence, because it’s that too. We live in constant danger of becoming a single point of light, or spreading out like a wave. Look under the rug if all you need are answers, otherwise, lean in. A tangerine rolls out from under the couch, giving the whole scene a focal point. No matter how many times I change the angle, there is always a center that I am trying not to believe in. The divide between faith and knowledge is the difference between saying yes and saying yes. In our wake we leave tiny particles of skin cells that collect on everything. Call it love, love, take my hand. We are not safe and it is good.
CHAPTER 2: [OSCILLATIONS: AN ESSAY]

As a hawk flieth not high with one wing, even so a man reacheth not to excellence with one tongue.

-Roger Ascham

Sometimes it seems that every book in the library is about me. Each page torn or fingered yellow is me. But even the full page contains mostly blank space, like a wall rendered solid only by the movement of tiny particles. As with everything that matters, I am also tiny.

*

The laws of science are always also metaphoric laws. It is strange to think of metaphor this way. You might call it “observing the spirit of the law.” I prefer to think of it as: my mouth is full of birds.

*

The traditional diagram for intercommunication in the brain is mechanical. Neuron A sends a signal to neuron B, sends a signal to neuron C, and so on. As if knowledge can be packaged in a little box and sent upon its way. Recent vocabulary, however, argues that communication is built on oscillations. As if the brain is a string instrument and consciousness a song.

*

Recently, I have been buried in Anne Carson’s translations of Sappho. My favorite one
reads “thought / barefoot.” On the good days, I can read them both into existence.

*  

Trevor calls it the Fed-Ex system of language. As if words are little boxes of meaning, packed up and sent along their way. All you need to do is open the box and the meaning becomes clear.

*  

On the theory of translation, Paul Kussmaul calls the source text an “offer of information,” which the translator transforms into an “offer of information.” What changes is culture.

*  

The story goes that when Moses saw the burning bush, God told him to take off his shoes. His feet felt tiny against the ground.

*  

I asked her, once, why it took us so long to get together. Why, that is, she showed no spark of desire in the beginning. She said she felt no desire of her own until she saw mine. Like realizing you’re hungry only after you see food.

*  

Particle Physics proves the world acts differently if we look closely enough. That the laws of reality are dependent on the size of our magnifying glass. But also, the world acts different if we look at all. Vision, in other words, is oscillatory. In receiving information, we alter what we observe.

*
An oscillatory system of intercommunication in the brain argues for a change in metaphor. We are not machines. Neurons are not cogs, but individuals engaged in conversations. Consciousness is group consciousness. The brain is a social structure. The self: a unique culture.

* 

Recently, I have been buried in Heisenberg’s “Uncertainty Principle,” which argues that certain complementary characteristics cannot be known simultaneously. The classic example is that we can’t know both the momentum of an object and its location in the same instant. In other words, knowledge of one thing removes the potential to know another.

* 

Dan lent me Gyorgy Buzsaki’s book on brain oscillations. It’s fun. In one part, he turns to a discussion on complexity, arguing it is not the opposite point on a spectrum with simplicity, but the middle ground between order and chaos. I wonder how many children grow up dreaming of being a neuroscientist.

* 

Is Sappho’s poem indicating that thoughts are barefoot, or that barefoot is a thought? Or is this a unique thought? One that is barefoot.

* 

Order and chaos are simple; they have only one taste, one flavor. Complexity demands the reader oscillate between improvisation and resolution, the sky and the ground, the self and the many-headed god.

*
Although the Romans adopted many cultural characteristics from the Greeks, they rejected their notion that the elite should always go barefoot, believing, instead, that they could separate themselves from the ground.

* My own desires oscillate between sexual desire, and wanting to write down everything she says in a little blue journal and read it each night before bed.

* Science seeks to push through mystery and arrive at the clarity that lurks on the other side. I want to push through clarity and arrive at mystery.

* Jane is explaining Nietzsche to me. “Vision is a set of three metaphors,” she says. “First is the conversion of a sensory impulse into an image; second is the conversion of the image into a name; and third, but also simultaneously, is the conversion of the name into a concept.”

* In Particle Physics, an object can be in two places at the same time. I am still trying to understand the various ways in which this changes everything.

* If the “Uncertainty Principle” is true, and one knowledge limits another, then the logical inversion is also true: the lack of one knowledge potentiates another. Not knowing the location potentiates knowing the momentum. This makes me think of children and how they say things that seem surprisingly pithy, as if not understanding how the world works
potentiates another type of understanding; one we call wisdom. It is this potential that I am interested in.

*

If I could ever arrive at a place of pure mystery, pure confusion, pure ambiguity; it must therefore potentiate a new type of pure understanding.

*

But words cannot exist devoid of meaning. Only music can define an abstraction with perfect precision, without ever resorting to something concrete.

*

Today I was thinking about how smallness is associated with a feminine ideal, while largeness with a masculine one. I want to say this means particle physics is the most feminist of all the sciences, but that says more about me than anything else.

*

But everything I say says more about me than anything else. Each poem is always also titled: *In Estimation of a Self-Portrait.*

*

Susan Howe writes: “The double of an object is that I desire it.” This is the fourth metaphor of vision.

*

This morning the rain was so dark my eyes felt cold. I stood beside an open door smoking a cigarette. I like how Nietzsche ignores the object observed. As if meaning is a negotiation between the self and the self. The object does not take part in the negotiation, but potentiates it.
I’m thinking rain is a good metaphor for translation. A body of water changing its form in order to rise. The mingle of clouds. Eventually it comes together again, forming a new body of water. The shape, the depth, the location all change; but the concept of the body remains constant.

Or perhaps the poem is about contraries. Thought being mind; barefoot being body. Thought being the highest point; barefoot the lowest. Thought being internal; barefoot external. The self is always the middle ground between them.

Also, I read “barefoot” as something analogous to desire.

“What the Romantics expressed as the claim that imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty was the realization that a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change.” —Richard Rorty

But names are always metaphors. In naming an image, we take possession of it. The image is paralleled across cultures; the way in which we possess it is different.

Poetry is the process of un-naming the world. I want to possess everything. I want to possess nothing. *I thought both thoughts.*
Paul Auster calls translators “the shadow heroes of literature, the often forgotten instruments that make it possible for different cultures to talk to one another.” I like the image of a “shadow hero.” I want to mold it into something very tiny and insert it into the ear of my childhood self.

*

Oscillations are capable of occurring in two or more directions. As the potential reaches an arbitrarily large number, the result is a wave.

*

An emotion washes over us like a wave, we say. What we mean is that we desire to move in an infinite number of directions simultaneously.

*

Nicole Walker argues that we use metaphor in order to be inclusive; in order to bring more meaning in, instead of pushing meaning away. And Derrida responds we only know things by what they’re not. In this sense, metaphor is an act of unknowing a thing.

*

I feel uncomfortable putting Derrida in a poem. So in the poem, he has no feet. Strangely, he can walk without them, which might not be strangely, knowing what I do about Derrida. Jane told me a story today—which was really Plato’s Symposium—in which Socrates was schooled by a woman on love. And in such, he was schooled as well on Philosophy. Being a lover of wisdom is the mean between the wise and the ignorant, the woman said, and Socrates was astonished. But really, in the story, Socrates made the whole thing up, so he could win a bet, Jane said, with a bunch of frat boys. I haven’t read that much Plato, but it’s nice when someone tells you a story.
The laws of science are always also laws of metaphor. Which means that in proclaiming a truth, one must simultaneously unravel that truth. The way a wave is most recognizable when it breaks.

In college I took a Philosophy of Art class, in which we spent the semester talking about what it means to be “good art.” Inevitably, someone mentioned Bob Dylan. “He fucks everything up,” the professor explained. “Based on all of our theories, he is a failure.”

I have started to think of white space as the barefoot part of the page.

In Particle Physics, it is possible for an object to blink in and out of existence, but only when no one is watching. We all understand this. Children close their eyes to make a wish. Most of us try to keep them open.

Vision is the act of translating an “offer of information” for the unique culture that is the brain of the individual. It is desire that makes this translation possible.

If the goal is mystery, or the potential that arises out of mystery, do I need to know what that potential is in order to arrive there? Or do I need to not know? The birds in my mouth are wandering.
“The history of science is rich in the example of the fruitfulness of bringing two sets of techniques, two sets of ideas, developed in separate contexts for the pursuit of new truth, into touch with one another.” – Robert Oppenheimer. I think he means touch literally, that the idea is not entirely in the mind, but rather rises up from the feet, through the body.

*

Today I was thinking about how tiny organisms are constantly eating us. Then I thought, even this is a metaphor for desire.

*

Walter Benjamin said the role of the translator is to expose the failures of language, how language does not reveal truth. The way the drag queen fails at gender in order to expose the failure of all gender. I keep thinking about “thought / barefoot.” In the original Greek, it took up about a third of a page.

*

I am interested in the idea of the pursuit of failure.

*

Jane told me when I woke up this morning I smelled of onions. As if I had spent the night on my knees in the loose dirt of an onion field instead of here, caught between this mirror and this buzzing fly, searching for a form strong enough to order chaos.

*

If I could remove myself from my poetry, remove myself completely, what new “I” would be made possible?

*
What does it mean to say I am interested in potential? That my aim is not communication, but potentiation? There is still, I hope, meaning, but I can make no claim over it. The way the musician can make no claim over the dance you do, alone in your living room at nightfall.

* Jane is complaining that all the old philosophers equate desire with absence. That to want requires we don’t already have. “I want my blue eyes,” she says, closing them. “But what do you give back,” I ask.

* The verb to fail originates from the Latin fallere, which meant literally: without success, but figuratively: to deceive or trick. As if there is always some truth waiting on the other side of action and failure is one way of measuring the distance between us and it.

* I’ve often complained that science is obsessed with measurements and defines knowledge by it. I thought this wrong, but now I am starting to doubt myself. Perhaps everything either can be measured, or is, in itself, a unit of measurement. For example, today I was thinking about desire as a unit for measuring the distance between the self and the other.

* A love of failure is at once dependent on a fear of failure. Just as “here” can only be understood in terms of “there,” “I” in terms of “you.” Love is always also a haunting.

* Lyn Hejinian calls description a “process of thinking.” “One might say,” she writes, “that it is at once improvisational and purposive. It is motivated thus by simultaneous but
different logics, oscillating inferentially between induction and deduction.” In the margins I wrote “terms are really metaphors for terms.”

* 

When I read the notes I’ve written in the margins of books, I find I am mostly measuring the distance between what I think it means and what I wish it meant.

* 

In the original version of “Cinderella,” the wicked step-sisters sliced down their feet with a knife so as to fit inside the slipper the prince brought. But he noticed the blood climbing up their ankles, and turned away. I like the way the wickedness works, and how it seems to manifest. As if the mutilation of one’s feet is the gift the wicked can offer. Here is what I will give you, one step-sister says as she levels the knife against her smallest toe.

* 

Up until now I have assumed “thought” to be a noun, but it dawns on me it can be verb, haunting the poem with desire lost. Once, I thought of barefoot, it almost says. Its eyes are closed.

* 

In an old notebook I found written: “If I removed the bags / from under my eyes / what else would I lose?”

* 

But Sappho only exists in fragments. Words have been chipped away, leaving, in their wake, the white space of potential. When this happens to paintings, we restore them, but poetry is spared this misfortune. Ever since this thought occurred to me, I have been
carrying around an image of The Last Supper. Each of the original fragments chipped away and attached to separate canvases. Every room in a museum filled with them. I dream myself walking alone through this museum, seeing myself in each fragment. *My favorite one, I would say, is the little bit of skin that is either the arch of a foot or the crest of a forehead.*
CHAPTER 3 : [MULTIVERSE PHYSICS]

Multiverse Physics

Jane’s awake at six AM.

Fuck you, Jane.

I can hear her making coffee

in another universe.

If it’s true that every possible action occurs somewhere,

then somewhere, I must be nameless,

wandering through the world

without any conceptual self,

which means that I am always subject

and never object, the way that god is always subject.

The way that god exists as grammar

in the architectures of thought.

Jane, I say, calling her name across space,
building her a body with indefinite wings.

**Multiverse Physics**

I had a dream I was a helicopter

and Jane was Pennsylvania. I got all up

in her airspace, then the police

knocking at the door. I explained

to them all about the other

universes. In one of them, I said,

you aren’t even here, because I’m having

a different dream; this one

about a fountain. The brash pump and water

arching into air, then falling back: all tiny

splashes in a basin. In the dream,

I said, I’m there: reflected

in the arcing, the process, the earth’s quiet

insistence nothing rise forever.

**Multiverse Physics**
Blue jeans are a peculiar symbol
for class equality. All that kissing in darkness.

This is the universe where everybody knows
the poor are the best dancers,

but they refuse to dance for anyone
but each other. There are so many ways
to exert power. Jane holds her hands up
and covers both her eyes. I faint. Sometimes

I feel like I’m the dream that someone else
is dreaming. It’s comforting. A silo

the farmer fills with grain. The other day,
Jane asked, if I was on death row, what

my last meal would be. I answered blowfish.
She said I misunderstood the question.

**Multiverse Physics**

I have a hard time trusting people
who don’t drink coffee. Jane says
it’s because I consider myself the standard of normalcy, then she agrees with me.

There is a universe where yes means yes and no means no, but no one exists there.

The living demand life is more complex than that. I want to tell Jane

I love her her living, but instead a canary bursts from my throat and my joints become cinder. We build a fire and thaw fish for dinner, asking each other questions about our day. When I touch her she touches me back.

**Multiverse Physics**

And then there’s the universe where beauty is still enough, where the poet doesn’t need to plant a seed inside some stranger’s asshole
to see what new sight sprouts up from there.

The universe where Jane’s body
is not made from water plants. Where I can’t
prognosticate in the patterns of her speech.
The universe where there are no other universes,
where people see that is and isn’t aren’t
as mutually exclusive as we pretend they are here.

When she steps out of the shower
Jane reminds me of a freshly washed apple.

In this universe, the word erotic is the sweetest
possible way of explaining the cosmos.

**Multiverse Physics**

If the opposite of singular is plural
why isn’t the opposite of boat *boats*?

Sometimes I say one thing when I mean

*go shove it up your ass.* “In another universe…”
Jane begins, but she’s just making fun of me.

I know some things can’t even fit inside infinity.

Canaries, for example. We all have ex’s that make us think of ohs! The opposite of afterlife is life and in this universe we’ve traded places with ghosts. What do we know about darkness?

That we are always one mystery away from understanding? The light from the lamp collides with Jane’s body. Sometimes shadows are more secure than that which cast them.

**Multiverse Physics**

Men look unconventional with blond hair.

Fuck you, blond hair.

There is a universe where high heel shoes were never invented, so feminism was called humanism, and humanism was just the assumption, and global warming
never became an issue. A universe

where we all believe ourselves to be whales

and communicate only in song. Either

everything is real, or nothing is.

There is no in between. This anxious dream

of living. Jane is making coffee while I blabber on

about Einstein and Heisenberg. We all need

a contingency plan in case reality doesn’t pan out.
CHAPTER 4: [DISCUSSIONS WITH EINSTEIN]

the content of these

explorations

will not

be the design of

communication

but the involvement

in an opportunity

of motion

A glossary of phrases

The dream

is observed being. -- Geometry is a body in space-time. Mine pines for dimensions. Flaws&laws provide narration.
Fits description only. -- A surface, anything that absorbs; desire slouched around a box.

A system of arbitrary. -- Borrowed as a bout of green + please clean the lint traps. Truth is the suggestion of cohesion.

Time slows,

organizing everything
into forever. -- To be unchained is to set clocks to
anything. Refusing to be transformed; either in pursuit of sugar.

Lightning

strikes in systems. -- A paradox of conclusion. The evidence not stationary.

Observation relative to organization. Isn’t meant to follow and/or whistle.

Said-high or oceans. -- All that lovely is unanswered.

Supplemented by positions. -- A splash of ink and almost angered. Every fixed star
describes a circle.

Evidence uncut. -- Inside a center, a curve doesn’t climax. Suggestive rather than exhaustive. Expounded in gaps.

Qualia

1

A box, a type of bargain. An agreement is also a partition. Blame the container, the position. Contents may have shifted during repetition.

* The placement is grander, though not quite splendor. As if is seeing; imagine imagined.

* The box has ridges that double as edges. Content is not the message, a premise. Meaning is skittish.

* Is conscious is consciousness as a ripple on water as a bug lands on water is a ripple. Language travels though oscillations.

* A concept is a possession, a tension between the seen and the seeing. A dream is a state of being without biology. As if is also epistemology.

* 2

A dream lacks convention. It is for this reason that in a dream we cannot experience love. This is how we recognize it as a dream.
* 

In its arrangement of ridges the box makes ripples. A ripple is always traveling, an event too: a bargain struck between happened and was happening--simultaneity is unraveling.

* 

As in an oscillation--never reaches completion, there is no solution, no answer. The box both does and does not contain water.

**a suggestion of truth** : **a standard**

i-arrive to require i-climb to desire 

a cloud is said-high even as a stone 

we seek ourselves for expression 

is the curve along which the body moves 

the clock is the tick supplemented+promised 

nice dimensions with a will 

nothing must be erected in action 

plastic+dynamic cohesion is a tonic 

look at the ocean measure the center 

permissible-in-mechanics even a rational-being 

would get ideas trapped inside its head 

if it observed words long enough 

**self-expression** : **currents carry-us-away**

geometry+sensation a smart fly’s a stiff proposition 

omission is a question so’s a color 

genesis-of-a-rigid-body fits description only
a-surface a-cloud/system-of-light
i-imagine being watching from a train
an embankment not to say foundation
no-such-thing-as uncut-observation
i-say lightning strikes different timing
watching from-a-train from-an-embankment
time slows down both physics&feelings
(un)observable phenomenon i-am existing always
between/suspended a-truth/system-of-truths

Qualia

*  
1

There is nothing mysterious about vacuity. Imagine inside the box cannot contain water. The box does not contain water. Imagine a box. It is filled with water.

*  
The rhyme ties the tire iron in. The handle, a kind of lever an agreement will likely sever. Blame the container, the observation. Contents may have shifted during conversation.

*  
In the time that follows everything is lifted. Imagine the box. Imagine all sides of the box simultaneously. Do not deconstruct the box. In its limitations, imagination is real.

*  

Is consciousness can’t realize by number, the interaction between imagination and the conventional, destabilizing the measurable. Content is (is) impossible.

* 

2

Imagine inside the box has more sides than outside the box. This is how the box is happening.

* 

Is happening is an interaction, not a measurement; a situation. Is consciousness is oscillations; there is no completion. Most of the world isn’t happening.

* 

This is what is meant by the box. Inside is not an answer just as the solution is not water. Meaning is determined by the finger, not the color. Existence is (is) artificial.

**a geometry of conclusion : take me for a little turn**

everything has been explained or extinguished

let’s learn ourselves bodies+currents

changing+postulating no stationary-space-time

no unchained isn’t even in the kitchen

the dilemma is extra-ordinary

i-don’t-mean-anything-anymore as for existence

the only actual evidence our observations are

our understanding is we can set clocks to anything

this is relativity arbitrary-is-necessary

an organizing-agent a combination of cupboards
expressed in an abstract manner to hell with the universe

my i-exists in a system-of-arbitrary

an organization geometry dreams toward
CHAPTER 5: [IN WANT OF AN IMAGE]

As in the way that time,
regardless of the gaze
that determines if it slithers
or circles or some
other thing altogether,
demands both an arrival
and the rejection of arrival;
because if everything keeps
going always eventually going
doesn’t mean anything anymore.

On my lawn, which isn’t even
a lawn but a little patch
of half-grown grass—the ants
build their homes under it
while I marvel at the crescent
shaped piles of excavation
on the surface, knowing
that if pressed flat or spread
the home remains;
but also it doesn’t
because surface
is synonymous with arrival
or, at least, it feels that way
every time I touch anything.
Late nights the hours
fill a room like heat. Just another
on the long list of that
which I can feel but not touch.
Think of this as a love poem
and think of that as the part
you can’t touch
and the thought as the thing
you push up against
when you realize your body
is a surface and no matter
how many layers of skin
or blood or bone or brain
you peel or pluck away
it’s all always still surface. Sight
reveals only the taxonomy
of sight and besides,
the whole concept
demands an under, an inside:
a sheet tangled around
your sleeping. What I want
isn’t so much a soul
but more music, more memory.
Sometimes the desire
to dissect myself
becomes so pronounced
there’s nothing to do
but stare outward.
To see my reflection
in the burrow the ants build
underground. We act as if time
can be paused, so we can say
present and mean it, so we
can say surface and feel secure
in its static. I have heard it said
there’s no word for this,
but there’s no word
for anything. The ants could
burrow deeper but that doesn’t mean
they do, or, because I can’t know
it means they do and they don’t—
The cork pops clean of the wine bottle
but the wine is never poured.

The ants scurry with such disarming clarity
of purpose, like blood circulating
through a body. So much of who we are
is ethos: the privilege of coupling
but the door takes so much effort
to open, and besides, even if we do
pass through, we only arrive
outside, in some inauthentic moonlight
so pale we start to believe
in the invisible, as if all this absence
is somehow evidence that there is
no absence. Remember the old Greek Myth
where clarity and blindness
went hand in hand; this is also
what the Uncertainty Principle is about,
and also it’s the thought I had
when I bought the wrong flavor
of ice cream and it turned out
better than the flavor I meant to buy
and I realized that eventually
that has to happen because random
is the shortest distance between
the self and the unknown.

Think of this as one of those flavors.

Think of this as a poem about

stepping on an ant hill

and trying to rationalize a moment

of cruelty into pure theory.

All I want is to say yes to the world

and to understand it in that

pronouncement, but I can’t escape

this question of destination: does a map

create or destroy surface,

gesture toward or away

from the idea of arrival

because if there is no arrival

then it wasn’t cruelty

just as chaos isn’t cruelty

just as the fact that there is ice cream

in my beard seems somehow

to be evidence of love

if not mine, then yours,

if not yours, then mine

for the map I made inside my head

of every tunnel they’ve dug
and the reflection of myself
that exists within it.
And as for what I care
of knowledge, I guess
I question how the knowing
becomes known. I believe
in brushing the dust from the bowl,
but I also believe in the dust.
All I want is some image
that transcends surface; not
as a metaphor, but as a new way
of seeing, which is to say:
all I want is one moment
of not being human. I am still waiting
for the understanding that comes
from not understanding. The cork slips
back inside the wine bottle
but it’s too late, and although
we can claim the wine doesn’t
spoil, the only way to do that
is to say it is no longer wine.
The difference between who I am
and where I am is the shrug
of a shoulder I can’t bring myself
to shrug. So instead
here I go again, sprinting down
some hallway and into each room
I pass, circling some central
object ad nauseum,
believing my motion can come
to understand its static.
then it’s back to the hallway
and toward the next room.
So I suppose if I must make
a decision then I’ve decided
to believe the ants are going deeper
and they’ll always go deeper
so on the surface
everything gets bigger,
even me, and somehow
I feel safer, and somehow
the fact that my waking
in the middle of the night
and stepping out for this smoke
this bite of ice cream
this moment of cruelty—
the fact that it didn’t even slightly disturb your slumber allows me to lie back down asleep again.
CHAPTER 6: [APPENDIX OF NOTES]

I like the idea of poetics in poetry. Not for some naive belief in transcendence nor for its offering of self-reflexivity. Poetics is the recipe on the bag of chocolate chips. It tempers my impulse to eat the ingredients raw, although in no way precludes it. At its best, it is a reminder that certain flowers only bloom at night and no matter how strong our desire, the concept of moonlight illuminates nothing.

*

My problem with notes is they imply a space without notes. Notes without subnotes. A moment free from debt. We are so quick to conflate context and meaning. Asking where we are when what we want to know is who we are.

*

I was seven. I had just heard that nothing could travel faster than light. Suspicious, I stuck my hands in my pockets as quickly as I could. I sucked milk through a straw at astounding speeds. I took up track and dance and honed my body to be a perfect vessel for motion. Even then the idea of absolutes was an impossible horror that I refused to consider. I was in first grade, waiting in line for an assembly when I had the idea that I had the idea immediately. *Thought travels faster than light.* So I gave up all manner of physical training, and started reading. For years I did nothing but read, training my brain to be a perfect vessel for motion. Now, of course, I know better. Even at their fastest, neuronal impulses travel about 2.5 million times slower than light.

*
Here is a subnote: I was seven when first introduced to the Marx Brothers. I am still trying to understand the various ways in which this changes everything.

* 

These poems could not exist without the concept of power theory. I am convinced of this! In math this is semi-abstract, a representation of how a random product demands a pre-determined process. The vase shatters and no one piece bears a relationship to the others, except the first break informed the second, the third. Like a bell curve, it is a formula for everything. If an action was performed truly random, it would always create a recognizable pattern.

* 

Another problem with notes: they insist things. And if words can’t be taken back, imagine what print does, and internet. All of youtube that can’t be taken back. How do I approach a thing like that without knowing first if I want it?

* 

When my cousin and I were young, my uncle would take us to Burger King to discuss Quantum Theory. I was just old enough not to understand it, and just young enough not to notice. Let’s say eleven. Prove that the moon exists in daytime, he’d demand. I’d say something about the tides, but he’d shake his head. Something about the earth’s orbit, but that didn’t work either. He changed the question. Prove that the moon exists without bearing any witness. We did this at least a couple of times a month. We never ate anything. He liked their coffee. He’d sit opposite us, shaking his head, taking slow, tiny sips.