

TO PASS THE TIME, I READ ABOUT ASTRONOMY

I had a friend so afflicted with myopia  
that she believed stars were theoretical  
that the sky's dim blur smudged over the  
blades and furrows of the earth.

I learn that it is true:  
that where my bright companions loiter  
are radiant vacancies  
subtle abysses uttering  
efflorescences of lost time. These traces  
like my pages, periodic pulses propositioning sense,  
quick flashes to the dishes, open or closed,  
straight frame to be spooled through, wound silk thick.

You and I orbit to different clocks  
Solar and sidereal  
thralled in the day's straying blaze  
or scintillating in the chill romance of distance

I read in the news about a woman.  
This was supposed to be about her.  
She flew a plane without knowing how.  
She managed what they call a good landing;  
that is, one from which  
you walk away.  
I didn't want to know the details.  
Her husband calling.  
Her choices being to huddle around his last breath  
or to fly the plane.  
In such moments we are compelled to consider gravity:  
Bernoulli's law telling us that the wing's curved and flat edges  
flush air to make the vacuum known as lift  
a myth as well told as an apple dropping from a tree  
untasted.

Against this, jet propulsion.  
complicated by flaps, slats, wheels, and foils  
to curb or carve our hurtling  
elixir of naphtha and kerosene  
Angles and intensities of beams, deduce us!  
Calibrate our disorders to our desires,  
with diffraction and fractional distillation  
dissect the rocks and water  
unspell the cyclic aliphatic; chain us to the fluid rush  
of lines across lines; tell us

how to douse oil from a stone—  
recite to us from the Kitab al-asrar  
with ciphers and deliquescences  
write over that apocrypha about sincerity  
that the bust without a slip could be exhibited  
without wax  
argue instead for the water that keeps its shape  
and burns  
proverb us into silence

I've left her suspended on an exhalation  
waiting for the scruff that means either life  
or the certainty of decay  
ion by ion repelling space to  
sate an appetite for pattern  
Fibonacci sequences pascaling us to faith  
Is it just that rocks and seeds are like that?  
Pity us.

Lock into a sea of frequencies  
121.5, number of souls indeterminate  
careening some miles above an unseen ocean  
where the vitreous and resinous resolve  
to the caress of fur on amber.  
Interference.

leavings of a frozen sea  
remnants of a dying star  
hydrocarbons, whale oil  
on these we tack the certainty  
of magnetic north

here's where the parabola and the valley coincide  
the thunderstorms far  
the thunderstorms near  
and Sagittarian hiss

She circled the line ten times  
was this blindness or emphasis?  
At last she came down.

I stand in the evening and look up  
map you altitude to azimuth

A satellite is an object that tumbles at the rate the world falls  
ever and always twinned in disaster

ANTHOLOGY

As I mentioned before, she has a passion for ants.  
elegant ant, glossy, armored, corseted  
ant mandibles masticating arugula mostaccioli inaudibly  
antweed colonizing leas of remotest Brazil  
festal ants in silent anthers of corn  
vestal ants fervid vermin communing in the nave  
supplicants among the celebrants  
sycophants among the celibate  
silhouetted, sanctified, and convenient  
antipodean ants frantically semaphoring filaments up the underside of formica tiles  
as, above, moonlight formicates slats of ceramic and slate  
blind ants scuttling oracular sticks into fingers of manifold appellants raptured by  
elephantine appetites while needs unuttered but equivalent are chanted to the downbeat of  
a 6/8 sonata for tympani  
Some antonyms for ants: atheism, capitalism, helicopters, meteors  
Arctica, the Ant of which is nominal  
Noumenal ant, or ding ant sich, that bites no harder than the phenomenal ant Kant blesses  
jack jumpers, prick of which might spare asp-nurse Cleopatra, lips pursed in final  
admonition at absent Antony, or, fortune-fated, only speed calamitous anaphylaxis  
indolent ant, faineant, lugubrious, and behind on taxes  
miscreant ant courting wingless regrets  
mendicant ant warbling eustatic ditties dating from the late Jurassic  
irreverent ant capering sweetly against relics of trilobyte  
herculean ant matched against titans, raising earth-bound demi-giant Antaeus to his  
hovering defeat  
Animalia Arthropoda Insecta Hymenoptera Apocrita Vespoidea Formicidae spp!  
O sapient ant, hymned of antique muses, auguring efflorescence with rain-damp ocelli  
O decorous ant, shedding wings post-nuptial flight to consecrate the connubial hill  
O antigonian ant, grubbing among the stones and ferns  
while queens and drones carouse in mead halls of ancestral hills, telegraphing allegories  
of immortality along the hum of elbowed antennae  
downstairs ants sipping honeydewed bristles of domesticated aphids  
the old ant forages, a last farewell—  
What did the pharaoh say to the carpenter and weaver?  
Nothing, for he was adamant.