

So Many Eyes of Argus

by

Christopher Sullivan

A thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English
University of Manitoba

(c) September, 1995.



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-16317-2

Canada

Name _____

Dissertation Abstracts International and Masters Abstracts International are arranged by broad, general subject categories. Please select the one subject which most nearly describes the content of your dissertation or thesis. Enter the corresponding four-digit code in the spaces provided.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

SUBJECT TERM

0295 UMI

SUBJECT CODE

Subject Categories

THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Architecture 0729
Art History 0377
Cinema 0900
Dance 0378
Fine Arts 0357
Information Science 0723
Journalism 0391
Library Science 0399
Mass Communications 0708
Music 0413
Speech Communication 0459
Theater 0465

EDUCATION

General 0515
Administration 0514
Adult and Continuing 0516
Agricultural 0517
Art 0273
Bilingual and Multicultural 0282
Business 0688
Community College 0275
Curriculum and Instruction 0727
Early Childhood 0518
Elementary 0524
Finance 0277
Guidance and Counseling 0519
Health 0680
Higher 0745
History of 0520
Home Economics 0278
Industrial 0521
Language and Literature 0279
Mathematics 0280
Music 0522
Philosophy of 0998
Physical 0523

Psychology 0525
Reading 0535
Religious 0527
Sciences 0714
Secondary 0533
Social Sciences 0534
Sociology of 0340
Special 0529
Teacher Training 0530
Technology 0710
Tests and Measurements 0288
Vocational 0747

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS

Language 0679
General 0289
Ancient 0290
Linguistics 0291
Modern 0401
Literature 0294
Classical 0295
Comparative 0297
Medieval 0298
Modern 0316
African 0591
American 0305
Asian 0352
Canadian (English) 0355
Canadian (French) 0593
English 0311
Germanic 0312
Latin American 0315
Middle Eastern 0313
Romance 0314
Slavic and East European 0370

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Philosophy 0422
Religion 0318
General 0321
Biblical Studies 0319
Clergy 0320
History of 0322
Philosophy of 0469
Theology 0323

SOCIAL SCIENCES

American Studies 0324
Anthropology 0326
Archaeology 0327
Cultural 0310
Physical 0272
Business Administration 0770
General 0454
Accounting 0338
Banking 0385
Management 0501
Marketing 0503
Canadian Studies 0508
Economics 0509
General 0510
Agricultural 0511
Commerce-Business 0358
Finance 0366
History 0351
Labor 0578
Theory 0579

Ancient 0579
Medieval 0581
Modern 0582
Black 0328
African 0331
Asia, Australia and Oceania 0332
Canadian 0334
European 0335
Latin American 0336
Middle Eastern 0337
United States 0585
History of Science 0398
Law 0615
Political Science 0616
General 0617
International Law and Relations 0814
Public Administration 0452
Recreation 0626
Social Work 0627
Sociology 0938
General 0631
Criminology and Penology 0628
Demography 0629
Ethnic and Racial Studies 0630
Individual and Family Studies 0700
Industrial and Labor Relations 0344
Public and Social Welfare 0709
Social Structure and Development 0999
Theory and Methods 0453
Transportation 0999
Urban and Regional Planning 0453
Women's Studies

THE SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Agriculture 0473
General 0285
Agronomy 0475
Animal Culture and Nutrition 0476
Animal Pathology 0359
Food Science and Technology 0478
Forestry and Wildlife 0479
Plant Culture 0480
Plant Pathology 0817
Plant Physiology 0777
Range Management 0746
Wood Technology

Biology 0306
General 0287
Anatomy 0308
Biostatistics 0309
Botany 0379
Cell 0329
Ecology 0353
Entomology 0369
Genetics 0793
Limnology 0410
Microbiology 0307
Molecular 0317
Neuroscience 0416
Oceanography 0433
Physiology 0821
Radiation 0778
Veterinary Science 0472
Zoology

Biophysics 0786
General 0760
Medical

EARTH SCIENCES

Biogeochemistry 0425
Geochemistry 0996

Geodesy 0370
Geology 0372
Geophysics 0373
Hydrology 0388
Mineralogy 0411
Paleobotany 0345
Paleoecology 0426
Paleontology 0418
Paleozoology 0985
Palynology 0427
Physical Geography 0368
Physical Oceanography 0415

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Environmental Sciences 0768
Health Sciences 0566
General 0300
Audiology 0992
Chemotherapy 0567
Dentistry 0350
Education 0769
Hospital Management 0758
Human Development 0982
Immunology 0564
Medicine and Surgery 0347
Mental Health 0569
Nursing 0570
Nutrition 0380
Obstetrics and Gynecology 0354
Occupational Health and Therapy 0381
Ophthalmology 0571
Pathology 0419
Pharmacology 0572
Pharmacy 0382
Physical Therapy 0573
Public Health 0574
Radiology 0575
Recreation

Speech Pathology 0460
Toxicology 0383
Home Economics 0386

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Pure Sciences 0485
Chemistry 0749
General 0486
Agricultural 0487
Analytical 0488
Biochemistry 0490
Inorganic 0491
Nuclear 0494
Organic 0495
Pharmaceutical 0754
Physical 0405
Polymer 0605
Radiation 0986
Mathematics 0606
Physics 0608
General 0748
Acoustics 0607
Astronomy and Astrophysics 0798
Atmospheric Science 0759
Atomic 0609
Electronics and Electricity 0610
Elementary Particles and High Energy 0752
Fluid and Plasma 0756
Molecular 0611
Nuclear 0463
Optics 0346
Radiation 0984
Solid State
Statistics
Applied Sciences
Applied Mechanics
Computer Science

Engineering

General 0537
Aerospace 0538
Agricultural 0539
Automotive 0540
Biomedical 0541
Chemical 0542
Civil 0543
Electronics and Electrical 0544
Heat and Thermodynamics 0348
Hydraulic 0545
Industrial 0546
Marine 0547
Materials Science 0794
Mechanical 0548
Metallurgy 0743
Mining 0551
Nuclear 0552
Packaging 0549
Petroleum 0765
Sanitary and Municipal 0554
System Science 0790
Geotechnical 0428
Operations Research 0796
Plastics Technology 0795
Textile Technology 0994

PSYCHOLOGY

General 0621
Behavioral 0384
Clinical 0622
Developmental 0620
Experimental 0623
Industrial 0624
Personality 0625
Physiological 0989
Psychobiology 0349
Psychometrics 0632
Social 0451

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION**

SO MANY EYES OF ARGUS

BY

CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

Christopher Sullivan© 1996

**Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies
of this thesis/practicum, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis/practicum and
to lend or sell copies of the film, and to UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS INC. to publish an abstract of this
thesis/practicum..**

**This reproduction or copy of this thesis has been made available by authority of the copyright owner solely
for the purpose of private study and research, and may only be reproduced and copied as permitted by
copyright laws or with express written authorization from the copyright owner.**

..... **D**iscern, through the walls
and towers destined to crumble,
the tracery of a pattern so subtle
it could escape the termites' gnawing.

Italo Calvino

It may be that universal history is
the history of the different intonations
given a handful of metaphors.

Jorge Luis Borges

It's only after realizing this for a long time
That you can make a chain of events like days
That more and more rapidly come to punch their own number
Out of the calendar, draining it. By that time
Space will be a jar with no lid, and you can live
Any way you like out on those vague terraces,
Verandas, walkways -- the forms of space combined with time
We are allowed, and we live them passionately,
Fortunately, though we can never be described
And would make lousy characters in a novel.

John Ashbery

CONTENTS

epigraphs

The Observer	1
The Observatory	1
The Observer & Books	2
The Observer & Memory	2
The Observer & the Lady	3
The Observer, the Lady & the Scroll	4
The Observer & the Scroll	4
The Observer & Dictionaries	5
The Observer & Translation	5
<i>Orion I</i>	6
The Observer & Light	7
The Observer & Light II	8
The Observer & the Hole	8
The Observer & the Hole II	9
The Observer's Song	9
The Observer & the Hole III	10
The Observer's Blood	10
<i>Gemini I</i>	11
The Observer's Blood II	11
The Observer, Wind & Light	12
The Observer, Wind & Light II	12
The Observer, Wind & Light III	13
The Observer & Heat	13
The Observer's Blood III	14
The Observer's & his Story	14
The Observer's Journal	15
<i>Lyra & Aquila I</i>	15
The Observer & his Story II	16
The Observer's Journal II	16
The Observer & Memory II	17
The Observer & Memory III	17
The Observer & Water	17
The Observer, Heat & Blood	18
<i>Atlas I</i>	19
The Observer's Stone	20
The Observer's Stone II	20
The Observer's Journal III	21
Light & the Observer's Stone	21
The Observer & Night	22
Night, the Stone & the Thread	23
The Observer & Water II	23
The Observer's Journal IV	24
<i>Gemini II</i>	24
The Observer's Journal V	24
Steam, Smell & Memory	25
The Observer, Water & Memory	25
The Observer, Water & Memory II	26
The Observer, Water & Memory III	26
The Observer, Dust & Memory	27
<i>Lyra & Aquila II</i>	28

CONTENTS

The Observer & the Lady II	29, 30
The Observer & the Orb	31
The Observer & the Pop-up Book	32
The Observer & the Tower	33
<i>Orion II</i>	34
The Observer & the Tower II	35
The Observer & the Fall	35
The Observer's Survey	36
The Observer & Intervals	36
The Observer & Intervals II	37
The Observer's Instrument	37
The Observer & the Atlas	38
The Observer & Flatness	38
<i>Atlas II</i>	39
The Observer & the Atlas II	40
The Observer & Spheres	40
Books & the Sky	41
<i>Gemini III</i>	42
The Observer & Books	43
Furniture & the Sky	43
The Observer & Furniture	44
Food & the Sky	44
The Observer & Food	45
The Observer & Epicycles	45
The Observer & the Orb II	46
<i>Orion III</i>	46
Light in the Centre	47
The Observer & the Sky	47
The Observer's Log	48
The Observer & the Cosmic Text	48
The Observer's Log II	49
The Observer & the Cosmic Text	49
<i>Lyra & Aquila III</i>	50
The Observer & Concentricity	51
The Observer & Spots	52
The Observer & the Atlas III	53
The Observer & Observation	53
The Observer & the Atlas IV	54
Expansion & Contraction	54
<i>Atlas III</i>	55, 56
The Observer & the Paper Cone	56
The Observer in the Mirror	56
The Observer's Observer	57

bibliography

The Observer

He must not have been swallowed whole, for he the Observer, now in the belly of isolation, cannot remember what came before and does not know his own name. For as long as he can recall, he has sorted through his trove of books and loose papers, hoping to find a letter addressed to him or the precious page that records his abduction into obscurity: perhaps a log of a last voyage on which he fell overboard and nearly drowned, consumed instead by a beastly whale. It is only a theory, of course; even a metaphor.

Water is the first metaphor: the Observer's memory first crystalline traces in ice, then mingling rivulets, now steam. Or memory is rather the sea itself, navigated by explorers who depend on the stars. The whale only follows. If water, then whale (Thales?) - no matter. The whale has at least saved him from drowning. Soaking in his bath, he always begins with this meditation.

Rising now to towel dry, he sheds a cacophony of drips back into the tub. It is like forgetting.

The Observatory

The observatory is circular in at least two respects: firstly that its perimeter is round, measuring 48 feet at diameter; secondly that its centre is covered by a dome such that a sphere with a diameter of 24 feet is implied. The former measurement is almost unconsciously known from the Observer's habitual pacing while the latter is a fact for which he simply cannot recall a source. Four tall bookshelves divide the circle into quadrants, allowing an open space of 16 feet diameter in the centre and an uninterrupted path along the perimeter wall. Whereas the books face clockwise, illustrations in frames and diagrams hang on the counterclockwise backs of the cabinets.

On the outer wall of one quadrant resides a furnace, oven and grill. On the wall of the quadrant opposite is a huge ventilation duct, covered by a screen. In the quadrant beside resides a sink, toilet and tub, while troughs of edible potted plants under heat lamps occupy the last. The Observer's furniture is arranged in the remaining space. There are, of course, no doors except those on the cabinets and absolutely no windows.

The Observer & Books

Around the inner circle of the observatory, the Observer paces, passing the ends of the bookshelves as he goes. Heading each of the four shelves is a marble bust of an astronomer, or so he thinks. He used to know their names, but time and divided attention has eroded these too. One has a slender face and wears spectacles propped on his nose. Another has a squarish nose, fashioned not in marble but in silver. A third sports an elegant hat and an altogether smug grin, while the fourth bears the cap of a pauper and an earnest countenance to match. The busts are a memory aid so the myriad volumes of the Observer's collection might be associated with each and found, by course, near by. It is their attributes that the Observer still recalls and in turn associates with the books: the spectacles, the nose, the smirk, the cap. He assumes they are astronomers by their patience and invariable stare.

The Observer & Memory

If there is one thing the Observer knows that he knows, it is that his books contain far more than he can remember. He often finds himself setting one aside while only half way through, haunted by the thought of a similar passage in another book somewhere read sometime before, and while looking for this prior second, discovers a third, set aside and open to an unfamiliar page.

To catalogue all the contents of the library is an ambition strongly held. Once he decided on a dictionary to be the model of the corpus. The sheer orderliness of alphabetic marshaling seemed appealing enough, but the information once ordered so no longer seems a narrative. It is all more invariably linear than in any alternative form, but it does not flow the way the Observer's thoughts do. What is more, there is absolutely no reduction in the quantity of material to read and re-read.

Eliminating some books altogether is yet another solution. There must be a priority of knowledge, he thinks, and by reducing the number of books in the library, perhaps he could finally concentrate on the few that matter most. It does not take long to realize, though, that a reliably judicious segregation could only be executed if a comprehensive comparison were made between all the books and that such a comparison would not be possible without a simultaneous knowledge of all: the very impossibility that begins the purge. To the Observer it is even a tiring speculation.

The Observer & the Lady

Dreaming of muses, the Observer hears a rattle quite peculiar to the air vent beside his bed; not the monotonous whirrr of a fan but sporadic clunks and scraps, growing louder and ever more frequent. Anxious at the prospect of this irregularity, he sits up and squints at the vent screen now jostling up and down. In a throe of panic, the Observer scrambles from his bed and frantically gropes for the bed lamp, cursing his caprice for re-arranging furniture. There now at the corner of his bed, in the stunning austerity of the newly lit room, regally perches a woman all aplomb.

So advanced is she in years that it is difficult for the Observer to believe her to be of his generation (though he cannot remember of what generation he is) but her eyes keenly tell of vigor. Her gown is covered in the dust of a neglected statue, but at the bottom hem can be read an embroidered symbol -- a letter: Greek, wait, yes Greek, damnit which, no, yes Pi. At the top can be read Theta. The vertical strip of letters in between is marred by a tear so that it becomes a bit embarrassing to stare. Two simple crutches lean against the wall, explaining perhaps the woman's eagerness to sit. But no other observations seem as sensible to the Observer, who as yet has no idea what the orb and the scroll in her hands are for. The uncomfortable silence is eventually dispelled by the gowned visitor in a centurion voice of unmistakable resolve. "Who" she demands, her piercing eyes alit, "has allowed these hysterical muses to approach this sick man's bedside?" Supposing that it is he who willingly dreamed of them, the Observer begins to blush. It is an impossible embarrassment to have offended his very first visitor without even saying a word. "They have no medicine to ease his pains, only sweetened poisons; they would kill the rich and fruitful harvest with barren thorns of passion". Why, then he wonders, is this second party referring to him in the third person when he is obviously present in the first; for what audience? If only these muses were as real to him as they seem to this incensed matron "Sirens", she continues, "is a better name for you and your deadly excitements: be gone and leave him for me to heal and cure!"

With the 'muses' newly dispelled, if only in principle, there is no longer an audience; perhaps he can ask to whom his visitor addresses her speech; why "he" and not "you"? Is there a spectator lingering unannounced? It seems unlikely that the Observer has overlooked any preceding visit; or perhaps he has simply forgotten.

The Observer, the Lady & the Scroll

The gowned visitor, seeing the Observer's dumfounded unwillingness to speak, holds out the scroll and assures "It is nothing serious, only a touch of amnesia he is suffering, the common disease of deluded minds. He has forgotten for a while who he is, but will soon remember once he recognizes me." It is almost obscene to think that this strange woman might know the name for which the Observer himself has searched for longer than he can remember. It is obvious to him that this sphinx's riddle can only be answered with her own name; the boon being a swap for the riddle, name for name. Perhaps she is in the same predicament as he but knows how to talk a better game. Perhaps it is she who has come looking for answers.

It is difficult to say whether the Lady's present gesture is conclusive or merely a further gambit, but there before the Observer on his very bed, lies the scroll left by the Lady who clambers back into the air duct with more speed than grace, replacing the metal screen behind her. Now in the duct again, the Lady is lost in darkness and rumbling, the Observer lost in questions.

The Observer & the Scroll

There is, of course, with any book the option to open first to a page not first or last, but, rather, somewhere in the middle. With the Lady's scroll, however, the choice is more obvious as its velum is equally distributed between two spools. For the Observer there is even some doubt as to which end is up. Unrolled, the scroll reveals 12 sections, each bearing a text in one of 4 languages: Pictograph, Latin, Japanese and Greek, as nearly as he can figure. The title, however, is unmistakable and needing no translation: "*Chronicles of the Sky*".

Were the entire scroll in a single language unfamiliar to him, he could assume that the Lady has mistaken his language of preference, but as there are clearly four scripts represented, it is apparent that she intends for him to translate. Is this the cure of which she spoke: translation?

The Observer & Dictionaries

It does not seem likely to the Observer that translating text is any kind of memory aid, but the matter is far too important not to pursue even the slimmest possibility. To translating, then, the Observer now turns his efforts, seeking out from his shelves the necessary reference books for the task.

Found in the third shelf of Spectacles, the Observer's dictionaries always propose a dilemma of ordering. It seems only right that these, of all books, should be arranged in alphabetical order, but not all of the languages for which he has dictionaries (or dictionary equivalences) are based on an alphabet: is one form of script capable of properly ordering all the others? Perhaps the chronology of the languages' beginnings should determine their order on the shelf, but how can the Observer even know, much less remember, the discrepancy between a language's inception and its codification? Can all the languages even be traced to absolutely individual origins? Scanning the completely variable array of dictionaries, the Observer can never remember which solution he last chose and half expects to also forget his reason for coming to this shelf while agonizing over a new one.

The Observer & Translation

The Greek dictionary is the first the Observer finds. From its pages he soon knows the Greek poems to be about "Atlas". The translucent pages of the Japanese syllabary are not entirely individual but unfold, instead, into diptychs and triptychs. From this oddly hinged book the Observer derives the title of the third set of poems: "Lyra & Aquila". The Latin dictionary is finally found at the bookcase ending; "Gemini" is the title revealed by it.

Some trouble, however, is the translation of the first triad of poems. Unlike the other dictionaries, the Pictograph book is approximate, even vague. Options rather than definitions fill the broadly illuminated pages. The Observer is afloat in figurativeness. According to his best estimate, however, the first chronicle triad is about an old man named "Orion" -- yes, old man, mountain, journey, sun -- a story to be sure. It is completely up to the Observer's discretion, though, how the syntax is to be realized. Only the order is clear. So the Observer's translating begins; the Observer at his writing table with stylus in hand. Sometimes it is impossible for him to comprehend what he reads unless armed so, recomposing the text as he goes.

Orion I

I wake with this marble head in my hands as if for years of sleep
My old head
These old hands that wove cane
And years together so I cannot count
Now cannot weave
Together these fingers even round this marble head

Older than my memory
This head has held its marble eyes
Steady on my weaving where this strand of cane began
My life
A strand of cane began
Though wound from where I cannot find
In hand I have its end

This is no country for old men
The young in one another's arms
Born here of parents born here from parents
The same and their parents the same
Their sensual song music not
Caught in marble ears
I go now where stone silence calls

The Observer & Light

The strain of tedious translation on the Observer's eyes reminds him of how little light there is in his observatory. As there are no windows, all the light is artificial. It seems a strange word, though: "artificial". All the Observer knows is the hum of awfully white lights depending from the observatory ceiling above the plants and the more yellow glow of the bed lamp and floor lamp at his reading stand. Candles are the other source of light; less stable and brilliant than the others but possessing of a certain allure. It is his prerogative to switch on or set alight any of these sources but of the light that occurs of its own accord through windows, he knows nothing except what is written in his treatises on architecture. Such light may only be a theory like the principles of proportion regarding the arrangement of the windows through which it is known, but even if so, it is an irresistible one. The lamps and candles are like his books that he opens and closes, but this other, uncontrollable light; it is like his memory.

At his reading stand, the translated scroll still open, the Observer sits in meditation, as he often does, trying to simply remember. A candle now in front of him, his staring eyes eventually blurr but this memory aid is far from effective. He rolls his round, closed ink well back and forth, then in a tight circle, then in a circle as broad as the desktop will allow. What preceded the candle? What makes his light artificial?

The Observer & Light II

With renewed interest, the Observer, according to his habit, re-consults an authority on light: Cap MS 27. This book is a catalogue of other books on light in which the Observer hopes to find a helpful reference.

..... To describe a book of light is to identify at least two aspects of it: the first accounting for the book as a vast collection of individual words that impart interpretation by interacting, in turn, with the eye; the second emphasizing the tendency of words to be carried in waves on pages that follow one another in sequence, creating a large scale rhythm

From this treatise of treatises, the Observer finally locates a preceding book: Smirk MS 12. This book describes an experiment that divides light into several colours, accomplished with a prism, a simple box and a hole in the wall. He has among his instruments a prism, and, no doubt, a simple box as well, but nowhere in his observatory has he a hole.

The Observer & the Hole

Deducing that air proceeding through the ventilation screen must first follow a course of duct work originating in fresh, open space, the Observer resolves to dismantle the defuser. Expecting the screen to lift off as easily as the Lady made it look, the Observer merely tugs at first. Realizing, then, the permanence of the fixture, he recalls why he must never have made this journey before. Perhaps he has attempted this breach of his cell a hundred times, each just beyond the duration of his memory. Perhaps this is the moment, the climax to which all his other fascinations lead; a moment followed inevitably by the disappointment of the duct's incorruptibility. Perhaps it is time to try harder.

The Observer pries now at the metal screen with the heavy bar used for opening and closing the iron door of his oven. Groaning sounds with squeaky overtones remind him of the audible throes of pickled cabbage sealed in a jar over flames. In cooking there is a point when such a sealed container under such pressure must burst, spraying about the overboiled solution. And so must this giant egg of an observatory crack -- yes, a crack? -- ah! success.

The Observer & the Hole II

Now, with the screen of metal mesh set aside, the Observer pauses at the new portal in his cell. Of all the possibilities he has contemplated in the preceding moments, all the feelings he thought he might have when embarking on this liberating adventure, hesitation is the least that he expected to realize. But here he is, now, wondering why he has ventured to leave the observatory at all. Has he come this far before and turned back, sheepishly replacing the screen and thinking no more of it until the distraction of his books eventually led him back to this inevitable juncture -- this crisis?

Light, yes, light: he is in search of authentic light that he can divide through a glass and see in full array. Where there is fresh air why should there not also be fresh light -- fresh, authentic light? Resolved so, the Observer peeks his head into the duct and stares straight up -- darkness, utter darkness. Waiting for his eyes to adjust, he begins to notice flecks of dust floating in the now still air. He fancies them to be constellations. With a distant hum churning up to an echoing whirrr, a gust of air streams down on his face, reminding him that his galaxy of dust spins in a wind pipe.

The Observer's Song

The hum and whirrr come and go so often that he no longer notices them, but never before, to his recollection anyway, has he had his head in the duct; now the mundane and mechanical wind seems a song. His whale is singing to him -- how sweet. Or perhaps it is the Lady herself again, or the song of mermaids confined in some other compartment of the beast's stomach, singing for loneliness; he dares not think they sing to him.

Moved by appreciation or by sympathy, the Observer clears his own throat and matches the pitch of the wind. Satisfying though unison is, the Observer soon reasons that it is not the stuff of a duet and begins venturing off on intervals. A third, a fifth, an octave is achieved. His own voice seems luxurious in such an echo chamber. Now more dissonant chords are achieved: a second interval, a seventh, now half tones, now quarters, asymptotically reaching again for the original unison with the wind when just as startling as it began, the wind song dies down, leaving the Observer's voice alone, resonating less majestically now in the duct.

The Observer & the Hole III

With the aid of his flash light, the Observer now peers more pragmatically up into the duct which he intends to traverse. As he suspects, an elbow in the channel obstructs the vision straight up; why should he not expect this course too to be serpentine? Braced for exertion, he steps into the breach and begins shimmying up. Not only are the metal walls of the passage chilly, but so too are they smooth. The Observer manages to prop himself up as far as the top of the screen's empty frame, but beyond this point he feels no seam in the metal on which to cling or pull. If the Lady could do it with her dropsy legs, he can too, surely. But press as he might his back and his feet against opposite walls, he slides back down every inch he shimmies up.

It is possible that the strange visitor's very rubber tipped crutches enabled her to negotiate the slippery slope of the duct, or so concludes the Observer. But there are no such crutches for him about, so clearly some other climbing aid must be found. Encouraging himself that every problem contains the means of its own solution, the Observer notices that the long rectangle that is the mesh screen, now set aside, is the device he needs. The very criss-crossed metal strands that once kept him in the observatory may now afford him the finger and toe holds necessary to surmount the serpentine passage out.

Angling the screen in cornerwise, the Observer jostles it around until it is upright in the shaft. The Observer begins again the arduous climb, now somewhat eased by the grip of the mesh. At the elbow of the duct, the passage continues perpendicularly into more darkness; the flashlight only reveals yet another elbow some twenty feet along. Supporting himself on the top of the screen, the Observer attempts to hoist himself into the horizontal duct, but comes only as close as teetering on the edge, as the distance from the screen's top to the ledge is almost that of his own height. He crouches down in order to spring, springs, teeters, slips and drops on the corner of the screen, goring in the process his loin.

The Observer's Blood

He cannot remember the last time he bled.

Gemini I

Chasing a maiden I have bled
A trail to this underworld
Can you see Pollux where I have fallen

Give me again your immortal hand
Again your bracing arm
Warm away from me this bloodless chill

The Observer's Blood II

It seems to the Observer that only a record of the event will insure that this episode of bleeding will not be forgotten. Perhaps he needn't bleed again if only he can remember the experience. The smear of red on the bandage he now improvises with a sheet ought to be a graphic enough record he supposes. But satisfied as he may be, his body continues to illustrate the event with a steady infusion of red on white. The subtle weave of the sheet's fabric is accentuated, then blotted out by the meandering flow of blood until it is necessary to change the wrapping. Anxious not to lose any of this precious memory, the Observer dribbles a while into a bulbous glass jar before re-wrapping his wound. It occurs to the Observer, as he re-dresses his wound, that bleeding is like writing. As his vision begins to cast the texture of the sheet's weave on everything in his sight and everything begins to darken like the very bandage he ties, dizzying, he realizes that bleeding is like forgetting too.

The Observer, Wind & Light

Waking from a sleep of indeterminable length, the Observer looks on his soaked bandage and bulbous jar of blood and recalls his adventure in the duct. It is a triumph of sorts to at least recall a failure so vividly. He is encouraged that his recollection will protect him from such another mishap -- his jar of blood a talisman.

Lacking still the apparent means to observe authentic light, the Observer decides that authentic air will do. Air, when forced through a confined space such as his duct, already appeals to two senses that light does not: hearing and touch. The song of the duct proves the former while the slight but detectable breeze now tingling the Observer's face proves the latter. Holding up a thread left over from his patchwork bandaging, he notes that wind too, now fluttering the thread, is observable. It seems that air in compression has all the sensory properties of light and more. Perhaps authentic light is wind.

The Observer, Light & Wind II

Delighted with the potential of his new discovery, the Observer eagerly inscribes the title on a fresh page: 'Light is Wind'. The experiments would begin at once. In order to intensify the effect of the breeze from the air duct, the Observer bandages over the opening in the wall with folded sheets, all except for a tiny hole in the centre which he cuts out with his penknife. The hole now resembles the pin hole in the window shutter from the corresponding experiment illustrated in his scientific book, Smirk MS 27. With a small, emptied gardening box, the Observer completes the apparatus array.

If authentic light is subdividable, so then must be wind. With hypothesis so declared and recorded, the Observer sets down to work.

The Observer, Light & Wind III

One certain way to prove the equation 'authentic light = wind' is to prove wind dissimilar to artificial light. It occurs to the Observer that apart from light, the lamps that grow his food generate heat. If the gardening lamps are artificial light and generate heat, and if artificial light is not authentic light, then wind, if actually authentic light, must not generate heat. It is only too clear that the proof the Observer must make is that wind is not heat.

At first the Observer resorts to his own sense of touch, holding his hand (his right hand) in the stream of wind whistling into the gardening box apparatus, then walking over to the heat lamps and holding his left under them. In neither instance does he feel much if any heat very quickly at all. An amateur might have given up at this, but it is not long before the Observer considers the possible subtlety of heat and the time it will take to achieve a telling observation. As even he has better things to do than stand for hours, concentrating on the nerves in his hands, the Observer elects to find different, more objective indicators of heat.

The Observer & Heat

Deferring the question at hand to an authority on the subject, the Observer limps from shelf to shelf, trying to recall by scanning book spines where he last saw a treatise on heat. Reasoning that heat lamps may appear in books on gardening, he eventually browses Nose M.S. 14 through 31. Of note he finds a handsome volume featuring colour illustrations of edible plants and another with the leaves themselves pressed between the pages; some still green. But nowhere is heat addressed.

Given something of an appetite by the array of documented edibles, the Observer's thoughts turn to dinner. On the small table beside the oven he notices one of his cook books left open to the last recipe prepared: he can always remember what he has recently eaten this way. In a bold font is printed at the top of the page "heat until simmering". What could be simpler? His experiment could be like cooking. He could place a bowl of soup on the stove and one in the wind box, observing which becomes hot.

The Observer's Blood III

As the Observer eats his dinner, it occurs to him that it is he that feels heat, not his soup. Certainly his soup is hot, but how can he know if it actually feels heat, and if it cannot, how can it be a reliable indicator? Being and knowing are two different things. Yes, his instincts served him correctly to begin with, but still, his hands do not seem the stuff of elegant science. From his recent reading the Observer is fairly certain that plants are animate and may, thereby, 'feel' heat. But he cannot be completely certain and the scientific integrity of an experiment this important must not be compromised.

Noticing that his bandage requires yet another change, all at once the solution to the Observer's predicament is clear. He hobbles from his chair immediately and seizes the jar of his blood, pouring equal portions into two larger, bulbous jars. One he places in the wind box and the other in the oven, covered in a sauce pan filled with sand. His own blood must feel heat as he does, so he resolves to examine both jars after an equal duration in both elements. What could be simpler?

The Observer & his Story

Surrounded by so many volumes of text, the Observer cannot help wondering if he is not engulfed in a story. The books are his own -- there has been no one in his recollection that has otherwise claimed ownership, though he would not mind the very companionship of such a dispute -- so it is a fancy of his that their cumulative discourse, if indeed a story, is his story. If this estimation is true, then it seems that in at least one of the constituent volumes the protagonist of his story (himself) must be somewhere mentioned, and if mentioned, thereby named. It is a hope, admittedly.

The Observer's Journal

Sorting again through his stacks of ciphers and files of folios, the Observer uncovers a slender tome, bound about with a dark, red string. The date is worn off the leather binding, but the age of the book is apparent from its stiff and flaking face. Each page of velum cracks at the gather as his thumb presses it down. Many manuscripts in the Observer's collection bear this antique charm, but remarkable in this volume is the script which is his hand. The Observer himself has written this book, but when he cannot recall.

He begins at a random page: *"I must not have been swallowed whole, for I, now in the belly of isolation, cannot remember what came before and do not know my own name".*

Lyra & Aquila I

Lone wandering ox
He not knowing where to graze
Treads hungry circles

When I became tethered here
My ox I let free
Now we both are lost
Tanabata

I cannot move from the bank of this
Your father's river
Were it narrow I would brave to swim
Or mercifully wider I could not
See you weaving at your loom
From here

Will your father proudly wear our story
Mantled on his shoulders
Or do you weave a different story now

The Observer's Story II

As the observatory is circular, there is no telling just where the collection of books begins and where it ends, though the Observer spends time trying. The Observer has four theories on the matter. The first is that the story begins in the volume which occupies the top left corner of the shelf which faces his bed and proceeds clockwise around the observatory such that chronology begins with his awakening and ends with his return to sleep. The second is that the seed volume is to be found on a bottom shelf in the quadrant containing the heat lamp garden; the story proceeding from there upward and out. Proximity to the water faucets is the third theory; narrative ink flowing from this spring in all directions. The fourth theory is based on the emanation of heat and its privilege as the origin of all life, placing the primary volume as close to the furnace as possible. The four theories implicate, of course, four different books: Spectacles M.S. 1, Nose M.S. 248, Smirk M.S. 399 and Cap M.S. 113. The Spectacles volume is a dictionary of dream interpretation with symbolic cross-referencing among entries. The second, Nose M.S. 248, is a seed catalogue, generously illustrated and sprouting with page marks. Each time the Observer peruses this book, the illustrations seem even larger and more brilliant than before, while the text seems ever faded and obscure. Smirk M.S. 399 is a primer of symbolic logic arranged such that each successive chapter begins toward the front or back of the book alternately with the last chapter occupying the middle. The final book of origin in the Observer's four-fold theory is a treatise on the artificial mutation of metals, divided into three sections: white script on black pages, red script on white pages and black script on red.

The Observer's Journal II

Lately I have been meditating in the comfort of the bath. It is my practice to close my eyes and clear my mind of any present complication, leaving me with a dark, silent whole. From here I begin with the simplest interruption of this tranquil whole as possible -- the subdivision. Anything that comes to my mind in this state I relegate to either/or.

It has occurred to me that the success of this bivalent process might be due to the very element in which I meditate -- water. What, I do wonder, is the connection between this fluid element of wholeness and the precision with which I make logical distinctions?

The Observer & Memory II

Unwinding this latest bandage, the Observer asks himself in vain how many bandages have preceded it since the fall. Perhaps they are in number the same as the times this bandage is wound around his hip. He may have increased the number of layers by one upon each redressing so that an account of his healing duration could be kept: the number of layers plus the assumption that the dressing is changed daily and so on. But he, of course, cannot be sure. If only remembering were like unraveling cloth, seeing each layer in sequence, finding the scroll fixed to its origin like this bandage stuck to this clotted wound. If only he could follow such fraying strands as these, now being plucked individually like hair that grew on the spot.

The Observer & Memory III

Anxious not to misplace and forget his journal again, the Observer takes it in hand and winds around its binding the beginning of a spool he has made with bandage thread tied end to end. From his journal he strings a path to the logic primer, Smirk M.S. 399. He thumbs to the chapter on "Truth from Bivalent Model" and winds the thread twice about the spine so that the slender twine is a book mark of sorts. The Observer eagerly fondles the spool of thread as he reads, wondering what will be next on his string.

The Observer & Water

Before draining his bath, the Observer, now fresh from his meditation, half fills two, narrow-necked, glass jars with the translucent water. One he labels "either", the other, "or". About their necks he loops the bandage thread that leads back to the primer and from there back to his journal.

The Observer eyes the bulbous jars with tentative satisfaction, but is suspicious of what gave him the idea to subdivide the meditative fluid with jars instead of cups or bowls. While the latter are well at hand on the dining table, he has to go into a cupboard for the former. Shifting his stare from the jars in question to his still tender loin, still bare from the bath, the Observer recalls as though gashed anew the jars of blood: one exposed to wind, the other simmering in the oven.

The Observer, Heat & Blood

Within the oven the Observer finds the saucepan full of sand and the jar as he had left them. But inside the jar is not fluid blood; a small, darker lump has taken its place. The Observer rotates the jar in his gloved hands, finding the lump to be quite viscous, almost solid. The loosened lid reveals a ghastly smell, almost reminding him of something else, the way only a smell can. It is an anxious moment in which he remembers other moments arrested by other smells, but not the thing to which the smell itself refers. It is always so. As the Observer hoped, the blood in the jar exposed to wind remains unchanged -- fluid and as bright a red as ever. Indeed the effect of heat is different than the effect of wind and because artificial light produces heat, then wind must be authentic light; must it not? It is this conclusion that the Observer ponders with the same tentative satisfaction he has for the "either/or" bath water. He ponders as he spoons the lump out of the oven jar.

Atlas I

Once upon our broad mother strode
Titanic children of Earth
Among these giants I Atlas was
The greatest

But in Hera's garden now
Lowly I am
Belabored under heaven's weight
Set to keep the sky apart from Earth

Once I youngly strode the Earth
Proudly as a god
With titan kin kept now in deep Tartarus
Sent by godly conquerors of our gigantic grace
And our rightful memory
So many and so long ago I cannot tell their names
From ours

What I know of their sky I feel
Across my back
My eyes are fixed as my feet
Earth is all I see
In posture I am chiseled sure
As garden statuary

Yes I immortal bear burden more
Than even this lone ox loafing along
Lick-tickling now at my feet
-- Hey
Mind your own poem

The Observer's Stone

The lump of viscous blood, almost completely dehydrated, very much resembles a stone. Smoothing the small lump between his palms, the Observer wonders if this token of himself is cataloged in one of his lapidaries. Perhaps it has a name -- his name.

Among the Cap books, the Observer chooses a volume that differentiates precious from common stones, itemizing their qualities. It shimmers with a cover encrusted with glossy stones. The pages devoted to the precious variety are, of course, the first consulted. This is, after all, a precious matter. Most of the stones represented here are acclaimed for their rarity and brilliance: some celebrated for depth of translucency, some for clarity, all for their potential as crafted objects. Of special interest are the diamonds and crystals: diamonds particularized for their permanence and crystals for their capacity for identical, modular replication according to an original form. From one illustrated page to the next he searches, finding each stone more rarefied than the last, but not among them finding his own.

The Observer's Stone II

As none of the other lapidaries on the shelf are as exhaustive as the first, the Observer returns to where he began his search. Perhaps based on properties shared by his and other stones he can determine an affinity. Two or three names are better than none.

The Observer's stone is at least as rare as any described in his lapidary; he is sure of that. But he cannot compare the light refracting qualities of the others with his own. Holding the open book in one hand, he rotates his small, opaque stone in the fingers of the other. Not completely dehydrated, the brown-red lump shows the prints of his fingers when pressed firmly. No catalogued stone has such a malleable quality. But without at least a constant shape, the Observer's stone cannot possibly be matched with another. The flattery of having a stone as rare as his soon dissipates in the remaining vacancy of namelessness.

The Observer's Journal III

There are names, of course, that I have fancied adopting in my desperation. Names I enjoy pronouncing like 'sherbet', 'mountain' and 'juniper' come to mind. If I'm going to be arbitrary, why not have what I like? But if I am going to have a name that really suits, I suppose it ought to at least be descriptive. Among adjectives and adverbs, however, there is nothing compelling, nothing with the substance of a noun. My compromise is to settle on a thing-name that is at least similar if not identical to me. For this thing-name I now search.

Light & the Observer's Stone

After linking the lapidary to his journal by a strand of the bandage thread, the Observer takes to pacing. As he paces he rubs the stone: pacing, rubbing, thinking, pacing. The ritual becomes a meditative, self-reflexive massage.

Does light massage like his fingers or does heat? Bearing in mind the associations of each, the present question again refers to authentic vs. artificial light. The stone's form mutates under the pressure of the Observer's fingers; perhaps like it mutated under the pressure of heat. Yet the breezy quality of authentic light, if indeed wind is authentic light, also exerts pressure, be it ever so slight. The Observer limps back over to the tiny, whistling hole in the sheet that still covers the ventilation duct and confirms again the tactile property of wind; the gentle fabric of his night shirt now waking in the path of air -- night shirt?

The Observer, instantly gripped by the enigma, presses now his memory to account for 'night' shirt. It is like removing the lid of the jar that cooked the stone and smelling a memory that dissipates into air. Yes he still has the matter of tactile light to resolve but what in the observatory is 'night'?

The Observer & Night

It is a comfortable shirt; that is all there is to it, really. The Observer wears it because it is comfortable. 'Night' is possibly a synonym for comfortable, but there is something vaguely insistent about the word, even spooky.

Opening one of the closets behind the Smirk book shelf, the Observer begins removing articles of clothing and sorting them on his bed. There might be some quality shared by his 'night' shirt and his other clothes that will define the mystery word. The trousers, short pants, socks and shoes, which he gathers to the left, are worn by pulling them up onto his body. His robe and other shirts, which he gathers to the right, are donned one arm after the other, over his shoulders and around his chest and torso, buttoning together at the front. The 'night' shirt, however, has no front to tell from back and has no buttons to fasten. To wear it the Observer must lift both his arms above him, look up, and slip the thing over his head. It is the only article of clothing which descends onto him. Perhaps 'night' descends as the Observer descends into bed where he wears the shirt most.

Removing his 'night' shirt, the Observer ties it to a strand of the ever growing, reference thread.

Night, the Stone & the Thread

Returning to the ventilation duct, the Observer takes up again his stone and resumes, in the breeze, his study of light. Pacing as before, his fingers again manipulate the pliable stone, trying to stir a solution. The Observer, in his stride, manages instead to stir a pang of pain from his still tender loin and, while seeking a chair on which to ease himself, finds instead his reference thread under foot, dropping, as he falls, the stone. Picking himself up off of the floor, the Observer picks up his precious stone and drops it again with purpose, watching carefully this time. Yes, this must be a 'night' stone.

It is not so peculiar, though, for things to fall: the Observer often drops books, cutlery, his stylus. Things even fall purposefully: water from the faucet, vegetables into a pot, scraps into the compost. Perhaps 'night' is everywhere in the observatory. But what ever falls upward; what rises without ever coming back down? Is there an equal and opposite property to night that has escaped the Observer's attention, or has he recognized and then lost sight of it like the thread over which he has tripped? For the sake of not losing sight of the thread again, the Observer dips into his remaining jar of blood and daubs the thread at length. Now becoming red, the thread will presumably be more conspicuous and less likely overlooked. The Observer, however, would thankfully trip over the principle of ascension if he could.

The Observer & Water II

Smashed, hopelessly smashed; it is a wonder that the Observer did not hear, when he fell, the two glass jars of water fall too. From a puddle on the floor, the Observer gathers up the sharp remains of the "either/or" water jars: the neck of one snapped, the bulb of the other in shards. He cannot remember why the jars contained water or why they are even strung up to his memory thread, but their destruction must somehow be retrograde to his progress; it is clear.

On his hands and knees, sorting the larger pieces from the fragments, the Observer finds that the remaining bulb of "either" nearly fits the neck of "or". With but a little twisting and grinding, the obstructing shards fall to the puddle, leaving behind them viable edges. The Observer brings to the scene now a lit candle and with its hot drops, endeavors to seal his handiwork. Its air securely corked, the jar is restored to the thread. Beyond this the Observer adds the stone.

The Observer's Journal IV

During my search for a name I have come upon thing-words in my books that might suit: 'chameleon', 'microscope', 'wind-up toy'. But I am more compelled to name myself after a person, even if he is mythical.

Gemini II

Can I travel by water to meet the dead
Gouge a votive pit and wait
Like Odysseus
Or are you Castor farther now than ever we sailed with Jason
For fleece no more golden than your skin

Are your memories now shades as you
Our journeys phantom chase
My calling voice and wrestling arms
Whispers and the breeze
Or would you know the touch of a brother

The Observer's Journal V

In attempts to preserve my memory, I have recently been translating. Though factual details of even my own life consistently escape me, I am thoroughly amazed at how I can retain the sense of something as complex as an entire language. It is my hypothesis that the act of translating may be intrinsically connected to remembering and that somewhere in my studies I will find, if not an account of my past, at least a catalyst for my own recollection. Toward this end I have come across a book that I simply cannot read. Its script is familiar but its syntax is a mystery, as if the letters of the alphabet have been randomly arranged. Committed to my project, though, I have persevered until the very last pages, hoping to find some sense. It is, in fact, on the second to the last page that I found, finally, something intelligible; though it is curious. I here record it: "O time thy pyramids".

Steam, Smell & Memory

Having forgotten the taste of "pickled cabbage", the Observer makes of this jarred commodity his dinner. It may be that the essence of this food is contained within the juice that surrounds it, so the Observer is careful to boil the whole jar unopened. This way whatever makes "pickled cabbage" particular to itself will not be washed away by the tumbling water.

As he is unable to find a recipe for cooking "pickled cabbage", the Observer must guess at the time it takes to heat. Reasonably, he considers it equivalent to the time it takes him to wash his dishes and set the table in preparation to eat. With a hungry anticipation the Observer retrieves the jar with gloved hands. The loosened lid reveals a ghastly smell, almost reminding him of something else, the way only a smell can. It is an anxious moment in which he remembers other moments arrested by other smells, but not the thing to which the smell itself refers. It is always so.

In this instance, however, the Observer spies a clue which he, in attempts not to be burned, has up till now avoided: steam. Palls of steam rise from the jar like the mysterious smell. It is transparent like smell and dissipates like memory. What is more, it is ever ascending.

The Observer, Water & Memory

If steam could be tied to a string, the Observer surely would so it could not be forgotten. Instead, he sits as closely to the stove as he dares, contemplating the vapors rising from a pot of boiling water. It is as though the water is thinking as well: tumbling like the Observer's own mind, heating like the brow of the Observer now forming beads of sweat. Perhaps thoughts rise like steam and disappear into the atmosphere and are sometimes breathed back in as memories. Perhaps his thoughts escape through the ventilation duct and are remembered by someone else outside the observatory. Might he, then, remember the thoughts of others? What if all his memories are no more than thoughts of others? It may be why he cannot remember his 'own' life, why he has no name. The Observer's eyes begin to blur and sting from his dribbling beads of sweat. Such a bewildering speculation may explain much, but he cannot possibly concede himself to such nihilism. More surely even than he now breathes and sweats he must go on trying to remember, if for no other reason than to prove that he is he, whoever he is.

The Observer, Water & Memory II

When he sits and meditates in his tub, perhaps it is the relative heat of the water that allows him to think so clearly. It is heat that translates water into steam, which is like thinking, so perhaps he need merely increase the temperature of his bath water to find a solution to memory. But he could never sit in a tub of boiling water long enough to think of anything but getting out. No, there must be some other way of testing steam.

Pacing back to the stove, the Observer resumes his contemplation of the boiling pot. If thought is the production of steam and memory is steam recaptured, then his problem is simply one of containing steam. Reaching for a lid, the Observer covers the steaming pot. It is a sight he must see almost every time he cooks. There seems nothing new now, even when he pays special attention. The Observer lifts the lid to re-examine the steam itself but notices something else. Tiny drops of water drip from the lid. It was dry before covering the pot, he is sure. Yet now, after containing steam, the lid drips water.

The Observer, Water & Memory III

With a blanket draped over his head, the Observer now hovers over the pot of boiling water. Steam gathers around the Observer's head, heating every inch of his skin so that he can feel his very pores opening to receive memory. The Observer takes deep breaths, coughing after each. Feeling the sweat dripping from his throbbing face, the Observer looks for the driplets' traces in the tumbling water below. Nothing can be discerned in the bubbling tumult, however. Once they fall from the Observer's skin, his drops of sweat are lost in the boiling flux.

Flushed with the heat and moisture, the Observer throws off the blanket and withdraws. Upwardly the released steam drifts, dissipating into the blur of sweat through which the Observer looks. His eyes sting less when he looks down and allows the sweat to fall clear of his face. Now his droplets of almost captured memory fall to the floor before the stove, mingling with the dust. The Observer falls to his hands and knees to see more closely as the drops are more visible here than in the pot. They are more distinct. With his eyes still a blur, however, the Observer cannot discern much detail, so he scrambles to his reading stand for his magnifying glass.

The Observer, Dust & Memory

So many drops of sweat in dust; he does not know which is first. With his reading glass the Observer tries to isolate each detail. One trickles along on a journey toward the stove. Two others reach together as though straining to touch. Still others meet and mingle in a single, muddy stream. One more just stays in one place quivering as though pressed under weight. Which one of these memories is his; can they be told apart? Perhaps his memory is the conglomerate of all, slowly mixing into mud.

Lyra & Aquila II

Tangled looming thread
Loops fastened tight along strands
Lines bound but not joined

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I wove about my loom
Pulling thread

You came by boldly
Leading your ox
Playing circles around me

So we went on gazing together
Until my weaving I forgot
And you your ox untethered

When Father relented
I married you Hikobishi
We mingled and never left our bed

Father abhorred our unattended duties
He sent you away then
Across the river of swirling eddies

You dragged your feet when you went
I have not stopped scowling
I can see from here where you were sent

If you brave to
Come cross the river
I will come as far as the bank to meet you

The Observer & the Lady II

Seeing his dust puddles quiver, the Observer turns to see the cause of the sudden draft. Poised above him in the rush of authentic light is a female figure holding in her right hand an orb and in her left a grail; both enigmas supported by crutches under her arms. She gazes down at the prostrate Observer as though he should recognize her; on her face all the patience of a saintly statue staring down at grief. While the one postures with a stare unyielding, the other averts his eyes, trying not to notice his visitor's shift. And so the oration begins:

"So sinks the mind in deep despair
 And sight grows dim; when storms of life
 Blow surging up the weight of care,
 It banishes its inward light
 And turns in trust to the dark without.
 This was the man who once was free
 To climb the sky with zeal devout
 To contemplate the crimson sun,
 The frozen fairness of the moon --
 Astronomer once used in joy
 To comprehend and to commune
 With planets on their wandering ways.
 This man, this man sought out the source
 Of storms that roar and rouse the seas;
 The spirit that rotates the world,
 The cause that translocates the sun
 From shining East to watery West".

In a pause the Observer glances up to see his lecturer wipe the corners of her excited mouth.

"Now see that mind that searched and made
 All nature's hidden secrets clear
 Lie prostrate, prisoner of night.
 His neck bends low in shackles thrust,
 And he is forced beneath the weight
 To contemplate the lowly dust."

A commendation on this orator's subtle rhyme scheme would be his most appropriate response, but what the Observer wants most to commend is her ability to come and go as she pleases. In an attempt to express his desire to go with her, the Observer reaches for the hem of her dusty gown. Recoiling with a dusty swoosh of flowing fabric and grace (astonishing for someone propped on crutches), the Lady draws out of his reach: "Nolimetangere"! So she departs with a turn; dropping onto the Observer's bed her orb. The torn fabric covering the ventilation duct flaps in the draft behind her.

The Observer & the Orb

Round, glossy, dark; from every angle it is the same. The tiny spot of reflected light on its surface follows the Observer as he circles around the bed. Lifting the orb requires both hands as its weight is as substantial as its curiousness. Now the Observer stands still and rotates the orb but its spot of light will not be moved, its stare as unyielding as its smooth, marble surface. There is no seam or underside that the Observer can find, but, no matter how quickly he rotates it, always there is the plane that he cannot see. Like his memory, it is the perfect puzzle.

Laying his flat hand on the orb, it becomes obvious to the Observer that the orb's curve is constituted of countless flat planes, all producing tangents when so touched. The Observer can point in any direction with such a given tangent and observe, this way, anything in the observatory. To say that all tangents proceeding from the curve of the orb are joined to a particular point of the observatory such that all points of the observatory are joined to the orb by such a single tangent is at least a start.

The Observer & the Pop-up Book

Searching for a book on the properties of the sphere, the Observer finds himself dragging his forefinger across the spines of geometrical books, scanning their titles as he goes: *On Concentricity*, *Principles of Trigonometry*, *The Sphere as Orbit*. Appearing to be the oldest of the books on the subject, this last volume perks the Observer's brow and is taken in hand. Whenever possible, the Observer prefers to begin with the most original source. While pulling *The Sphere as Orbit* from the shelf, the Observer sends tumbling another volume which falls to the floor open, revealing a delicate paper sculpture.

Fascinated by anything that falls to him from above, the Observer's attention is immediately engrossed in the fine detail of snips and tucks apparent in the book. Attached to the verso and recto page faces open are paper strips that form a circle subdivided into quadrants. This array is arched over by twelve, slender ribs, forming the longitudinal lines of a dome. At the turning of the next page, a column fashioned of folded paper rectangles rises from the floor. The column occupies the very centre of a two-dimensionally illustrated circle, but does not seem at all bound by it. The column seems in stead to float above the page in the airy, three-dimensional continuum of space around it.

Gathering up this marvelous book from the floor, the Observer strings the red thread that leads from the stone between the pages that contain the paper column, now left open on the reading table.

The Observer & the Tower

With some effort, the Observer begins to move his wooden furniture from the centre of the room. First his reading stand with its featured book, then the stool to match, followed in order of increasing magnitude by the arm chairs and, finally, the dining table. At the four corners of the newly cleared space, the Observer places the four books of origin: Spectacles M.S. 1, Nose M.S. 248, Smirk M.S. 399 and Cap M.S. 113 (one still entangled by the thread). Next he proceeds to collect the rest of his books from their shelves, piling them in their four sequences toward the middle. At first he stacks them face to face, as they are most stable, but soon the Observer finds that standing the books up and opening them about 45° allows him to fill more space with fewer volumes. His structure, then, assumes the pattern of alternating layers: one of books stood on end, the next of books laid horizontally, supported by the spines of the layer below. The Observer ascends the structure as he builds.

He cannot recall observing before the mutability of his books as clearly as this. Once only supported by a structure (the bookshelves) they now constitute a structure altogether different. They are the universal and adaptable matter of the observatory from which all his endeavors proceed and back to which all his experience is committed. Perhaps they are the building blocks of his memory as well as his knowledge.

Orion II

His eye was on the mountain
The old man's
Hands on his head
Empty basket on his back
This ascent not the journey of youth

What does it mean to go up the mountain
Bent with age in body and mind
Climbing to mount the sky

Light comes down
Comes rain comes
Down comes law
But up goes age

He carried in his basket his marble head at last
Hauled it up the mountain
Walked straight off into the clouds
He did
Not once look back he did

The Observer & the Tower II

It is with a methodical, pyramidal progression that the Observer reaches the point at which he has no more books to stack, a point he supposes to be the top. From here the observatory is just as round as it always was, but in a different way. There is a roundness all the way around him now, as though he were airborne. From here it seems as though he can move in any direction. Downward he sees the familiar arrangement of shelves. From this perspective, however, they more obviously divide the observatory into quadrants. At their ends still rest the marble busts of the astronomers but Spectacles has on the top of his head a bald spot previously unnoticed. Above, the dome is even more a dome. He can almost hear its roundness. Taking advantage of this new vantage point, the Observer squints to see if this apparent perfection bares any cracks or holes, but is not surprised to find that spheres are as impenetrable from within as from without.

The thread with which the Observer has connected various items of the observatory is now visible as a whole below, winding its way around book shelves and between articles of furniture, joined to one of the four corners of his tower itself by a book. It is a web of sorts, but more like the divisions on a map or perhaps the map's roads themselves. It is a puzzle to find its point of origin, but from here the Observer locates what looks to be a scroll and most closely to it, a book. If a book, it must be one of the only books not now a brick; judging from the tremor under the Observer's feet, perhaps the one brick desperately missed.

It is not clear to the Observer whether his path toward the floor is as curved as the space from which he falls or is merely a tangent, but the view while falling is indeed dizzyingly circular.

The Observer & the Fall

And his books were scattered in all directions so that he does not recognize one from another or from whence they came but only that all are out of order. Each lays open at a random page, offering a discourse different from the next. Issuing from his own mouth, the Observer's blood trickles down his cheek. The Observer tries to pronounce the substance of his discourse -- "bloooul" -- but does not recognize his own utterance. He has bitten his tongue in his head-long flight. Blood is now what his tongue speaks. It seems to the Observer worthy of committing to page -- "bleeding is speaking".

The Observer's Survey

The Observer cannot remember his books ever looking less like a library. Not only are they out of order, they do not even physically relate to one another the same as they did before the fall. Instead of sitting face to back on the shelves in rows as though drafted, they lie about, some open, some on end, possessing different planes altogether as though sculpted. The assembly looks more like a landscape now than a proper mindscape. It seems that now the Observer has less of a chance than ever to organize his books; to organize his memory. Only the slender thread winding around the observatory is unchanged -- orderly -- so along its course the Observer treads. The Observer now begins counting his steps, starting with "one" at every object bound to the thread. Orb to book, book to little red stone perhaps all that ascends in the observatory must fall again. Little red stone to silken shirt, silken shirt to book, book to bulbous, glass jar perhaps all change is illusion. Glass jar to book to book to, finally, scroll perhaps all effort is vain. It is with this melancholy that the Observer now surveys his apparent ruins, biting on a towel to stop the bleeding in his mouth. From counting it is apparent that the lengths between objects on the thread diminish from orb to scroll. Biting, pacing, counting, pacing, biting, he hopes for a clotting of blood into a scab and thought into idea.

The Observer & Intervals

In order to pace the length of the entire thread again, the Observer strides a straight line between the scroll and the orb -- the two terminus points. As the thread winds throughout the observatory, this distance is shorter to walk than turning around and pacing the thread's length the opposite direction. The Observer counts his steps as he walks. Though this distance is unthreaded, continuing to count seems only right as it makes a continuum of the course. Meditating on the various numbers of paces tread between the various objects on the thread, the Observer realizes that the unthreaded distance between the scroll and the orb is exactly twice that between the two neighbouring books connected by the thread further back (or further ahead, depending on his perspective). This simple yet precise relationship inspires the Observer to re-pace the other distances carefully. Apparently all of the distances can be more or less neatly reduced to smaller numbers.

The Observer & Intervals II

With some wire used mostly for hanging framed diagrams, the Observer measures out scaled down lengths in correspondence to the great red strand. At first he sets the cut pieces of wire end to end, hinging them as the larger thread meanders through the observatory, but soon places them side by side according to magnitude so that their relative lengths are most apparent. It is this relative length that prompts the Observer to fix the wire strands onto a board with nails in sequence. Stretched tautly as they are, the wires vibrate under the Observer's slightest touch. When the Observer brushes his hand across the set, a strange but soothing harmony issues. It is a welcome accompaniment to his meditation.

The Observer's Instrument

Pacing the length of the meandering thread, the Observer strums his wire and wood contraption, humming to match the tune. Plucking two strings simultaneously, the Observer hears that the relationship between the strings of different length is sonic as well as spatial. It is easier to hum along when only one of the eight strings are played, but the sound of harmony is irresistible. The Observer's song matches that of his instrument about as apparently as the instrument resembles the long, red strand from which it is derived. Stranger than the tune produced is, however, the discrepancy between the thread itself and its model -- the instrument. Yet undeniable is the fact that the instrument and even, perhaps, its music are representative of the thread; that a tone depends on the length of the string that produces it. When the Observer plucks the dull, red string, it drags behind his finger as far as he pulls. There is no tension, no resilience. There is, as a result, no sound. Strange as it seems, the small, derivative model of the thread possesses a greater, more mesmerizing power -- music. Perhaps his mute library can also be reduced to a model as taut and resonant as this simple harp. Perhaps his memory is a tune he has not yet the instrument to play.

The Observer & the Atlas

It is with a certain confidence in the unknowable totality of his library that the Observer begins searching for the appropriate book. If the observatory is now a landscape, then there must be for it a corresponding atlas. Such a book is, like his instrument, a model of distances scaled down. In an atlas there exists a correspondence between subject and representation that allows for the concentration of detail. In such a model there are crafted, more total visions available that are missed when one is surrounded by overwhelming detail. It is possible that until now, the Observer simply has not seen his library for leafing through all of his books.

The Observer & Flatness

The task of sorting through the library for a source could not be more desperate, now that all the books are scattered about. Having previously moved the floor lamp over by the tub in order to clear the room for the pyramid, the Observer now finds the immediate light insufficient to read the titles of his books. With the intention of locating an atlas, the Observer takes the lamp now in hand and carries it around the random stacks, looking for a place to set it down. The shadows cast by the light in motion are something of a novelty. Holding the lamp up at its usual height produces very little effect, but tilting it down close to the floor exaggerates the shadows until they nearly reach the perimeter wall. The shadows, when cast as far as possible, become faint but illustrate what appears to be a curve on the floor: not like the total curve of the wall, but subtle like the warp on a table top. The floor seems flat enough when walked upon, but the shadows prove it to taper off from the centre of the room in all directions, emulating, if ever so slightly, the vault of the ceiling.

Atlas II

With the other titans nothing could be done
Best a cavern better than forgetting
Argus grouped the World's edge
From Olympus Zeus said farther
Furrowed mountain's underside
Zeus said deeper
Cracked brimstone smelled a hoary wake
Zeus said farther still
Argus mauled deeper in
Blurring molten spumed to melt the sky
Of guilt

Look deeper
Came to where everywhere is up
Planted feet and called hoarsely Zeus
There

But for Atlas there was the sky
Vaulted heavy blue
Across his shoulders heavy laid
Zeus this load
This titanic imposition

Atlas did not know whether sky needed keeping
From Earth or Earth from sky
But in the squint width of his margin
He has eternity to ponder

The Observer & the Atlas II

It is, of course, possible that he has merely overlooked the volume in his search, but to the Observer's best reckoning there is not an atlas of the observatory to be found. Not all books that the Observer seeks are those he ends up reading, however. Perhaps the actual map of the observatory which orders all of the library's contents is not apparently an atlas at all. Few answers sought in a book are revealed in its title. Perhaps one of the books all ready at the Observer's feet is the book he seeks, requiring for the admission to its mysteries only the trouble of translation.

From the pile closest to where he stands, the Observer takes up a single volume, the first in a similarly bound series: white letters grace a cover of blue, surrounded by an endless key design -- more Greek. Inside, text is accompanied by diagrams also appearing to need translation. They describe celestial bodies and their courses, recorded in several versions; it is a cosmic atlas.

The Observer & Spheres

After clearing the books of his fallen tower away from the very centre of the observatory, the Observer searches in his drawers for his stylus and a knife. With the stylus, eight concentric circles are drawn on the observatory floor, proceeding outward at tight and constant intervals from a dot where he perceives the very centre of the floor to be. Beginning with the orb, the Observer then cuts loose all the objects connected along the red thread that meanders between bookshelves and furniture, taking each to the cleared area as he goes. The orb he places on the dot -- Earth. Placed then on the equidistant rings in the order they are retrieved are a book of paper sculptures -- the Moon, the little red stone -- Mercury, the silken shirt -- Venus, a book covered in tiny, glittering stones -- the Sun, a sealed but empty bulbous jar -- Mars, the book used as a corner of the tower -- Jupiter and a slim, homemade book still bound in red string -- Saturn. Along the curve of the outermost ring is finally unfurled the scroll, embracing the arrangement as the sphere of fixed stars does the planetary system.

Now there is nothing meandering about the objects formerly connected by the thread. Their arrangement is now uniform and concentric about the mysterious object that is the orb. It is a model that the Observer can contemplate while sitting in one place; his immobility perhaps an intensifier of his concentration. Perhaps if he stays still and meditates upon his equally static model, he will hear in its harmony, his story, his memory.

Books & the Sky

Just beyond the circumference of the scroll containing the twelve "Chronicles of the Sky", the Observer begins stacking books into piles. In the quadrant of the observatory containing the stove, he positions two stacks close together, one slightly larger than the other -- Aries. Moving now to the quadrant of the vegetable garden, the Observer gathers several books together to make Aldebaran, completing Taurus with piles much smaller. Now at the head of his bed where he can hear the current of air issuing from the vent, the Observer places two piles of equal size next to one another -- Castor and Pollux. Only the bright orange cover of the top book on the one distinguishes it from the other. In parallel alignment on either side of his bed, the Observer positions the remaining stars of Gemini. Three low but equal stacks of books compose Cancer, the constellation now arranged near the tub.

Gemini III

Oh what sadness Jupiter saw
Castor cold among the shades
Pollux ablaze to reach him
Yet man immortal cannot join one who knows of death
Brothers they be they cannot be
Together

Petitions were wept at Jupiter's feet
Gladly Pollux would add his blood to tears
But grimly shook Jupiter's head at his noble son
Who shook with grief for Castor who shook with cold

No more could Pollux shed his grace
Than Castor collect his blood
But swept up by the wept down tears
Jupiter conceived a noble consolation
Suiting his nobly conceived son
The consolation a constellation
The image of Pollux and Castor set
In the sky together
Ethereal epitaph to brotherhood
For them to admire

The Observer & Books

There is, of course, no reason why the constellations should be limited to one medium. Their form can be just as aptly reproduced in another as all are derivatives of the original, ideal form. Even the constellations of stars described in the Observer's books are representations of the ideal. The essence of the form is present in the books' descriptions and in the arrangement of the books themselves. There is no need to observe the originals. Besides, from this observatory, there is no way to observe them. It is all the Observer can do to meditate on their representation.

Furniture & the Sky

Leo is next, constructed in the quadrant of the stove. Of the dining table the Observer makes the lion's body. He tips it on its side so that its broadest surface shows in profile, then props it up upon two wooden, straight-back chairs. Now equipped with legs, the lion is given a towel tail and is completed with a chair tipped on its back, precariously mounted on the table as a head. The maiden Virgo is depicted reclined on top of the garden table, formed of potted plants re-arranged with respect to contour. The Observer drapes over this sculpture one of his shirts for the sake of discretion. On either side of his reading stand, the Observer balances a stool such that the legs grapple onto the stand's horizontal braces. This rendition of Libra is positioned near the Observer's bed. The sprawling scorpion winds its way around the bath tub in lengths of towels and clothes, the stinger fashioned of a serving fork.

The Observer & Furniture

The new arrangement of furniture prompts the Observer to also move his floor lamp so it is closer to his reading stand. As it is carried around the still substantial obstructions of scattered books, it casts new shadows with every turn of direction. The sprawling forms of Scorpius, Leo and Virgo are even more exaggerated as silhouettes on the wall. Balancing the lamp almost horizontally, the Observer manages to dramatize even small and level Libra, now bent out of scale. Though the lamp adds to the constellations the enhancing effect of motion, the tall shadows produced look no more like a scorpion, lion, maiden or scales than does the furniture at any other time. But in his cavern, bound by his knowledge, it seems all the Observer can do to see shadows of figures of stars on a wall.

Food & the Sky

From Aries the Observer retrieves one of his cook books and prepares dinner. On his stove he recognizes his kettle to be Sagittarius. As the Observer spreads out the spinach leaves to be cut for his soup, he sees in one the shape of Capricorn. Pouring the boiled water from Sagittarius in with the vegetables, the Observer spills a little on the floor and watches carefully as the splash and trickling rivulets form Aquarius. While slurping his Capricorn soup, the Observer notes that his especially rooked spoon is fashioned remarkably like Pisces. By now the Observer is much too consumed in speculation to continue eating, so he methodically cleans up: rinsing out Sagittarius and replacing it onto the stove, committing the Capricorn steams to the garden compost, hanging to dry in front of the vent the cloth with which Aquarius was wiped, placing Pisces in the sink to be washed with the bowl.

The Observer & Food

The Observer wonders to what he owes his creativity that can transform food into constellations. Perhaps there is an intrinsic quality to food that generates or, rather, regenerates things. When the Observer eats, his food, as he understands, is digested and re-creates into something else not resembling food at all. It may also be that it is he and not the food that possesses the digestive/creative power. Perhaps he owes all his creativity to this phenomena of digestion; all the Observer comes into contact with being transformed somehow by him. With regards to memory, this digestion may be a symptom of the Observer's ailment. Perhaps the Observer's creativity is a result of his faulty memory like his unrecognizably digested food is of his digestion. There is comfort in knowing that to digest is to nourish, but at the same time the Observer's frustrating cycle of learning, forgetting and re-creating seems by this quality only perpetuated.

The Observer & Epicycles

Now there seem to be cycles everywhere in the observatory, connected to one another. Seeds from which the Observer grows his vegetables are taken from vegetables that the Observer grows. Vegetables out of which the Observer makes his meals are grown in earth fertilized with vegetable scrap compost. Pots, dishes and utensils used in the preparation and eating of a meal are washed, stored, used, washed and stored in relation to the cycle of vegetable growth and consumption. Books that the Observer reads lead to experiments and the writing of notes on them which, in turn, are collected into books. Incorporating these larger cycles is the Observer's more frequent pattern of rising from bed, performing his toilette, dressing, eating, working, cooking, eating, cleaning, undressing, bathing and going back to sleep. Contained within any of these other cycles, of course, and likely in sympathy with them, is the activity in which the Observer is now engaged: his vary pacing around the observatory -- roundly and around.

If there is no limit to the minute gestures incorporated in this total system of cycles, perhaps there is no limit to the grandest ones either. As the Observer looks for and notices discrete repetitions, there may well be enormous cycles still unseen. Perhaps all that the Observer does and even knows is hurled around in a continuous curve of time and space unrecognized. Inspired to sit by the dizzying notion, the Observer turns Polaris to face the planetary system. Can he ever assemble the number of circles it would take to make a model of his cosmos?

The Observer & the Orb II

Removing the Earth from the centre of the planetary system, the Observer resumes his usual form of meditation -- pacing. With him he carries the mysterious orb, making the rounds of the observatory. The Observer recalls that the cosmic atlas is supposed to be the model of the library that will facilitate his memory. Yet he models the library after the cosmic atlas. Is he to find memory in the atlas or the library; which is the original form and which the model? Now the observer rotates the orb in his hands as he rotates around the observatory. He stares at the turning orb as though expecting to see the answer to his question appear on the horizon.

Orion III

He tread upon cloud fields sewn with birds
 Deep in strata snow
 Beyond the mountain everywhere was
 The silent season of the old

He reached into his basket for his heavy marble head
 But pulled out the Sun instead
 A fine thing to be carrying unawares

Searching for a place to set the Sun he carried it around the sky
 For half the journey in his basket
 Specks of light sprinkled through the weave

So he went on searching roundly for the Sun's proper place
 In the sky pacing night and day

Light in the Centre

Staring intently at the orb, the Observer rounds the corner of the book shelf next to his reading stand and walks quite squarely into the lamp. It seems that he has forgotten where he left it last. There is a certain obviousness about a thing when he collides with it so. At the same time it is as though the thing is in the wrong place altogether and that he should have paid more attention to it in the first place. Obviously his cosmic model of the observatory has not improved even the most facile precinct of his memory. Perhaps it is not the model for which he seeks at all. It may be that there does not yet exist the ideal model.

Gathering together blank sheets of paper, the Observer now resolves to make the necessary atlas himself. Notes made from diligent observation must replace his re-contemplation of existing models if he is ever to break free of circular perpetuation. The Observer begins by placing the lamp in the centre of the observatory where it seems most sensible; from here its light is most evenly distributed. Under this new, luminous focal point, the Observer takes up his stylus and begins his task of recording the observatory.

The Observer & the Sky

In the observatory, the sky is everywhere. No book contains a word more or less than does at least one galaxy contains stars; no sentence more or less phrases than at least one solar system contains planets; no word more or less modifiers than at least one planet possesses moons. No two or three or six chairs or tables stand in a relation to one another not already founded in some constellation; no thread of fabric or grain of wood follows a path unblazed by some satellite. No instrument measures any increment not divisible by a ratio that produces celestial music. It is the Observer's task to note of his observatory everything.

The Observer's Log

Lacking means more precise, I now undertake charting in my observatory with the use of my hands. Facing the lion in the quadrant of the stove, I raise a thumb and use one eye to measure -- 16 widths. That is the same as four times the distance between thumb and index finger when held at arm's length. The kettle on the stove just behind is not quite a quarter of that width -- 3 thumbs. To the immediate left -- 5 thumbs to the left -- the chair is a substantial 7. But there seems to be a difference between observing with one eye and another. Closing one and opening the one to the right shifts my thumb considerably to the left. In order to make this record accurate, I must take this discrepancy into account, perhaps making multiple measurements of the same object.

The Observer & the Cosmic Text

When the Observer reads the sky, the grammar of the cosmos is unmistakable. Celestial bodies are nouns which are located by adjectives and altered according to verbs. The subject-object relationship is a matter of perspective, as are mood and tense. In the solar system, for example, the subject is the Sun which exerts force by way of the verb on the planetary, direct object and its moon, the indirect object, all adjectively modified in relation to the rest of the galaxy. If the phrase represents a single body, such as a planet, then a clause incorporates a planet and its moon while a sentence constitutes a solar system.

In the increasing magnitudes of subordination, reference and generic cohesion, the Observer reels with the prospects. Is the universe an essay, a book, an encyclopedia, or is it only a prospectus or a treatise of one? Is the universe literary or expository, poetic or prosaic? Does it prescribe or describe, elegize or satirize, or is it merely inert? In the decreasing magnitudes of textual subtlety, the Observer is also lost. Prefixes, roots and suffixes, morphemes and phonemes, the very contour of an 'o', all seem incalculably significant to the exegetical eye.

The Observer's Log II

It has occurred to me that I can, perhaps, increase precision with proximity. My distance from the objects to be measured must effect the discrepancy with my thumb. But, of course, moving out of the centre of the observatory to get closer to one object will undermine my constant point of reference for the rest. So it is with my reading glass that I now correct my initial observations. If it can make text easier to read, then so might it entire books at a distance.

It is with disappointment that I report my present findings: magnification only exaggerates the shifting thumb phenomena. I still lack a certain measurement. Far am I from failure, however. This matter, like all others, can be reasoned through; sound conclusions derived from sound premises and like deduction.

- ☐ *Thumb shifts when observed by different eyes.*
- ☐ *The distance between two eyes (the pupils, that is) is 4 thumbs -- this is a constant.*
- ☐ *Magnification increases distortion*
- ☐ *Observer's seat of observation must remain fixed.*

So then, if the base line of differentiation between my 2 vantage points (eyes) is 4, and the more magnification I have, so I have differentiation, then but how can so many vantage points lead to a single, certain measurement?

The Observer & the Cosmic Text II

If the universe is a story, then does it have many characters? Are they all related in their fictive fortunes or do they meet and pass one another only incidentally? Do they even know one another to exist? What could be a story worthy of the universe: a comedy, a tragedy, a romance, a myth?

Lyra & Aquila III

Drying piled lumps
Soft when the ox first dropped them
Unlikely treasure

Behind him Hikobishi's faithful ox deposited
A solution piled neatly at river's bank
Smoothed between hands and counted out
This manna would ford the water

So Hikobishi tossed his floating stones
And hopped one to next
But under his weight they quickly sank
And Hikobishi with them

Looming thread still clutched in her anxious hands
Tanabata chased bobbing Hikobishi along the river's length

She found him at her father's mill
Fetches up on a water wheel

Tanabata cried from her eyes
But he from nose and mouth

She wound her ample looming thread
About the boy's passing head
Around then her own and followed

Now they gaze from either side
Of the Milky Way

But being so caught up did she
Take in his knowledge with his water
Before the indifferent mill-wheel let her choke

The Observer & Concentricity

Books, arch, vent, books, arch, tub, books, arch, stove, books, arch, plants, books, arch, vent, books, arch around the observatory there is a rhythm unmistakably produced by circles; or so it seems to the pacing Observer. Along the curved, perimeter wall the Observer drags his finger over the seams of the wood panels as though over the spines of books; the repetitive bump on his knuckle slowing him down until, now still, he stands before an arch. It is one of the four arches that joins the wall to the book shelves, round like the others and the dome; or so it seems to the stationary Observer. As the arches are placed, the Observer cannot see all or even two at once so he cannot be certain that they are the same size, only that they are round. Of course, if the arches are not the same size, then even if the book shelves are the same length and equidistant from the centre of the observatory, the diameter of the observatory cannot be uniform. In fact, there may not even be a proper diameter at all.

With all haste the Observer clutches the nearest book from the floor and places it short side against the wall, flipping it end over end along the line of the shelf. Arch - 4, shelf - 12, so the Observer progresses across what he supposes to be the diameter of the observatory. Shelf - 12, arch -- as he feared: 4 lengths of the book plus almost a hand's width. As it is possible that his measurement is not accurate, the Observer repeats his survey, this time from the opposite direction.

The result is as consistent as the Observer's diligence in measuring forth and back and forth and back and forth. Round as it seems, the observatory must not be perfectly so; the Observer's pacing course around the lamp, not a circle.

The Observer & Spots

It is a disturbing idea, that the observatory is not perfect. From his pacing course the Observer now stares at what he used to think was the exact centre -- the lamp. Was the observatory always slightly oblong, or has it, in a course of unknowable duration, altered? Is it even the prerogative of the observatory to change? The possibility of seeing such change in action prompts the Observer to now fix his eyes on the perimeter wall, expecting from it perhaps an undulation. On the wall, moving at the same speed as the Observer's pace, is a glowing spot. It is somewhat hazy to be sure, but it is certainly luminous. The colour of it is not, however, fixed; but seems to undulate from orange to yellow to white and back to orange. Stopping, the Observer sees the spot stop too. He cranes his neck closer for a better look, but no larger does the spot ever get. Instead of becoming vivified with inspection, it actually fades into white until, now, gone.

The Observer resumes his regiment of pace and focuses again on the lamp where there is no exact centre, rejoining his meditation. There is a kind of mutability in his books. That is obvious. As much as he can move them around, so they change in appearance at least. But really, how much does their content change? He may not be able to remember all that he reads, but don't contents of the books stay constant -- or do they? Perhaps he cannot remember the total content of his library because the contents of his books are somehow different every time he reads them. Turning his stare from the lamp to the empty book case beside him, the Observer spies the spot again, now between the shelves. Again, however, it fades upon inspection.

It is now the garden before which the Observer stands. This he knows for certain to change. Plants grow from seeds and are snipped regularly for the pot. Is the alleged change of the observatory in his control or not, for he plants the seeds and does the snipping, but what actually makes the plants grow? The Observer stares quite earnestly at the heating lamps above the garden: 12 glowing sources of change. Now 12 spots appear among the plants, darting around stems and leaves in formation as the Observer chases them.

The Observer & the Atlas III

With very little surprise, the Observer finds in the path of his fretted pacing a small bundle of papers that bear his script. Quite odd, however, is the fact that the pages contain only one clause each: "authentic light is wind"; "bleeding is writing"; "cooking is experimentation"; "bleeding is speaking". It is a poor economy of paper, certainly, but there seems among these pages a profound economy of meaning. If only he could reduce every page of his library to one clause

Perhaps he has come across the beginning of a solution to memory he once found and then forgot. These pages may be the model for a book of such clauses that reduce his whole library -- his whole memory. Perhaps the points recorded on his observatory's atlas should not be entire books but single words that represent them. proximity on the map could correspond to the likeness of things represented by words; his atlas could be an atlas of metaphor.

The Observer & Observation

He wonders at length "why is memory incomplete"; "why is the night sky dark ?" If a person were as humanity itself, would he remember every detail of every revelation, or would he keep revealing the same phenomena over and over, having, in time, forgotten the previous occasion? Are the revelations knowledge and the recognition of the cycle wisdom? Or is the cycle all one can ever really know? Perhaps memory is complete but only doomed to reproduce itself as new knowledge is found, forgotten and found. Perhaps the universe is infinitely retracting from past into present and expanding from present into future like knowledge. Perhaps the night sky is dark because the universe has only a memory: the light that travels after a star has gone dark, the habit of an orbiting moon. Perhaps the universe can only know the patterns of its regeneration.

The Observer & the Atlas IV

If the likeness of the contents in two or three books can be arranged according to proximity, perhaps the scale of the entire library can be reduced to one book which contains representative illustrations, like an atlas. Set on a grid, the likeness of two things can be measured by their distance apart. Self congruency can be expressed by the singularity of an item (there being no distance, for example, between it and itself) and absolute dissonance expressed by sheer distance. At a glance, therefore, the Observer can discern a thing by a representation of its appearance and understand its relation to other things.

These constellations of objects could be sorted according to some general categories in order to group them into charts that fit on individual pages, but the dilemma of choosing these categories remains. Should objects be separated from actions? Should animate objects be separated from the inanimate? Should Should Or is the secret in associating the uncategorically similar?

Expansion & Contraction

In his efforts to reduce the library to an intelligible scale, the Observer seems to have happened upon an irony. If his task of constructing the atlas is successful, then he has indeed succeeded in concentrating the library but has also produced another book. Similarly, all of the writing that he has produced, within his memory or beyond, has increased the library. As he cannot recall all of the notes, diagrams and entire books that he might have composed, he can only suppose the amount to be uncertain but ever increasing. If his present composition is realized, will it indeed succeed, or will it only perpetuate the growth of the very library he wishes to shrink?

Perhaps there is a point at which the number of books, though ever increasing, becomes irrelevant compared to the knowledge achieved in them; though information grows, if that information is a summary of all else, perhaps knowledge actually consolidates. It may be that the Observer has reached, with his atlas, this critical point at which an ever expanding library becomes an ever contracting one. Each book ever written, however, may also be both an addition and a culmination of existing knowledge: the present consciousness of a continuous but receding memory; each the centre of a library both ever expanding and contracting.

Atlas III

Of all the gardens of all the gods in all the World
Hercules came into Hera's
An axe to grind

In Hera's garden grew an apple tree
A tree of immortality
A forgotten wedding gift
-- Oh my
 What a lovely apple tree of immortality
 I know just where I'll put it --
93 apples exactly
Atlas could not count how often he had counted
Hercules only wanted one

Never did they all ripen at once
Nor did they ever drop off
Each swelled and shrunk on its branch in turn
Blood's red alveoli
Never had he seen one picked

So what in the World did Atlas care if Hercules helped himself
But a mortal's hands heroic though be
Might well as strangle him as pick from the tree
Only titan Atlas could dare

In exchange for the favour Hercules relieved
Atlas of vaulted heaven
Only time enough to accomplish this last of 12 poetic labours

In his titan hand the red fruit was soft
Yielding even to the print of his thumb
He could mold of it what he pleased
It seemed
This moment plucked from eternity

Did Atlas forget his eternity of labour
 Or squeeze between Earth and sky willingly
 With the forbidden fruit did he not pluck
 The knowledge that he was free

The Observer & the Paper Cone

Punching tiny holes in a sheet of cardboard, the Observer fashions a stencil through which the light of a candle is cast about the room. The holes, of course, are calibrated as constellations. The observatory is at once a beaming planetarium. In only seconds, of course, the cone catches fire and dawn erupts the sky.

The Observer snatches a loose page from the planned Atlas of Metaphor and clips this time the little points made by the loops of P's and B's, O's, Q's, D's, A's and R's. His pboqdar template and candle transform the room again. First a spread of random dots appear. Then assemble constellations: men, a lyre, a bird? Now plumes of smoke sting the Observer's eyes.

The Observer in the Mirror

The Observer sits in front of his round, gilded mirror, intensely staring into the pupil of his eye. A darkened star floats on a sky of blue. Radial amber tendrils around the black on blue make an aurora, perhaps telling of an eclipse. But no matter how long the Observer waits, the radiant star behind the obscurer never shifts into view. He waits then for the dark disc to expand or contract, for it must be either growing or dying, but the star seems to grow and shrink with its obstrucuter, the two in invariable alignment. Perhaps the disk is not a body but a hole -- a black hole that draws in light and compresses it to an imperceptible density. Yes, his mind is the immeasurably dense solid that draws to itself, warps and assimilates information by way of his eye; his memory, the impenetrably warped region beyond.

The Observer's Observer

The Observer knows of observers that preceded him; their discoveries are stories like the sky. But what will be remembered of the Observer who surveys the work of others and his own; the observer who makes observations of observation? Will another analyze his work with ever more scrutiny, deriving hypotheses ever more subtle, ever more concise? Will ever there be a singular observation like once there was a singular sight: the universe once proceeding from a single point, collapsing back again? Will that sight, that space, that moment be yet smaller than even this small observatory?

Primary Sources

- Ashbery, John. "Knocking Around" in *Modern Poems* 2nd Ed. Ed. by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair. New York: Norton. 1989.
- Boethius, Ancius. *The Consolaton of Philosophy*. Trans. by V.E.Watts. London: Penguin Classics. 1969.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Selected Poems: 1923 - 1967*. Trans. by Ben Belitt, Norman T. Di Giovanni, Alan Dugan, William Ferguson, Robert Fitzgerald, John Hollander, Richard Howard & Cesar rennert, W.S. Merwin, Alister Reid, Mark Strand, John Updike and Richard Wilbur. New York: Delacorte Press. 1972.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", "The Library of Babel", "Funes the Memorious", "The Immortal", "The House of Asterion", "The Fearful Sphere of Pascal", "Avartars of the Tortoise" and "The Mirror of Enigmas". from *Labyrinths: Selectred Stories & Other Writings*. Ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. Trans. by Emecé Editores. New York: New Directions Publishing. 1964.
- Burckhardt, Titus. *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*. London: Penguin Books. 1967.
- Calvino, Italo. *Cosmicomics*. Trans. by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace. 1965.
- Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Trans. by William Weaver. London: Pan Books. 1974.
- Calvino, Italo. *Mr. Palomar*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace. 1985.
- Eliade, Mercea. *The Forge and the Crucible*. Trans. by Stephen Corrin. London: Rider & Co.. 1962.
- Koestler, Arthur. *The Sleepwalkers. A History of Man's changing vision of the Universe*. 1959. London: Penguin Books. 1988.
- Pound, Ezra. "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" in *Modern Poems* 2nd Ed. Ed. by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair. New York: Norton. 1989.
- Seferis, George. *Collected Poems: 1924 - 1955*. Trans. by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sheppard. London: Jonathan Cape. 1969.
- Sessions, Larry. *Constellations*. Philadelphia: Running Press. 1993.
- Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself" in *Modern Poems* 2nd Ed. Ed. by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair. New York: Norton. 1989.
- Yeats, William B. "Leda and the Swan" and "Sailing to Bysantium" in *Modern Poems*. 2nd Ed. Ed. by Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair. New York: Norton. 1989.

Secondary Sources

- Hume, Kathryn. *Calvino's Fictions: Cogito and Cosmos*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1992.
- Shaw, Donald L. *Borges' Narrative Strategies*. Melksham (Eng.): Redwood Press. 1992.
- Sturrock, John. *Paper Tigers: The Ideal Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1977.