

SEEDBOX BY STARLIGHT

LAURA WATTS

## PREFACE

To be situated (in Donna Haraway's sense) is, in part, to look up and see the constellations and their stories. They whirl around the pole star, Polaris, and shift with your location on the planet, your location in the seasons, and your location in that moment at night. Epistemes come with some stars, and not others. When I was invited to be artist and poet in residence at Seedbox for one month in September, and I landed on 'planet Seedbox' my first instinct was to look up (so to speak) and to ask what constellations glowed overhead. For me to learn and respond to how Seedbox is situated as a project was always going to be a matter of storytelling its guiding stars.

Sometimes I am an ethnographer who writes poetry as part of my method to write the world otherwise. I nodded to Haraway because her insistence on the inseparability of fiction and fact, and the need for speculative fabulations ('SF') to create flourishing futures are the founding tenets to my work. Sometimes, though, I am just a professional poet—my most recent book is a collaboration (with Alec Finlay), a collection of poetry on marine renewable energy. This time, on this residency, I took the opportunity to be a professional poet, but one who could draw upon ethnography to inspire my writing.

The challenge for an Artist in Residence on a social or cultural research project is that the project is in the bodies of the researchers—particularly at the beginning. There are no obvious laboratories to be 'resident' in. So, I had to make Seedbox as a place to be resident in—which is ethnographic work. And so my thirteen ethnographic conversations with Seedbox researchers allowed me to learn about, and make the place: the Seedbox planet with its own constellations, whose stories I sought to tell.

So I made the Seedbox constellations and their stories. This night's sky is filled with the fabulous creatures that roam the Seedbox project (I learned about the Prion, the Ants, the Tick, and more). I also created and shared poetic seeds. These are words that can be planted, nurtured, and grown into a different kind of academia, and a different kind of project. For who says that Seedbox is a planet just like Earth? Perhaps things grow differently there...

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

the following poems and writing were created as part of a 1 month residency at Seedbox, Environmental Humanities Collaboratory, Tema Genus, Linköping University.

during my residency, I interviewed 11 people involved with Seedbox. The material in this collection is inspired by those conversations.

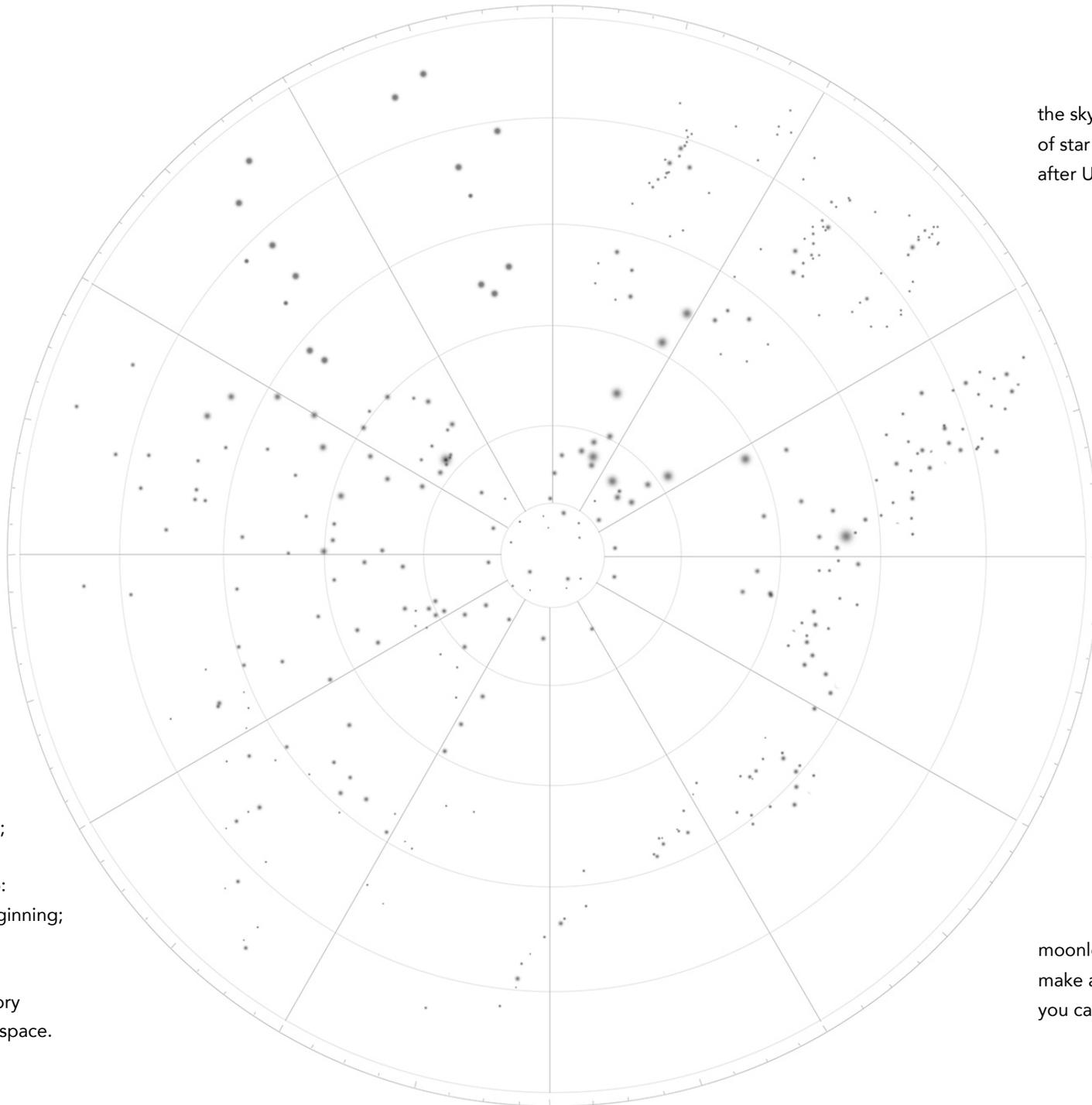
I am grateful to all those who took the time to speak with me, and to everyone who helped with the practicalities of the residency, and made it happen.

Special thanks to Jonas Anshelm, Jacob Bull, Olga Cielemecka, Tora Holmberg, Martin Hultman, Ericka Johnson, Lauren E. Lafauci, Eva Lövbrand, Justin Makii, Jesper Olsson, Björn Pernrud, Cecilia Åsberg.

Seedbox by Starlight

published online at [www.sand14.com](http://www.sand14.com)

© Laura Watts, 2016



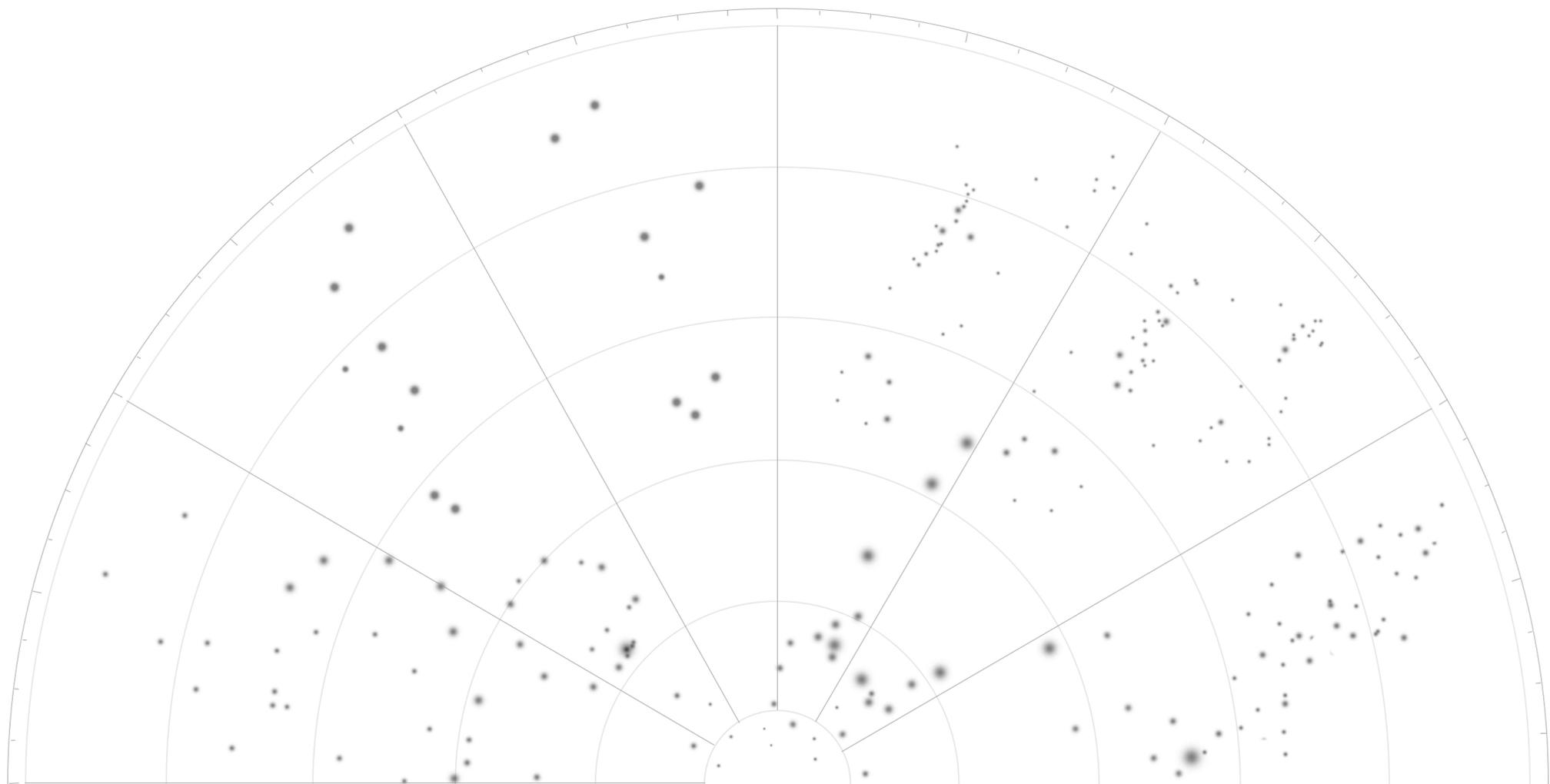
the sky is a carrier bag  
of star light and fiction;  
after Ursula Le Guin.

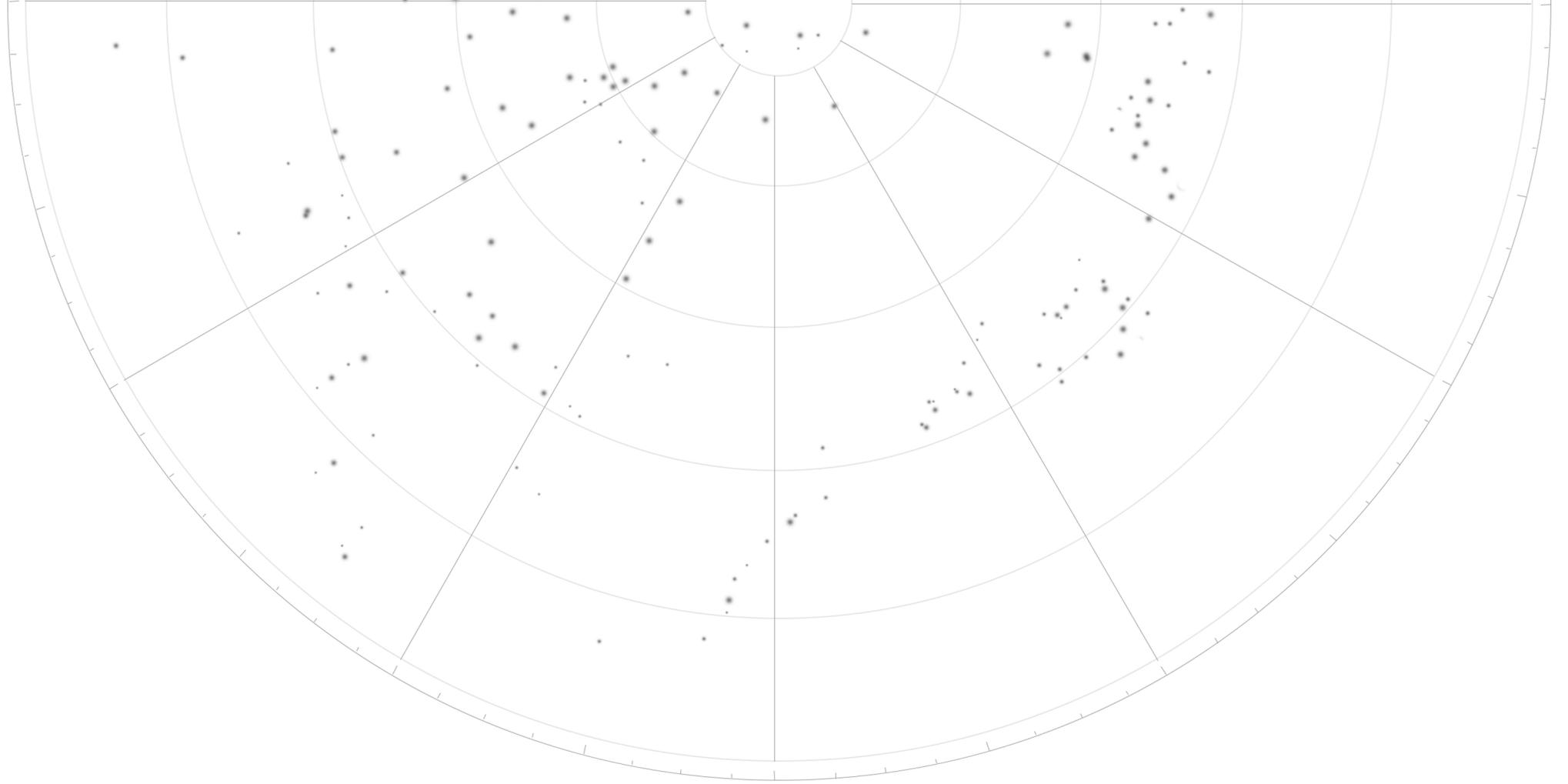
this planet,  
unexplored;

but look up:  
there, a beginning;

all paths  
have a history  
in space.

moonless stars  
make a teleport:  
you can land  
anywhere.









## SEEDBOX BY STARLIGHT

### TICK

hickory dickory dock.  
the tick ran up the clock.  
the clock struck nine,  
the tick tocked on time.  
hickory dickory dock.

### ANTS

stigmergy:  
writing and rewriting  
(writing and rewriting)  
(writing and rewriting)

### HULDRA

huldra has a foxtail  
or, more frightening,  
a hole in her back.

### HERDEN

there's Dolly the horse,  
the dogs, the rabbit,  
(the dog likes the rabbit;  
the rabbit likes mice);  
I get to pick up the poo.

### KATTEN

academics are  
cats!  
strong-minded  
cats.

constellations inspired by conversations with Seedbox members

\*Herden, the shepherd; Katten, the cat

# SEEDBOX BY STARLIGHT

## EYE

you can see  
into the woods  
with Emerson's eyeball.

## SEA

think of the Baltic  
not empty, but bad,  
bad toxic algae blooms.

## APPLE

I am grappling  
with the apple  
that spoke back.

## PRION

protein with an ego:  
I'm fabulous!  
(so it goes)  
Be like me!  
(so it calls  
with its folds)

## PILGRIMAGE

walking from  
Swedish summer  
to Parisian fall

constellations inspired by conversations with Seedbox members

## TICK & EYE

transparent eyeball:  
god trick on a stick;  
or a tick's damp view  
within a raindrop?

*(for Lauren and Jacob, after Emerson)*

## PILGRIMAGE & ANTS

ant pilgrimage:

a walk from Uppsala to Paris,

a two thousand kilometer

stigmergy;

a walk from Uppsala to Paris–

a walk from Uppsala to Paris

that stays.

*(for Olga and Eva)*

## SEA & PRION

hydroponic Baltic:  
seeds afloat,  
roots in the swell,  
stems unfolding  
entangled in the Sun;  
futuretropic.

*(for Cecilia and Justin)*

## HULDRA & HERDEN

the 'huldreherde'  
is as foxy as their flock:  
the fox-tailed huldra of the forest.

huldra hide a secret:  
their coccyx is a hole  
through which hope shines through.

the 'huldreherde'  
enchants harmful cynics  
with her riddles and fairy song;  
all leave only their leavings.

*(for Tora and Cecilia)*

## PRION & ANTS

the pallasite glowed  
when held to the light,  
a honeycomb matrix  
of metal and mineral.

fallen in the night,  
from an unknown moon;  
or an unknown strike,  
as asteroids fused.

sliced and electron diced,  
there! on the screen,  
in billion year amber:  
one odd-folded protein.

was it life from the Dark  
or from life on the Earth?  
Nature? Unnatural?  
the world waited on the binary divide...

*(for Justin and Olga)*

## SEA & EYE

the server farm  
is albatross air  
traffic control.

black boxes  
on feathered backs  
make data trails.

packed racks  
of processors with  
bird's-eye view

of

birds' eye views:  
lone shadows  
on unending sea.

*(for Jacob, Cecilia and Lauren)*

## APPLE & PILGRIMAGE

incubator,  
glistening optics and glass  
drip ethernet and oil  
through tangled tubes.

a sphere,  
clouded with inner rain  
enclosing a pedestal  
with one sprouting seed.

a stem,  
trunk, branch, blossom,  
a needle pollinates,  
and petals fall from a bud.

an apple,  
red red as a warning sign,  
gene spliced, growing  
ripe under floodlight.

she comes,  
no fairytale type,  
an engineer from Nairobi  
(white would tempt fate)

she bites,  
falls to the medical bed  
in suspended animation,  
first pilgrim to the stars.

*(for Martin, Ericka and Eva)*

