

Contradicting Skies: A Prayer
or, My Quantum Teenage Eyes, and Israel
*for Rachel, my niece and beach
companion*

Part 1: Prayer

As I strolled one day last month on an
unsuspecting beach,
the Cape Cod sky up and stole away
my breath.

It tossed me to my knees on cold damp
sand,
as close to prayer as I'm sure I'll ever
know.

That day, I watched the sky bend in half,
no longer sky,
but Arctic glacier, its vast expanse
cracking fast
into rough-edged, floating rounds of
jigsaw puzzle ice,
while above them in another sky,
fat clouds grazed serene
like shapely cows.

Rachel, though, read in the sky her own
designs, and delicately asked for me
not to speak of mine. We sat, then,
side by side, content, each beneath
our private skies. Mine was now a 3-D
movie rolled boldly on a giant angled
screen,
but every time I squinted, or tipped back
my head,
the sky's horizon would wander off again,
the Arctic floe
somewhere far below while I, unmoored,
became
the Arctic glacier's sky.

Finally, yanking home rebellious teenage
eyes, I clicked the horizon
back into place, and stood, barely steady,
reluctant
to return to land, almost unready
to hand back
these new extraordinary skies.

Part 2: Quantam Physics, and Israel

So, here's the thing:
my eyes of late, have been stepping out
defiant, on their own; much like teenagers
proclaiming
an opposing point of view.
Some days I see first a branch, or sky, or
streetlight, as it's always been
but then these crazy teens dress it up, turn
it upside down,
and suddenly the sky's a tilted frozen sea
and I wonder," Which version of the sky
is real?"

Is this some gift that comes from turning
fifty?
Teenage eyes performing psychedelic trips
I missed
in my less-than-daring teenage life?
Will life from here on be like those
pictures where you're never sure
which one's the vase
and which the profile
of some sketched-out woman
with a stolid regal nose?

This happens often now; most recent
was the summer night when
the moonless sky threw a giant party,
and invited every constellation, every
single star.
Miss Showy Venus bared her breast as
satellites and tiny planes drove by,
while the Milky Way, in disapproval, air-
brushed a veil of gray across
her busy brood of stars. Voyeurs,
we humans crashed the party,
some of us atop a car, others on the grass
or chairs, and one by one
we each caught ourselves a shooting star,
(those shameless celestial streakers
of the night!) "There's one at 5 o'clock!"
"No, look! There's one at 2!"
"I missed it! Wait! There's one over there
at 9!"

But then, because my restless teenage eyes
are never satisfied,
and because the drowsy moonlight stroked
the deep-green leaves
on branches stretching long fingers out
just above my chair, the leaves spun bright
into dangling luminescent stars,
their branches now a second Milky Way
suspended from a lower sky.
So was there then, I thought, no tree at all?

Puzzled, as before, I squinted, blinked and
checked again,
until the tree retrieved her ordinary garb,
and the stars
clambered back up high to where they
once belonged,
Worried now, (a bit) and yet, also
somehow pleased
I stepped inside our rented home, tucked
all my fears in bed,
and slept right through that brilliant
peculiar summer night, until

next day when the rude t.v. news
shook me wide awake. Israel, they say, is
dropping bombs on her neighbor,
Lebanon, and women are shown dying
with children in their arms. Can this
possibly be true?
And are we as Jews invoking yet *another*
country's rage-or worse, again,
the world's? And is this now *another*
war? Now I'm certain that the sky's askew
and I can't seem to scramble to my feet
at all. But wait! I'm reminded again
of Israeli soldiers kidnapped, and of a
Hezbollah run wild, so Israel, insist
some friends, must defend herself,
and what else can she do, they ask, but
bomb until she's safe?
What else can she do?!!!

Unmoored again, I try to make this
question work:
So, you say, when those you love are
being killed
then those in either nation, each beneath
her separate skies, are obliged to kill the
other, and this will somehow stop

everyone on either side
from killing?. Does it matter anymore
if anyone is either "right" or
"wrong?"

This time, if I squint and blink,
will my new untrustworthy vision
realign these contradicting skies?
Quantum physics,
my friend, Stuart, says,
is somewhat like my teenage eyes.
Every thing we see exists
only through the eyes that see it, but

what we're faced with now
is not about competing
Cape Cod skies.
In this new war
I know for sure that neither of
these bloodstained skies
can possibly be real
unless each agrees to recognize
the other, and right now
neither of them
seems at all inclined
to blink.

Leonore Gordon, 9/20/2006