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Poetry/Majerus
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A Condeluded Analysis of David Citino's Poem *Einstein, Placenta, the Caves of Lascaux*

Or, in Short,

Utter Chaos [A Method to the Madness]

[Introduction]

I read a poem in class:

Einstein, Placenta, the caves of Lascaux

Written by some dude named David Citino

Interesting, but nothing special (so I thought then)

Later, questing, I found the poem to be of use

It's statement about human belief struck a chord

Not wanting to type up the whole thing, I looked on the net

Surprisingly hard to find, but then I discovered-

The poem was cut off; a fragment, half the time

The ending mis

It was confusing before, but finding the missing piece

Didn't make constructing the puzzle any easier

It read so strangely, and kept things hidden-

Things I wanted to find

I rolled up my sleeves

And started to magnify

[End introduction]

“The natural universe moves to precise rhythms:”
Yet no rhyme or meter to match the statement
The title’s subjects not in line with the poem’s order
The content in seeming disarray

And contradictions - as I unraveled,
I uncovered so many
But the voice of the speaker
So monotone, factual, speaking the truth

The truth of disarray
Discordia¹, the language of chaos
The quivering particles reveal
A subtle mockery of rationality

Perhaps “mockery” is too strong a word-
To say, rather, that life and humans cannot subsist on mere fact
The food we eat should have flavor
To be unique, we need a touch of washing machine

“Einstein died at 1:15am EST on April 18, 1955,”
Truth, fact as dried and cut as it can get
“While speaking frantic German to a New Jersey nurse”
Strange, for a complete lie [1] to follow fact

Einstein died peacefully in his sleep
This glaring misdirection must have some hidden meaning!
Turn the dials up to 11
Zoom in the electron-scanning-tunneling-all-seeing-all-knowing microscope

German, English, no translation but still comprehended-
Death, a universal language, understood well

¹ Discordianism is (and is not) a religion centered on the idea that chaos is all that there is, and that disorder and order are both illusions that are imposed on chaos.

All creatures fear it, yet on some level must come to terms with it
Acknowledge that the end is always nigh

Einstein was not a religious man [1]
He saw the world in a different light, solidity and assured chaos
What could frighten the great man so
In the time before his light reached the 8-minute mark?²

A life based on fact and logic
If there was nothing to see as he lay dying
He would not be wrong; he would not fear
So he was wrong

To see your life's work of lines and laws
A house of cards crumbling, tipped as you went over the edge
Would you not panic, try to convey
How you were wrong?

Two hands that wrote proofs that shattered minds
The jaw that spoke of things beyond the comprehension of many
Eyes that saw the world in a different light
You are, in death, a number; but numbers are not only numbers

Death per percentage point's a downer
Having lost your job, you walk down the street
Kick an empty can down the street
Kick the can

For there's only despair
A dead-end of emotion
Patterns need not be rational
A method to the madness

² It takes roughly 8 minutes for light to reach the Earth from the sun. If the sun suddenly went out, it would take us 8 minutes to realize this.

“Nature works in five ways:”

The undiscovered, the assumed, the strange, the new,
Each vague and insubstantial
The building blocks of our mass

The last but not least
Unscientific yet surely confirmed
Through careful study and controls
Belief is not imagined

To turn chemical reactions
Electrical activity
Inside a fatty blob contained by a
Calcium phosphate shell

Into ink, words
On a page,
Letters from the dead
Even numbers can feel

To turn the real into something that is
Untouchable, undetectable
Not able to be scanned or measured
Yet breakable

The caves and their replicas exist
That is truth [2]
The originals stretching back
Old enough to imagine

Damaged, yes, by traffic
Tourists wanting to see something
That in the end
Is inconsequential

A bleep on the monitor, in your ear
The pigments made light [2]
You can't have your cake and eat it too
Preserve or let all turn to dust?

Much of what we do
Hearkens to the lies that bind³
Our reason to live is but an excuse
To avoid the world beyond the dark gates

The caves are like those gates
Reaching into the past
As they fall like a house of cards
You build a new one: start over again

"All such movements of matter into energy, energy to matter/
Are of course influenced by what we know of love and fear,"
Are *of course* influenced by what we know of love and fear
We are only human

To shed emotion and embrace what's left
Those who are without emotion
Are called
Psychopaths

It's an actual term, surprisingly
(Though I must admit to learning it from House⁴)
The cold chill you feel
A survival instinct: flee or die

As when, for example, in Citino's twelfth grade biology class
In the all-boys school in Cleveland at St. Ignatius' High School [3]

³ I admit to self-inserting a little here. I've taken some lines from an old poem of mine.

⁴ A medical drama.

When the Jesuit instructor (truth!) tossed onto the lab table
The still warm placenta bloody as sunrise

“The still warm placenta bloody as sunrise”
A symbol of creation, new life, rebirth
Naked as could be in its clear plastic bag
A stark reminder

Not to get on too high a horse⁵
We all came from the same mold
We'll all follow the same decay
As is natural, and good

Yet we will rage against the dying of the light⁶
As is natural, and good
For what we do not know we often fear
Despite knowing death well: it is all around us

“Eight youngsters, 1/3 of the class,
Left the lab and ran directly to the room marked 'Men'.”
Perhaps sickened by this reminder of mortality
Or, simpler, just because we are only human

1/3 is eight; the class would be of twenty-four
Twenty-four hours in a day
Eight hours the hours of sleep
The hours of walking the line between death and life

They may have been mocked-
“Why take biology if so squeamish?”
But maybe, maybe, they knew better
They trod the line between the here and then

⁵ “Why are you acting so dignified? ...”

⁶ Dylan Thomas's poem (I'm sure you know it)

The natural universe moves to precise rhythms:

We end with a day

Begin with a death

End with a beginning

Cycles that will never end

Even when the death of the universe comes about

For life is tenacious

And rages

The poem is tied together

No longer cut off

Like a young life

So tragic

Let us all remember - there will always be a something

Something we cannot unriddle

Let us all forgive emotion

For we are only human

Sources:

1. Obituary/On This Day, New York Times. "Dr. Albert Einstein Dies in Sleep at 76; World Mourns Loss of Great Scientist". New York Times. 2/15/10

<<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0314.html>>.

2. Hayes, Holly. "Lascaux Caves, France". Sacred Destinations. 2/17/10 <<http://www.sacred-destinations.com/france/lascaux-caves>>.

3. X, SIHS. "Saint Ignatius High School - About SIHS". SIHS. 2/12/10

<<http://www.ignatius.edu/s/237/cmsindex.aspx?sid=237&gid=1&pgid=352>>.

Additional:

Wikipedia, for confirmation on the actual existence/status of the various particles mentioned (plus some other stuff...)

<<http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/fabe/website/david.htm>> for additional information on David Citino.

Footnotes:

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discordianism>

4. House MD

5. <http://www.xkcd.com/291/>