

The Space Traveler Pities Us

Benjamin S. Grossberg

Tell me about you, in your
moment between secretive
oceans and practical space travel—
what navigable eternity you find
to correlate to inner darkness,
what lights to set against
the patterns of your pressed-
closed eyes. And the milky
darkness that shuts your world
from the stars: how do you know
what's inside without them?
How without a blank to reach
a fist into do you figure
what all's inside? Not that
the outlet's everything, mind
you, but how with all expressed
on such a small scale, to apprehend
say the grandeur of being lost?
I once knew a suburban den: dim
light, a brace of couches, books,
a melon-shaped device similar
to your telephone. The limit
of my universe was the fact
of gypsum. But now—even
on a bad day, when only dust
rushes past, when ether refuses
any other organization—I
have more than possibility. I
have myself: unfolding in
punctuated darkness, in all
that space between the stars.

The Space Traveler's Brother

Benjamin S. Grossberg

is not a space traveler. Lives
in fact on a planet the color
of parchment, but withholds
the address: those three little
coordinates (X,Y, and Z) that
a brother longs to hear.
Holidays the space traveler
looks twice at dust balls, at
rocks desiccated and pretty
much absolute zero. *Could
be down there*, he thinks,
bouncing a red ball against
its paddle. *Just the kind of
world he enjoys*. He sips soy-
milk from a juice box, muses,
*and what could a reunion
look like anyway?* Planet
speak, spacer lingo: even
a few decades of divergence
renders it impossible, with
common words denoting
skew experience: *travel*,
food source, *home*, *brother*—
the abyss after hello shrinks
the universe to a midsize
urban park. *There's always
next year*, he mumbles, easing
his feet into a tub of hot water.
Maybe I'll just stay up here.