

A Reminder of the Diverse Particles
that Form Your Identities—Ancestry
in the Language of Geography
and Theoretical Physics

Simon Peter Eggertsen

For my younger children

So you will know, here is a recounting of the quantum influences, the little arcs of familiar experience that accelerate within your own beings, tickling the protons of personality, exciting your identities into existence, *top to bottom*:

i. *charm*—

the intricate cosmology of questions in Caribbean folklore, the stories retold in the brown-girl songs of your own

West Indian *mother*—which village slave auntie first added a *deepa-greena* taste, *chado beny*—coriander—

to spice up the sloppy *callaloo*? how many *cocoa beans* it takes to make a packet of Hershey’s Kisses once your

great-uncles sweat, dance, oil them up for the marketing board’s fifty-kilo bag? how as giggling children, without

knowing why, you learned to call the sharp reach of the *sword plant*—“*mother-in-law’s tongue!*”;

ii. *strange*—

the fluctuating warps, the stellar images of relativity embedded in your *father’s* quirky English thoughts—

the size, the shape, the spontaneity of a solar wind, now
just a mild spring breeze in Cambridge, as it twists
and twirls medallions of green-stained glass in laneways
near Rose Crescent, the Sun, bending new Light, perfecting
its prism work, scattering soft spectrals, little rainbows,
here and there, then, lessening at Evensong
in King's College Chapel, casts last Light on Rubens's
Adoration of the Magi, brings its own reflection to an end;

iii. *down*—

the diminishing Time your *grandmother* has left on either
side of the present, the spontaneous entanglement awaiting
the monarchs near Monterey Bay as they bunch together
at evening, camouflage into the pines, the eucalyptus,
share their warmth, rest, tremble subtly in the night sea
breeze, wait for the yellow blaze of another morning's
Sun to remind their wings they can fly again, the length
of the next generation's journey to their summer home
in Canada, the fallow fields, the sustaining sweetness of
Manitoba milkweed;

iv. *up*—

the pulsing quasars, the Light-laden intimations hidden
in the flash of fireworks set off by your Chinese *forefathers*
—how they ricocheted red off the dragon-arched village
gate, then in Canton, split, curled, then scrawled, like

a child's sparkler writing, ancient calligraphy for *joy* and *luck*
and *prosperity* on the slate of a New Year's night air,

the length of the moment it took your *great-grandfather*
to realize he would someday drag that bright practice,

and his shopkeeping, to other side of the world, to the green
rolling green hills of Trinidad, the cricketed village of Rio Claro;

v. *bottom*—

the earthy ambience of your half-Danish *grandfather's* Wildwood,
deep in the folds of a Utah canyon, where the Sun has to fight

for space in the morning, where on Sundays, dappled by the Light,
we learned to softly ask for God to be with us, the swinging

bridge at Dr. Weight's, where each crossing was always
an adventurous leap, a rising toward some kind of nervy

blue limbo, whenever another child jumped on, flexed the bridge
works back, lofted you up, away, stood you on air 'til

gravity brought you down;

vi. *top*—

the expanding, smooth Space occupied by the density of
your island *grandmother's* own black matter—as dense and

lyrical as this poetry—the undulations, the slowing pace of
Time encountered on Zanzibar, the event horizon of five

female figures, draped as night in their *bui buis*, moving
along uneven cobblestones on Gizenga Street, the peaceful

lilt of their greeting, "*Asalaamu alaikum*," the amount of Light
they swallow up, reflect back late in the afternoon as they

slide their shade across a mosque's sun-perfected presence—
an Aleph in Old Stone Town, the mystery of their transform-
ation into sails on spice-laden *dhow*s, drifting away from
Jozani at midnight, side-by-side, vibrating, curving, moving
north, a slow, expanding wave front headed toward Oman,
to the *souks* at Muscat, eyeing to trade for handfuls of golden
earrings, bags of honey-yellow amber.

—Montreal, June 2021

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