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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  
Discordia<sup>1</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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?<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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 bind<sup>3</sup>  
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 House<sup>4</sup>)  
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]

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 horse<sup>5</sup>  
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 light<sup>6</sup>  
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

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<sup>5</sup> “Why are you acting so dignified? ...”

<sup>6</sup> 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/>