Among Cosmologists

for Sarah Shandera

Breathlessly, with a shrug and a vague gesture,
Empty hand palm up, collecting something
From empty space that is by all accounts
Not empty, rather like the four-dimensional
Surface of an n-dimensional cauldron
Where bubbles form and wink out of existence,
The young expert on galaxies suggests,
“A hundred billion?” However the next Sloan
Survey announces the count of galaxies—
Red-shifting as they leave us past the tall
Implacable vast light cone we cannot see
But know it marks the boundaries of seeing.

“Doesn’t it keep you up at night, this outward
Rush of galaxies fleeing themselves and us
Into the infinite arms of the multiverse?”
What keeps me up is our recurrent failure
To know the universe before inflation,
Or offer quantum mechanics a foundation.
It’s not the future, but the hidden past.
It’s not what’s overhead, but underneath.”

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