

**ROBIN CHAPMAN**

**Strange Attractors**

How to find them, those regions  
Of space where the equation traces  
Over and over a kind of path,  
Like the moth that batters its way  
Back toward the light  
Or, hearing the high cry of the bat,  
Folds its wings in a rolling dive?

And ourselves, fluttering toward and away  
In a pattern that, given enough  
Dimensions and point-of-view,  
Anyone living there could plainly see—  
Dance and story, advance, retreat,  
A human chaos that some slight  
Early difference altered irretrievably?

For one, the sound of her mother  
Crying. For this other,  
The hands that soothed  
When he was sick. For a third,  
The silence that collects  
Around certain facts. And this one,  
Sent to bed, longing for a nightlight.

Though we think this time to escape,  
Holding a head up, nothing wrong,  
Finding a way to beat the system,  
Talking about anything else—  
Travel, the weather— spending our time  
At the flight simulator— for some  
The journey circles back

To those strange, unpredictable attractors,  
Secrets we can neither speak nor leave.

— from *Images of a Complex World: The Art and Poetry of Chaos*. Chapman, Robin, & Sprott, Julien  
Clinton, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing (2005)