



# In a Manner of Speaking

## Chapter One: Encounter and Negotiation

January 8 – March 4, 2025

**RA Walden, *access points // or // alternative states of matter(ing)*, 2023**

### Poetic Text and Image Descriptions

#### **carbon: $1s^22s^22p^2$**

soot coal ash smog deep peat reservoirs crushed black smoke pits dark down below below  
crumble rock in between every finger nail streaked with grease oil muck mud markings shapes  
of things turned to stone lay lines under gravel pits piles of highway grown over coughing up  
every bit of smoke smog coal ash fire light white heat pain brighter than the sun cleaves holes  
into every thing take this then say thank you a match stick blackened withered in a box a gaping  
wide open mouth wet teeth pearl tongue hungrier now than ever before feed me with plant with  
rock with touch with time

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “carbon:  $1s^22s^22p^2$ ”, referencing the electron configuration of carbon, and then transitions into a poetic description of carbon-related concepts such as soot, coal, ash, smog, and geological and environmental imagery. Below the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by two concentric rings with small dots indicating electrons in orbit.

#### **hydrogen: $1s^1$**

hello do you read me? I lay in the wreckage where I once was / a hollow-dug-out-blast-chamber  
/ weep into my own remains  
life blown into a pink mist  
the body the body the body the body / a lament  
ashes scattered all across time  
we must gather now / that is all that there is to be done  
the work is slow  
an absence / an ache  
1650 degrees celsius is a violet shrine / but hydrogen can burn hotter  
than the sun  
we work to find each other in the darkness /. To make meaning of  
another world  
i learned some things that I did not know before  
a charcoal blade /a gaseous moan  
did your body burn hotter than the sun?

blackwoodgallery.ca  
blackwood.gallery@utoronto.ca  
(905) 828-3789

University of Toronto Mississauga  
3359 Mississauga Road  
Mississauga, ON L5L 1C6

does anything feel the same as it was before?  
Is anyone else out there?

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “**hydrogen: 1s<sup>1</sup>**” referencing the electron configuration of hydrogen, and then transitions into a poetic description of elemental transformation, destruction, and rebirth, blending scientific references to hydrogen. To the left of the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by one concentric rings with a small dot indicating an electron in orbit.

**nitrogen: 1s<sup>2</sup>2s<sup>2</sup>2p<sup>3</sup>**

the body is a landscape that particles move through / most of our atoms made of empty space  
100 trillion neutrinos slipping through us each second / every particle a solar system  
spilling outwards from unknown origin / going who knows where  
move through mid/dirt/rock/body/tree/ice/water/flesh/wind/tongue/pain/metal  
move through salt/shell/shield/slime/bones/bread/time  
sickness grounds me back into the soil / fingers mapping ridges in the land  
fallow maybe not forever maybe inchoate  
to fertilise crops / to feed bodies / to make weapons / to fell bodies  
a season cycles through / deep time / gas dissolving in the blood / rising to the surface too  
quickly / desperate for air

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “**nitrogen: 1s<sup>2</sup>2s<sup>2</sup>2p<sup>3</sup>**” referencing the electron configuration of nitrogen, and then transitions into a poetic description. The text reflects on the interconnectedness of life and matter, the dualities of creation and destruction, and the body’s integration with the natural and elemental world. Above the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by two concentric rings with small dots indicating electrons in orbit.

**oxygen: 1s<sup>2</sup>2s<sup>2</sup>2p<sup>4</sup>**

every body is an echo of something that happened a long time ago  
every happening a split in space time  
every before unknown until the after  
when the visitation comes it takes the land’s breath away  
stripped in swatches of white against a green-brown floor  
when the visitation comes It takes the body’s land away  
turns a vista once known in minutiae into alien terrain  
we awoke aghast at this new prospect  
that which we thought was ours is no longer  
I take myself outside and do not recognise the way that I move  
the land escapes me

every stone an echo of something that happened a long time ago  
every body a remembrance  
hold on to something human  
or let go of everything that once was  
the first a battle  
the second a reckoning

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “**oxygen:  $1s^22s^22p^4$** ” referencing the electron configuration of oxygen, and then transitions into a poetic description. The text engages with themes of loss, transformation, and the passage of time. To the right of the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by two concentric rings with small dots indicating electrons in orbit.

**phosphorus:  $1s^22s^22p^63s^23p^3$**

come the light bearer / come the morning star / show us the layers of bone lost in the fading light  
there is never any way back to it / no map that can guide us / what we have lost is already gone transformed into another state of matter(ing)  
all of the energy / wasted / on / outlines / dissolving / in the mud  
another tide / coming in / another wind / moving through / another age / passing

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “**phosphorus:  $1s^22s^22p^63s^23p^3$** ” referencing the electron configuration of phosphorous, and then transitions into a poetic description. The text engages with concepts of impermanence, transformation, and the cyclical nature of time. To the right of the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by two concentric rings with small dots indicating electrons in orbit.

**sulphur:  $1s^22s^2p^63s^23p^4$**

97.9% of a human is made up of six elements / nothing stays still  
mountains breaking down at 2.5mm a year / lava flowering at 6 miles an hour  
meteorites containing 12% sulphur deepened from yellow to black at 250 degrees  
death valley rocks moving at 6 metres per minute  
the slowest thing in the world is a cloud / cooled by lasers to near absolute zero / light slowed down to 17 meters per second  
the slowest thing in the world is a cloud / or is it an illegible body waiting to be understood / or waiting for its land to be returned / or the past to be repaid.

**Image description:** The image contains text and a graphic representation. The text begins with the term “**sulphur:  $1s^22s^2p^63s^23p^4$** ” referencing the electron configuration of sulphur, and then transitions into a poetic description. The text engages with concepts of transformation,

temporality, and the interplay between the natural world and human experience. Above and to the right of the text, there is a minimalist graphic resembling a Bohr model of an atom. The nucleus is represented as a solid black circle, surrounded by three concentric rings with small dots indicating electrons in orbit.