

Messier 31

Why we speak of the night sky in number and symbol: why, like God, it must be seen through the dilapidated apparatus of ozone, lens, and belief: such weak pylons for a world which needs constant summoning, every baby fighting its birth, every crocus forced to open a hole for itself in the snow. Why create the whole thing anew every day, when the realm of uncreated realities already exists? Hell has always been hard to locate, heaven too hip to hold onto, conflating the darker angels and devils with white polished teeth. It is said that God himself was converted, when told of a world that sustains itself in a constant state of decline: mushrooms flourishing orange in verdant fern, algae blooming like youth along quiet hems of ponds. It is said he refused

to resolve the paradox of mortality, opting for a prominent position in a distant cluster of stars: Today the glowing smear of him can be seen by any naked eye on a modestly dark evening. It has taken him two million years to reach us. All this way and now the New York City light pollution shimmies his face. And now the vague shape of him can be interpreted in many mutually exclusive ways. It was the scientists who finally christened him *Spiral Galaxy M31 (NGC224) type Sb*. God pronounced this naming *good*: he'd always wanted to rid himself of his himness.