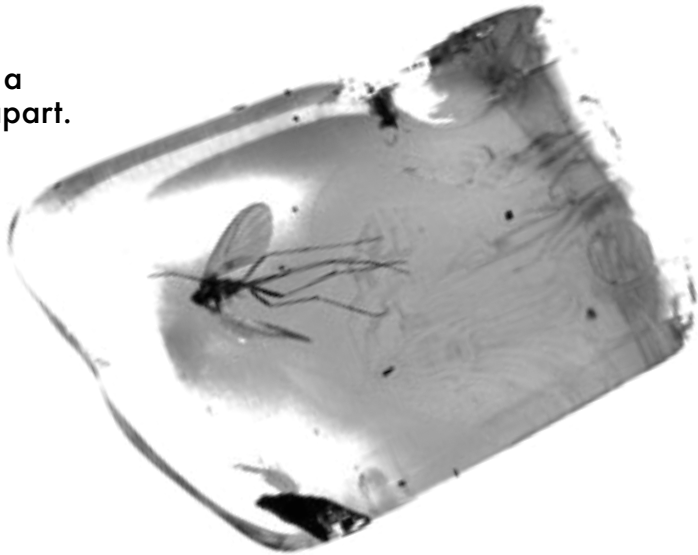


# Looking Back

When they look back at us,  
stumbling on petrified arXiv  
in the tombs of the  
internet like a  
Cretaceous mosquito  
trapped in amber,  
will they distinguish our  
grandest theories of  
quantum gravity  
from red ochre bison  
painted on the walls of  
Lascaux caves?

Just as we,  
perspective warped  
by ages,  
fail to intuit that  
campfire and  
hand axe  
were invented a  
million years apart.

Just as we wonder at  
stone circles  
and towers forged  
by slaves,  
will they look back at  
us and wonder  
how did they do it  
with such primitive tools,  
with so little knowledge,  
with such pain.



Just as ancient ones  
looked out through  
cave mouths  
and knew the valley  
was all the world.  
As we peer out at the  
CMB and the  
observable universe  
and know that  
all lies within,  
so too might they gander  
at horizons undreamt,  
toeing the rims of  
Dyson worlds.

Perhaps then they  
will finally learn,  
that they too  
will be conflated with  
antediluvian eras,  
that all is  
never known  
and the long-time  
limit reunites  
us all,  
and smiling  
take another step,  
ranging yet vaster vistas  
on the road unending.

—Arthur H. Manners

