

## A Linear Combination of Solutions to the Schrödinger Equation

“...*In quantum experience the situation is more unsettling: material properties of things do not exist until they are measured.*” — Joint Quantum Institute

I want to be looked at till I collapse.  
To be small enough I become composed  
of warm ripples, gorgeous and diffracted.  
To be thrown spinning at a wall of holes  
and come out starlight. God, I want to have  
a wavelength, I want to stop being  
so singular, I want to split myself in two,  
to send a box of me up to the moon,  
be here and there at once. It's not allowed,  
though, I'm no atom, no, I'm massively  
determinate. Perhaps that's why we fall  
in love—because that's entanglement, right?  
a long-distance operator, tying  
silver thread, two hearts spinning in tandem,

I didn't know you can just as easily  
call loneliness *distance* till we got trapped  
this far apart, fireflies bell-jarred across  
state lines. Have I ever told you I don't  
believe in love at first sight? I still think  
about *sight*, though, about *seeing*, how you look  
at me and I relax back into myself.  
I was sitting stranded on a roadside  
on my way back to you the second time  
I ever saw a firefly. Have I ever told you  
that fireflies produce cold light, visible  
only, but they can't do it alone — it must  
be air-touched, that pent-up luciferin  
shine. Look, see? Violet, crimson, blue,

spiral into  
the sky as I reach out to  
touch your hand once more

## Author's Note

This piece is the first poem in my chapbook *Counter / Pastoral*, and neatly encapsulates many of the obsessions -- with science, nature, form, sentences, love, etc. -- that gave rise to the collection writ large. The Schrodinger Equation itself describes the energy and position of electrons -- you may have heard of his famous cat, both alive and dead, but the truth is perhaps stranger. Among other oddities, once one reaches the scale the Schrodinger Equation describes, familiar properties begin to break down: particles start acting like waves, they can be entangled across thousands of miles and still interact, and their energy and position can never both be known exactly. This fundamental strangeness of the world -- which also encompasses the fragility of frogs, the violence of plants, and the bizarre monsters of thought experiments -- is something I have found fulfilling to explore through the lens of poetry.