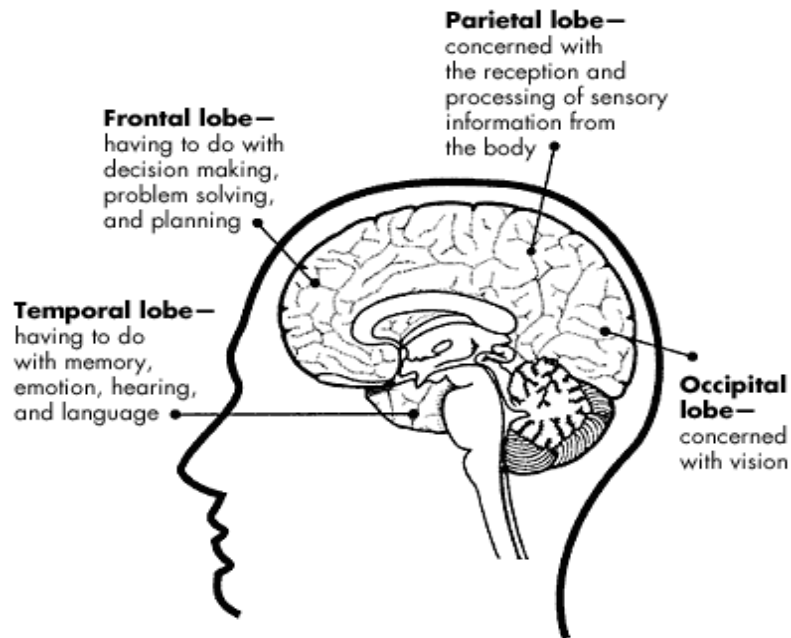


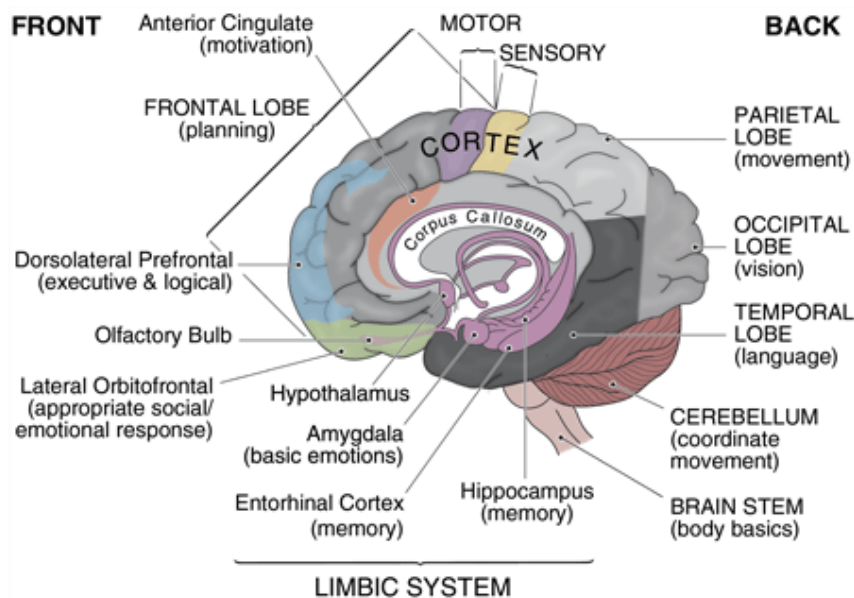
# The Spark: Neuroscience, the Senses & Memory

with Tara A. Elliott



(upper image)  
The Four Lobes of the Human Brain:  
from *The National Institute of Health*,  
(<https://science.education.nih.gov>)

(lower image)  
A Diagram of How the Brain Works  
from The Brainwaves Center,  
(<http://www.brainwaves.com>)





**Connections:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Memory Activity:**

**Inertia**

Equinox again. Day's end—I sit,  
 at rest, with whiskey, on the porch—  
 and nightfall, equal, opposite—  
 and ponder ostriches who, planted  
 earthwise, feathered as this orchard  
 is, have donned their planetary  
 helmet, fishbowl helmet, upside  
 down. So dizzying. I wish  
 I understood the calendar  
 that turns me too, as blind, as blind—  
 What rest we keep relinquishing!  
 Now apple trees are paper lanterns  
 candled by the sun behind  
 them. Winter, soon. They tear. Wind-torn  
 a few of them reveal the wick  
 itself, before it dies. A few spent  
 bees lift off the porch light, turn  
 a dazed ecliptic down. They walk  
 a little on the cold cement;  
 by morning they'll have died, no doubt.  
 By spring the lantern's light blown out  
 may light anew, and trees will mend,  
 as orchard comes to bloom again—  
 I skirt the bees on my way inside.  
 I circle too, you see; I'll ride  
 the slight curve generated here  
 out to the very end, to bed,  
 where breath will fail to close the sphere  
 of dark-to-light around my head—  
*Hush, hush, you'll say, the harsher laws  
 of motion, dear, can never govern  
 our emotion. Loss by loss,  
 so love conserves—*So love's vernier  
 is at your touch. I feel its solace  
 settle here—your arms by turns  
 encircle me, to stillness, nearly,  
 for a moment, nightfall turbaned  
 round and round ... A vernal solstice  
 at the soul. And then again the veer—

from *Orrery*  
 by Richard Kenney

**Color Coding for Imagery:**

**Highlight the poem for the  
 different senses.**

Red = Sight

Blue = Sound

Green = Touch

Yellow = Taste

Orange = Smell

Note: Overlapping colors is fine!

### First Poem for You

I like to touch your tattoos in complete darkness, when I can't see them. I'm sure of where they are, know by heart the neat lines of lightning pulsing just above your nipple, can find, as if by instinct, the blue swirls of water on your shoulder where a serpent twists, facing a dragon. When I pull you

to me, taking you until we're spent and quiet on the sheets, I love to kiss the pictures in your skin. They'll last until you're seared to ashes; whatever persists or turns to pain between us, they will still be there. Such permanence is terrifying. So I touch them in the dark; but touch them, trying.

from *The Philosopher's Club*, by Kim Addonizio

"It was growing dark on this long southern evening, and suddenly, at the exact point her finger had indicated, the moon lifted a forehead of stunning gold above the horizon, lifted straight out of filigreed, light-intoxicated clouds that lay on the skyline in attendant veils.

Behind us, the sun was setting in a simultaneous congruent withdrawal and the river turned to flame in a quiet duel of gold....The new gold of moon astonishing and ascendant, the depleted gold of sunset extinguishing itself in the long westward slide, it was the old dance of days in the Carolina marshes, the breathtaking death of days before the eyes of children, until the sun vanished, its final signature a ribbon of bullion strung across the tops of water oaks."

—from *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy

"This scent had a freshness, but not the freshness of limes or pomegranates, not the

freshness of myrrh or cinnamon bark or curly mint or birch or camphor or pine needles, not that of a May rain or a frosty wind or of well water... and at the same time it had warmth, but not as bergamot, cypress, or musk has, or jasmine or daffodils, not as rosewood has or iris... This scent was a blend of both, of evanescence and substance, not a blend, but a unity, although slight and frail as well, and yet solid and sustaining, like a piece of thin, shimmering silk... and yet again not like silk, but like pastry soaked in honey-sweet milk - and try as he would he couldn't fit those two together: milk and silk! This scent was inconceivable, indescribable, could not be categorized in any way - it really ought not to exist at all. And yet there it was as plain and splendid as day."

—from *Perfume*, by Patrick Suskind

"The beet is the melancholy vegetable, the one most willing to suffer. You can't squeeze blood out of a turnip...

The beet is the murderer returned to the scene of the crime. The beet is what happens when the cherry finishes with the carrot. The beet is the ancient ancestor of the autumn moon, bearded, buried, all but fossilized; the dark green sails of the grounded moon-boat stitched with veins of primordial plasma; the kite string that once connected the moon to the Earth now a muddy whisker drilling desperately for rubies.

The beet was Rasputin's favorite vegetable. You could see it in his eyes."

—from *Jitterbug Perfume*, by Tom Robbins

### Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,  
Asleep on the black trunk,  
Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.  
Down the ravine behind the empty house,  
The cowbells follow one another  
Into the distances of the afternoon.  
To my right,  
In a field of sunlight between two pines,  
The droppings of last year's horses  
Blaze up into golden stones.  
I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.  
A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.  
I have wasted my life.

from *Above the River*, by James Wright

“Dandelions. A dart of affection leaps out from her to them. But they do not look at her and do not send love back. She thinks, ‘They are ugly. They are weeds.’ Preoccupied with that revelation, she trips on the sidewalk crack. Anger stirs and wakes in her; it opens its mouth, and like a hot-mouthed puppy, laps up the dredges of her shame. Anger is better. There is a sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth.”

—from *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison

“So fine was the morning except for a streak of wind here and there that the sea and sky looked all one fabric, as if sails were stuck high up in the sky, or the clouds had dropped down into the sea.”

—from *To the Lighthouse*, by Virginia Woolf

“As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.”

**Sunday Poem Hag Riding**

why  
is what i ask myself  
maybe it is the afrikan in me  
still trying to get home  
after all these years  
but when I wake to the heat of morning  
galloping down the highway of my life  
something hopeful rises in me  
rises and runs me out into the road  
and i lob my fierce thigh high  
over the rump of the day and honey  
i ride i ride.

from *Blessing the Boats*, by Lucille Clifton

**Stridulation Sonnet**

Tiger beetles, crickets, velvet ants, all  
know the useful friction of part on part,  
how rub of wing to leg, plectrum to file,  
marks territories, summons mates. How

a lip rasped over finely tined ridges can  
play sweet as a needle on vinyl. But  
sometimes a lone body is insufficient.  
So the sapsucker drums chimney flashing

for our amped-up morning reveille. Or,  
later, home again, the wind’s papery  
come hither through the locust leaves. The roof  
arcing its tin back to meet the rain.

The bed’s soft creak as I roll to my side.  
What sounds will your body make against mine?

from, *Take Me With You, Wherever You are Going*  
by Jessica Jacobs

—from *A Moveable Feast*, by Ernest Hemingway

**What I Didn’t Know Before**

was how horses simply give birth to other  
horses. Not a baby by any means, not  
a creature of liminal spaces, but a four-legged  
beast hellbent on walking, scrambling after  
the mother. A horse gives way to another  
horse and then suddenly there are two horses,  
just like that. That’s how I loved you. You,  
off the long train from Red Bank carrying  
a coffee as big as your arm, a bag with two  
computers swinging in it unwieldily at your  
side. I remember we broke into laughter  
when we saw each other. What was between  
us wasn’t a fragile thing to be coddled, cooed  
over. It came out fully formed, ready to run.

from, *The Carrying* by Ada Limón

### **Cicada Shell**

It is a shell, if by shell I mean something emptied out,  
crawled out of.

I hate the beetle grip on the screen door, the abdomen  
like an extinguished bulb.

In its translucence, the possibility of ocean  
or crackle, were it to fall, driftingly, to the porch floor  
and stepped on —

Someone should fill it with light.  
Give me a syringe. I will inject it

with maple syrup. A cicada shell ought to be  
amber to the tongue,

a little death in every husk

so the yard is full of mourning.  
The trees, on their leaves, shudder—a warp and wail of legs, a click

in the bug-larynx.  
I'd swallow them like pills, if they contained

their own rejuvenation. I'd let them wobble  
like drugs in my palm.

My father died last night. I was far away.

I want to pop them like grapes between my fingers.  
Their juice is sweet in my useless hands.

from *National Anthem*, by Kevin Prufer