The Third World

And the third world that horizoned
At twenty seconds of arc, on our passage to Tlon,
It too possessed atmosphere,
Unbreathable, as its spectrum of elements
Showed us; but the green patches
And the obvious polar caps so attracted us
That we entered an orbit, and thus to our doom
Fell. (I Jangr am charged with this log,
To keep it until the end.)
And we are fallen, into a landscape
Not unlike our own Uqbar, but without life:
None have come out to see or to see to us,
Assuming that they see, or see to —
For it appears inhabitable, this landscape,
And may be inhabited, assuming
That they breathe this unbreathable
Already by rapid displacement suffuming our craft.
Communication having failed with Tlon, we cannot be
accurate
As to forms our dissolution may take:
Predictably chemical deaths, and not other.
I would like to say, for ours, that we face with courage
Absorption into the bands of this third world
That has no name; but this noise out-ratios these signals,
And there is no signal, no name for us
Among green squares of what grows on the third world,
Amid noise that is the signaling
Of creatures that moonrise everywhere and circle us,
Who know courage, color, number, all which we know,
In whose unbreathable fall now their word and our peace.

NANCY G. WESTERFIELD