

The Doppler Effect

1.

I'm standing inside a stationary train and looking outside the window when a fast moving train on the very next track roars past the window. I reach for the strap hanger, which used to be leather but is now the bent metal shape of a vacant pig's ear, because I am convinced that I am moving. Even my knees begin to brace against illusion. It is like that at night, when my dog nudges my hand from the couch to pet her, her head fitting the cup of my hand, as if before my hand was formed, a dog's head needing the shape of it was the cause.

This is not the Doppler Effect.

2.

Surf-fishing with light line on Fire Island. A whale breaches so close to shore the slap of its tail is audible. I imagine the sound under water would be like dropping empty oil drums from a seven-story building. (The "seven," in the phrase, "seven-story building" is completely arbitrary.) Some dapper guys in Speedos want to know if I am fishing for whale. I say no, not today.

That is not the Doppler Effect either.

3.

When the neighbor's 140 pound Great Pyrenees got hit by the Ford Escort it was a matter of forces being applied and absorbed. Golf balls compress during the proper implementation of exacting pressures. Were it not for the camera we could never have proved, without asking them, that horses fly. This too is an assertion of intent. The world has less and less to do with any of us, whether we're on an unmoving train or at the eroding beach.

This also is not the Doppler Effect.

4.

If a bird could sing as loudly as a jet plane, I could better sense that its singing as it approached me standing in a field would be louder in pitch than when it passed. This is also true of light. So, if the same singing bird was a galaxy moving away from me the stretch of light waves would cause it to appear to be red. And the same red bird singing but now moving toward me at a rapid pace would then become blue at its approach. If blue is sadder than red, how sad is it that the singing bird gets bluer as it nears me? Sound and light as far as the bird is concerned have little to do with its contract to sing, which as near as anyone can tell is simply a matter of marking ground, or air, or the ever expanding universe.

“The Doppler Effect” is not a good title.

5.

No/whale/in/the/train/singing/a/bird's/song/can/undo/the/bending/of/light/that/a/sound/
may/make.