

# Time

by Mark Waldrop

Down in the basement, as far away from the Arizona sun  
As we could get, we were led by a man that loved the word  
*Motherfucker*. He said this was where we belonged.  
In the basement.

He told us science fiction had rules:

1. Don't read anything before the year you were born.
2. Time is a motherfucker.

He couldn't stand still and  
He left his reading glasses on around his neck.  
He'd swoop them up off his chest the way a gunfighter  
Quick draws a revolver — to fire some paragraph right through  
us.

*That goes for my stuff too, he said. Don't go reading my books  
Until you've finished Bradbury and Wells.*

*Time*, he'd say, *is a motherfucker*. He told us to put our hands on  
the flat

Cool surface of the desks, to touch them so we knew they were  
real.

Some of us did, some just watched him, shuffling  
Birkenstock sandals, playing with curls of hair.  
He stopped moving to tell us this one thing.

*This is the past, he said. You don't know it yet but this moment is  
over.*

*Time is a motherfucker that way.*

