Affinity for Infinity

Pam Lewis

Madison, Wisconsin

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm

Part of the Physical Sciences and Mathematics Commons

Recommended Citation


©2017 by the authors. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons License.

JHM is an open access bi-annual journal sponsored by the Claremont Center for the Mathematical Sciences and published by the Claremont Colleges Library | ISSN 2159-8118 | http://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/

The editorial staff of JHM works hard to make sure the scholarship disseminated in JHM is accurate and upholds professional ethical guidelines. However, the views and opinions expressed in each published manuscript belong exclusively to the individual contributor(s). The publisher and the editors do not endorse or accept responsibility for them. See https://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/policies.html for more information.
Affinity for Infinity

In the city without limits,
the zip code is an irrational number,
light travels the shortest distance
between two minds,
floorplans are fractals,
and parallel streets converge
at the town spiral.
At the Moebius strip mall,
drugstores sell remedies
for ad nauseum,
shoppers shop til they drop
into another dimension,
buy uncountable chess sets,
and divide the lunch bill by zero.
GEOMETRY

Your story
and my story
trudge silently
on parallel paths
across a dusty,
Euclidean landscape
to an empty horizon
where intersection
never occurs.
But parallel lines
meet at infinity,
and infinity
is everywhere.
Odd Odds is based on a science fiction story I read decades ago. Unfortunately, the author’s name is lost to me. It was a wonderful depiction of the many effects of the violation of usual probabilities.

**Odd Odds**

Everyone who decides to go out arrives at the same restaurant and orders the same meal in a cacophony of coincidence, as they sit crammed against each other at tables brought up from the basement, elbows resting on vinyl placemats, while those turned away devour the nearby eateries.

Everyone who decides to stay home plugs in the vacuum cleaner: simultaneous yearnings for suction, plastic hoses and canisters, a need to remove dirt, dust, and dog hair immediately, a perversion of probability that stresses the power grid, causing brown-outs, and black-outs of certainty.
CHAOS THEORY

...the Butterfly Effect—the notion that a butterfly stirring the air today in Peking can transform storm systems next month in New York.

-James Gleick, *Chaos.*

To the butterfly
it was no big deal,
this beating of wings
to set off a cyclone
half a world away.
It was just another day,
another day of countless beats,
setting off cyclones
or preventing them
with equal ease,
everywhere,
all day long.
Recalculation

As the toddler grows,
from top-heavy staggers
to carefree gait, the head
becomes proportionately smaller,
with continuous adjustments
to the silent equations of the body.
The center of gravity shifts.
Bobble-headed notions topple,
a central belief slides outward,
someone drifts to memory’s edge,
another claims the center.
Explanation, revision, shudder and sway,
solving for certainty, solving for love.