

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Robert Ronnow

Derivatives With Limits

Working over Birk's Works and other tunes my saxophonist admires—
Cheesecake, Blackbird—for the theoretical, applied mathematics
inside an abstract, audial harmonization of the Big Bang and The Fall.

The derivative reveals the slope of the tangent along the curve of space-
time.

Follow that rope back and forth from the known to the unknown, your
mountain to their shore,
an umbilical cord between cities and stories, history and hope, divinity
and
mortality.



I never had anything wise or gentle to say to my parents.
About bladder function. They got the same treatment as every other sol-
dier.

Which systems shut down first and how. The mail keeps coming even
after
you've stopped barking.

What is man made of? Man. Tough it out, laugh about it. Take it out
on your spouse and sons. Democracy corrects itself
through constant criticism, neurotic carping, daily life as low intensity
warfare. That's how we show we care.



Will my letter to the editor be in the funny pages?

Will I even be able to read it?

Did I send it to the wrong address? I've seen my death face and it's not
pretty.

Maybe I can watch your varsity games from a viewfinder in the afterlife.

If I don't finish The Iliad, maybe there's a library there.

Maybe. Maybe is a long, long time.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1



Homer tries several ways to explain the slaughter:
by describing how a spear pierces a warrior's jawbone or armor,
how Achilles' and Agamemnon's hissy fits contribute to the pain of being
a soldier

and how the gods, esp. Zeus, are passionate, confused, obtuse.
A callow youth even as a man. He was afraid and therefore could not
comfort or help.
Perhaps he has a question he'd like to ask but isn't sure what it is or how
to ask it.



Would you rather have the fever break or something great happen?
The young senator or never pissing glass again.
Look one way, from another come the heart's missed beats.

Can I call you back? We're trying to get my truck out of the mud.
Who does he think he is, Nelson Mandela?
Lieutenant, this corpse will not stop burning!



The hero loses urinary control.
The virtuoso loses interest in her bow.
The expert neglects to do the research.

How do cancer cells and bacteria cooperate to kill
the host (you)? The way yr mum & pop
fuck you up. It's unavoidable and it's not your fault.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Anomie

Should we invite the neighbors over for dinner?
Their politics so different from ours.
All the more reason. Combat anomie!
He's worried the town's losing population
but opposes immigration. I like immigrants
but hate passing people on my morning walk.

The whole mountainous western region of the state
is losing population at a rate of 1% per annum.
The young move out, the old stay put but
young artists priced out of big cities move in
looking for affordable studio space. How low
can the population go as long as rents stay low?

We did agree about the fire department expansion
being premature (him) or unnecessary (me).
He argued we should renovate the high school first
the roof is caving in and walls crumbling.
But you can teach under a spreading chestnut tree
or baobab and science needs the world for a laboratory.

I teach at the old 2nd St. jail in Pittsfield
a town that doesn't know if it's coming up or going down.
A few shootings last month, no deaths.
They're holding their breath but also trying to attract life
science businesses to the industrial park. The local bank's
expanding, buying smaller banks in neighboring civilizations.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Eventually our fire department got the vote they wanted,
just called another meeting and packed the auditorium.
The final winning argument was we can do the school,
the fire house and the police station all at once.
Don't accept defeat, limitations. Defeat anomie!
Anomie means lawlessness and purposeless in Greek

so that's not exactly what we're trying to defeat.
It's the mismatch between our aspirations and resources,
no, the dissonance between our tribe and nation,
no, the individual as sexual animal and intellectual,
no, the farmer and the banker, the loved one and the litter,
no, whatever happens to you after you die and belief in reincarnation.

For me, it always boils down to mortality
every conversation, which is why no one comes to dinner.
Whether the fire department buys an exorbitant parcel
at the expense of a future school renovation
in a town slightly losing population but still viable
with a college, bank, artists and a few working farms

is everything and nothing, as Borges says.
Deutsch says death ought to be curable.
The new high school or fire station, conditions like anomie
v. democracy, new life forms, self-conscious species
from the laboratory or the biome. How de body?
Today ok. Tomorrow I don't know. Potential

energy, lover, killer, anomie. Karl Popper
had such faith in the rational whereas Niebuhr
acknowledged man's ego is uncontrollable except
by force. Conflict is inevitable. But at dinner
we agree it doesn't always have to be violent or terminal.
We can do the fire department, police station, the school *and* anomie.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Brodmann Area 4

The debate between free will and fate has taken a hard right turn to neuroscience, Brodmann area 4 the primary motor cortex of the brain located in the posterior frontal lobe (the one cut out of the one who once flew over the cuckoo's nest). This area of the cortex has the pattern of an homunculus! a little man, a troll, the all-wise, mandragon, the golem of Jewish folklore.

This little man has a penis that, when fully engorged, is equal in size to his entire body. However, diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Huntington's, Lou Gehrig's and Creutzfeldt-Jakob are gunning for him. His basal ganglia are garbled and he ends up giving poor advice and making bad decisions. Who can say what happens to his soul or cells or if all will be given or well?

I was listening to the famous astronomer on public radio who expressed the certainty there is no death, your soul is immortal, it exists outside of time (but not space?). That's because time exists only in the human mind (as does the universe including the professional baseball season which is canceled when you're dead).

By Spring, my problems will be solved or ignored, either way is good.

Groundhog holds the knowledge of death without dying for man needs help from every creature born.

Will the holocaust wipe the smile off the face of our romantic comedy or will laughter outlast the outburst?

About the dark times will there be singing?

Yes, there will be singing and some of the songs will be sidesplitting.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Solving the murder reveals the city. Nature of kinships and economic sustenance, who loves whom and why, when things happened and how they lost and found themselves in what happened. Because a meter-making argument cannot appear from nothingness, purposelessness, just cold. He does not go where he was supposed to go. He is in the desert, Sonoran desert, counting cactus buds and ocotillo blooms. This is the afterlife for which he has always longed.