

ON THE CURVE (of solving for B)
by Thylas Moss

(text of poem used in a University of Michigan
Engineering 477 VRML Project, Fall 2003,
related to themes, images, & attempts to locate what remains
dealt with in *Tokyo Butter* © 2006 by Thylas Moss.
This poem, though a part of the book, is outside the book)

Miss Barufaldi's huff is embedded
in every struggle with her math.

My arm's clean curve rises
from the desk on some z-axis of regret;

Fingertips against widow's peak

copy

the foot of an antique tub
whose curved top leaks the light form

of its porcelain huff onto the floor
in flash circles and null-white sets

while a man drowned in what wasn't depth
by accident, in a tub of huff,
the usual (!) math trouble,

and everything is mathematical.

Now this

golden spiral knockoff in the

copy

as if the fingernails go on and on, shrinking
into a tighter and tighter unending violin scroll,

my arm, locked as I concentrate on solutions,
fixed positions when $B = 1/4^{\text{th}}$,

is as good as taxidermed

in beige sleeve of bleached otter back
incompatible with knuckles

such as what was uncorrupted in the tub
where there was a drowning, facts jutting out
like knuckles in a desperate grip on the antique
rim, frozen, mathematically impossible
that he could get out, each knuckle the tip
of a variable vying for control of varying limits,

there are too many faucets

of mistaken identity

let loose in the curve, once arm,
now right there: rail of Santa's sleigh

that leaves no mark in snow
as angels do when pressed

beyond hypothesis

not that angels are needed here,
the otter zone,

my answer sheet fresh butcher paper
grid erased, not graphable,
faint line of curve ferns

into the white an indelible blue frost

the handle of the big dipper

when it's not needed,

the otter stiff with curve,
my concentration in its most intense mode,
a tap on the tail

rocks it
into rising and falling

part fetus and boat,
start of almond-hook

an ample weapon, from the same arsenal

of idea as what, some lines back, killed a man

whose anonymity
is in part his being on the curve

when a can of alphabet soup,
or the variety with pasta shaped into numbers,
couldn't be opened completely,
the blade traveling the lid as it curved

and coiled as tightly as nappy hair
follicle deep and circling endlessly,

circular saw

easily mistaken for advent
of rotating halo, blessings

as from the reputation of a shark

Miss Barufaldi turned out to be,
her curve-grade also scimitar

for the one who still floundered and failed,
couldn't get the hang of trip, got hung up
on rational and irrational numbers,

the dead man one of many dead men
you don't have to know about

don't have to worry about
don't have to ever hear about again

as you can't prove which man he is or isn't
or that he was ever anything more than the line

about him as it curves

without becoming face or signature
so he is missing

in the action of the curve
in the footnote to vector analysis
in the retroaction of reading it again

simulating
the pure pleasure
of eugenics

—as if to look for meaning
—as if to suggest he could be cut

along that line

that is his entirety
his ordinary infinity

of limits

reproducing in this line
that would have to be cut also

to eventually leave Miss Barufaldi alone
isolated B on one side of the equation
as she should be left

—her eyebrows met in a cursive
white lowercase M

but not because of that

yet because of that there's enough religion,
too much religion, not enough

at any given time, this time here

is sun slash through Devon, announcement ray,
punisher ray, forgiver ray, devil ray

opening passage to Tampa, devil ray's gill openings so long,
they begin, looking at them extended-tilt, to curve, to pass

some test, to produce desired results.

Another elegant Sunday. Funeral home ad
fans the faces disappearing into prayer.

my answer sheet fresh butcher paper
disappearing into prayer