

EMILY GROSHOLZ

The Continuum: Trying to Describe the Reals in Cambridge

“For there are two labyrinths of the human mind,
one concerning the composition of the continuum,
and the other concerning the nature of freedom,
and they arise from the same source: infinity.”

G. W. Leibniz, *On Freedom*

Draw the curtains! The curtains are always closed
on roses, rugby field, light variable
but waning along these tiered northern skies
where ten o'clock's the apogee of day,
a full moon pewtering the cliffs of sunset.
I write in the wizened glow of my computer.

I write, the reals are really not like numbers
that we are used to count with, to begin
and go up stepwise. They are number flooded
by continuity, the line upbraided
by differential strands to labyrinth.
They are the shape and cardinal of freedom.

Abyesses along abyesses along abyesses,
yet perfectly defined. As if we charted
a finest-grained Grand Canyon with passing walls
through which a sourceless unplumbed river ran,
like moonplate cumulant in tiers above
the river of waning sunlight. Draw the curtains!

From *Proportions of the Heart: Poems that Play with Mathematics*, by Emily Grosholz, Tessellations, 2014.