

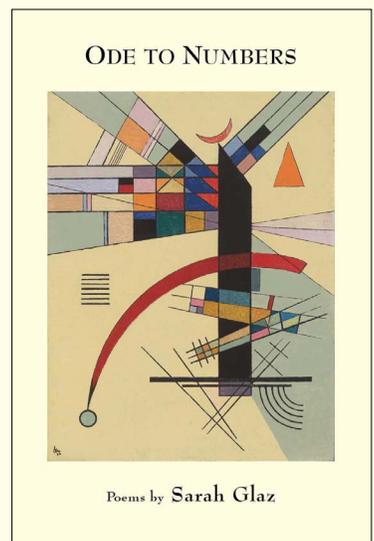
Ode to Numbers, Poetry by Sarah Glaz



In *Ode to Numbers* Sarah Glaz has created a fascinating mixture of poetry and mathematics in which each bespeaks the other. This is as passionate a book as it is erudite. Sarah Glaz moves naturally between the visceral world of strong emotions and the mathematical world of Commutative Rings. About the book, Emily Grosholz has written, “Because Sarah Glaz sees ‘a streak of mathematics in almost everything,’ this book of poems is a work of alchemy. Light rays in the sky, lines of gold, become x and y axes. The square root of 2 becomes a symbol of the irrationality that drove her family from Romania to Israel. Small stones stand for the calculus (in Latin) and the integral sign is a snake (in Leibnizian). The transcendental number e covers three pages laced with equations, first appearing as a pirate, then Euler’s namesake, then a peacock’s tail and finally a poetic star. Logic proves its own inability to prove with cymbals and umlauts. The precious fruit of labor is both a baby and a theorem, depending. The fabric of the universe is algebraic; lemmas are blue, corollaries orange, theorems purple. The poet’s backpack is full of theorems, and commutative rings grow in her garden instead of weeds. A ghazal utters a gazelle, water becomes wavelets, and sunshine weaves the Golden Ratio into everything it covers. Train tracks converge at infinity, defying Euclid’s Fifth Postulate. Don’t miss these transformations!” Philip Holmes adds this: “These poems tell Sarah Glaz’s story, from childhood in Bucharest to her mathematical life in Israel and the US. Surprising, rich and complex, they invite us to a journey through letters and numbers, with an ever-curious mind.” Alice Major notes that “This eloquent collection twines the history of mathematics with the story of a woman mathematician – the patterns, travels, discoveries that shape her life. Sarah Glaz deftly explores the dance between numbers and letters, and between the joy of ‘proof’ and the inevitable limits to certainty. In such expert hands, the language of math and the language of life reflect each other beautifully. And this from Barry Mazur: “Poetry is the most intimate voice we have and Mathematics the most transcendental. In *Ode to Numbers* these voices sing together wonderfully.”

Sarah Glaz has moved from culture to culture and from language to language several times in her life. Born in Bucharest, Romania, she emigrated with her parents to Israel at age 11. After completing a Bachelor Degree in mathematics and philosophy at Tel Aviv University, she and her husband came to the United States as graduate students at Rutgers University. This was the site of two major events in Sarah’s life: her son was born shortly after she passed the prelims, and she was introduced to Commutative Ring Theory and completed a Ph.D. thesis in this area of mathematics. Sarah went on to a research and teaching career in mathematics, joining the faculty of the Mathematics Department at the University of Connecticut in 1989. By the time of her retirement in 2017, Sarah had authored or edited about ninety publications and received several grants and prestigious visiting positions. In 2007 she was elected a University Teaching Fellow. Sarah has written poetry in the languages of all the countries where she has lived: Romanian, Hebrew and English. She is not far from poetry even in the country of mathematics, where her area of research falls into the region of pure mathematics, which according to Einstein is “the poetry of logical ideas.” Sarah started writing poetry in English in 1991 and found, to her delight, that the mathematics which shaped her life found its way into her poetry. Since then, her poetry and translations from various languages have appeared in a number of literary and mathematical journals and in several anthologies. This is Sarah’s first poetry collection.

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