

## Locked in Functions: A Short Poem for Robert Langlands

Virgilio A. Rivas

*Polytechnic University of the Philippine and University of Santo Tomas*

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



Part of the [Mathematics Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Virgilio A. Rivas, "Locked in Functions: A Short Poem for Robert Langlands," *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, Volume 13 Issue 1 (January 2023), pages 301-302. . Available at: <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/vol13/iss1/27>

©2023 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.

# Locked in Functions: A Short Poem for Robert Langlands

Virgilio A. Rivas

vr.aqui.rivas@gmail.com

---

Here was a thinker, with nature  
tucked in his hands. It's not like  
the pebbles, not those of the  
wreckages  
of stars a child could count  
when coaxed to climb, eyes  
dazzled by the light of the morning sun.  
For once,  
let's divine a mystery:  
In his hands, a version of nature,  
invisible, doubtless, doubles into  
a dreamlike beauty.

Take a modular of ' $A = x$ '  
folding onto ' $B$ ' eons later.  
Or take the same ' $x$ ' apart from time  
as doubling as always as the same  
mystery, the same uncharted 'continent'  
before which stands the prize of beauty;  
the third in his walks that doubles  
 $A/B$  into the same 'footpath'-  
soul for mathematicians, energy for physics.  
It's the math that makes him dream of fields.

But just as when the series gathered up a storm,  
the old man recoiled. Unlike automorphic  
forms dreams do not leak into physics;  
proofs are for functions (take a Rosetta stone,  
fold it by three).

They repulse experiments, but keep  
the questions by motives.  
He who looks right through an empty  
universe gains the secret: Prime numbers  
hidden from sight, specters for the deep,  
overlays for veiled affinities.

---

This is the same nature on the same page  
but written three times over.  
Einstein was in his room.  
His space was a realm of functions.  
Everywhere but the physics' region.

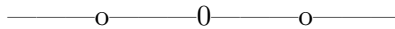
Take my name off it.  
He once told a young student.  
We climb geometry, not the universe.  
Then he recalled an incident  
in his youth.

His dream could have been  
an empty wastebasket rivaled only  
by spreading mimeographs. In his old age,  
he was asked—

If things fit together,  
why avoid the question of beauty?  
Isn't beauty the path on which  
the 'here to there' makes 'walking'  
reveal a pattern from chaos?

Warning his listeners that only God  
knows the motive behind  
the question of beauty, he asks,  
"What would you do with all  
the information on a zeta-function?"  
Assume too much and dive into errors.  
The old man advised.  
Assume too less, even passions  
won't work. That, "I have none."  
The last thing he said.

That, for one to cross a space with math  
functions must have none.



Virgilio A. Rivas, Ph.D. is an independent researcher from the Philippines. His research interests intersect with natural philosophy and social science. Rivas is affiliated with Polytechnic University of the Philippines and University of Santo Tomas.