

S P I R E S

intercollegiate arts & literary magazine

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T W O T H O U S A N D F I V E
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*Anna Finneran
Washington University*

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INTRODUCTION

After witnessing the production of nearly seven issues of Spires, the task has finally fallen upon me to write the introduction. As a senior, I recently have found myself inundated by a great number of questions. So I figure I should add why am I proud to be a part of Spires into the mix, along with why study English, why graduate school, etc. For one, Spires puts me in touch with a group of people I might not have known otherwise—a group that is intelligent, talented, and just all around amusing. Spires gives me the opportunity to escape from coursework, paper deadlines, and honors thesis research to share my passion for something I might not otherwise let myself take the time to do.

But Spires extends way beyond my personal experience. The students who submit make up the voices of our generation. Because we are an intercollegiate magazine, we break out of the Washington University bubble and extend the power of expression to all college students who take part in our collective experience. We all have ideas—things that inspire us, things which we wish to communicate—and they deserve a place in which to be published. Spires serves as the intermediary between individual artists and a larger group of people who can connect with their work. I delight in knowing that the volumes of Spires issues on my shelf have provided me with the opportunity to be part of a larger project, a larger production, and I think that we all want to be part of something larger than ourselves.

I have grown a great deal from my experience in Spires, and I like to think the magazine has grown with me, too. It has been remarkable seeing where the magazine has come from and where it will go, left in such good hands. We have definitely had our fair share of catastrophes, from budget problems to website crashes to hectic literary reviews and printing problems, but you guys have been incredible. I think there is one thing we have all learned—it is much easier to be the critic than the artist. Nonetheless, Spires, you are amazing. It has been a true pleasure spending Wednesday nights with you.

Never stop writing, thinking, living, loving, or sharing your own creations.

Your Spires veteran,

Andrea Soroko
Spires Co-Editor-in-Chief



Steven Garen
Washington University



Taryn Williams
Washington University

FALL 2005 SPIRES POETRY PRIZE WINNER

PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THE TEAROOM*

Picture the occupants:
little silk bird-people,
their silence a vapor around them.
They sink into it
as autumn leaves float on water.

“Large, Cumbersome American
Girl With Awkward Elbows
Please
do not enter.”

Picture myself, age eleven:
folding like thin paper
to fit the impossible
white and wood sanctuary.
Their inky brows arch in shock.
They clutch their earthenware cups
like eggs in their slim hands.

Tania Strauss
University of Michigan

*After “Japanese Cha-no-yu and Tearoom” in the University of Michigan Museum of Art.



Oliver Hulland
Washington University

FALL 2005 SPIRES FICTION PRIZE WINNER

The Loss of Muzaffar

The poison hid from Muzaffar's body until his fourteenth year with the Celestinis, when it flooded arteries and a melancholy aorta. Everybody talked about him. Doctors said he died from a sudden failure of the heart while Grandpère Celestini whispered of the unbearable guilt Muzaffar must have had to live with after pocketing the family sapphires, even though the Celestinis, such good people really, decided against accusing someone so stalwartly loyal to them. Others, surprised that such a lean and reticent man suffered from a heart condition, blamed the unpredictable nature of old age. But in the back of the neighboring townhouse's bottom floor, where the Haitian maid slept amidst the ghosts of toppled towers and the aromas of Muzaffar's irresistible cooking, Etoile suspected something else when she tasted secrets in the bitter smell of fried okra.

Etoile never ate the food from Muzaffar's kitchen; few who knew of him in New York ever did. The Celestinis sheltered their extraordinary cook until his name became a rumor, his talent a legend amongst postmen and dog-walkers. Grandmère Celestini seldom shared Muzaffar with guests, anxious that one mouthful of biryani or a lick of jasmine sorbet might cost her the family chef, for these were hard times, and even the proud Celestinis could not pay as much as their deeper-pocketed friends. Frequent visitors to the household, therefore, grew to understand the distinction between invitations to "High Afternoon Tea" and "dinner." The latter was rare indeed, perhaps once a season, while the family

held Teas weekly on Thursdays at precisely 4:35 in the afternoon. Little brown-haired Leila would languorously stir the pot of ginger Darjeeling while her twin Malcolm, with the gravity of ritual, would daub twenty-two cups each with a spoon of honey. He'd leave one cup unsweetened for Mariko the corner clairvoyant, who liked entering seven minutes late in a fog of scarves and omens.

The psychic always arrived first—punctuality was desperately out of fashion in their neighborhood, even more so than elsewhere. But the Celestinis waited quietly for the publisher, the wine-seller, the Tibetan refugee with a meaty smile, self-referential artists, the Jerrells who floated back and forth from the Hudson to their Caribbean home, Alun the flutist, retired diplomats from Grandpère's working days, Leila and Malcolm's small waddling friends from school, a journalist called Viorel, neighbors they liked, neighbors they disliked, and Cecil, who always seemed lost even when he strolled in last carrying a bottle of brandy and reciting Persian poetry. Once all were snuggled in the red glow of the sitting room, Maman Celestini would pour the tea while Papa Celestini carted out trays of diamond-shaped egg sandwiches and loaves of pound cake he loved making himself. Everyone ate while babbling between bites and gulps about the latest openings in Long Island City, Malcolm's recent soccer trophy, or the Chinese Diaspora in St. Kitt's. Cecil recommended a jot of brandy for everybody, but after being repeatedly rebuffed, he fell into his customary winged-back chair and

grumbled at a wizened and deaf man (whose suit everyone admired but whose name no one remembered, not even Grandpère) about the stench of the distant Upper East Side. The old man would grin thinly, but kept his eyes on Alun the flutist's dancing fingers. Few ever skipped Celestini teas.

Celestini "dinners," on the other hand, were known for their scarcity and overwhelming awkwardness. Whenever the family particularly felt the burden of overdue social etiquette, Papa and Maman decided on two guests and had Muzaffar prepare a slightly larger meal than usual. He also made the table, traced with his long fingers and favorite calligrapher's pen the names of the guests on place cards, straightened the mahogany dining chairs, lit two candles and then disappeared into the kitchen to await the tinkling of Grandmère's bell. She only used the bell on these occasions as it allowed the family to avoid calling out his name. As Muzaffar flashed in and out with platters and bowls, the children remained stonily silent throughout, though any guest could hardly fault the two. Leila drooped in her chair, choked by a dozen layers of pearls, while Malcolm's cheeks flushed the same color as his impossibly bright red bow-tie. The rest of the family hurried through the meal, eyeing their guests. Her forearms wrung by glittering bangles, Grandmère sat up straight and let her hooked nose arch grimly towards the visitors. Grandpère talked little. Instead, he cast worried glances from the food to the bathroom in the foyer. Papa and Maman played the reluctant hosts, dully mouthing questions-about-the-job or indictments-of-Bush that faded quickly into a sip

of wine or another nervous pause and did nothing to lighten the stifling mood of gloom. Visitors would take their leave abruptly after eating, breathing deep relieved sighs once they reached the pavement outside. Of course, these dinners were all successfully choreographed to distract guests from the splendor of their meal, the incredible sensibility of Muzaffar's cooking hands—such was the Celestinis' dependence on a man who they found one winter afternoon curled on their front-stoop with one palm cupped against his forehead, mumbling words they never understood.

"*Aadaab arz*," he had said then, each gentle syllable rolled to an incomprehensible perfection that, for days after, made Malcolm and Leila scamper about the house murmuring "*aadaab arz, aadaab arz*" to each other while thrusting little hands to their heads until three syllables and one motion became their eternal secret language. Grandmère had brought the man inside instantly. She had Grandpère and Papa lay his thin, long frame on a sitting room sofa, while Maman brushed the ice from his cleft chin and plump eyebrows. But as soon as Grandmère stomped off to the kitchen to make tea, the man sprung up and followed her through the house, running his fingers along the ochre walls. Grandmère was stunned when, after a brief glance around, the man busied himself about shelves and stoves, a flurry of hands and feet, like those of a dancer missing his stage. The Celestinis crowded in front of the pantry door, watching in tremulous anticipation. He stopped suddenly, turned on one heel, approached the huddled family with four even strides, and presented a mug to

Grandmère. "I am Muzaffar," his voice sounded like a quilt. It was the best cup of tea she ever had.

Without much of a fuss from anybody, the Celestinis adopted Muzaffar, initially out of Grandmère's insistence that humanity had an obligation to protect thin people from winter and then permanently after Muzaffar's voluntary assumption of all duties within the kitchen. Against polite protests and the furious batting of his eyelashes, the family forced a salary upon Muzaffar, a monthly wad of bills half of which he tucked unceremoniously into the back of a kitchen drawer, next to the fondue forks, and half he left caught in the springs of the cot he kept in the kitchen. Papa and Maman had felt exceedingly uncomfortable (or at least felt that they *should* feel exceedingly uncomfortable) at the prospect of a slender brown man toiling for nothing in their home. As Papa explained to Grandmère one evening, peering over the top of his newspaper, the money justified the man's role in the house, how else could they understand his most bizarre presence?

Though Grandmère accepted her son's clipped reasoning, she had, guiltily, entertained fantasies of a man so warm and generous that he would respect welcome and shelter with a passion for kitchen-work, that relationships need never make economic sense as long as they were dimly poetic. His reluctant acquiescence in a wage cast Muzaffar as her romantically tragic (or even tragically romantic) hero. This veiled dreaminess of Grandmère's, uncharacteristic for a lady who woke up at five past six every morning to ensure

that the baggy-eyed Sanitation Department truck picked up *all* the garbage in front of their stoop, had already infected the entire family. It seemed that Muzaffar's arrival tickled the Celestinis out of character. In the first weeks, Grandpère began to return from his daily dusk strolls with pots of petunias, which he had Leila and Malcolm balance on the many crumbling window-sills so that pink petals fluttered against the grey face of the house. Grandpère hoped the effect would make their home look like Florence, lavender memories glimmering again in his eyes. Meanwhile, Maman dragged the children into the kitchen, where, to Muzaffar's great bemusement, the three Celestinis proceeded to make guava jelly from a faded family recipe. "Our generation doesn't make jam anymore!" she berated Papa the next morning. Papa, too consumed by his own bout of fantasy to care for confectionery, spent day and night rearranging and dusting the family's horde of books. At least two rooms in each of the townhouse's three floors boasted floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall book shelving, all of which suffered from a severe case of accumulated disorder. He decided to set things straight, whizzing zealously about with a plumed duster and knowledge of the Dewey Decimal System. Suddenly, the poems of Mahmoud Darwish no longer found themselves besides Herodotus, Calvino extracted himself from Sun Tzu, Walcott escaped the clutches of Durkheim. Papa even found the fake book in which Grandpère had intended to stow the Celestini family sapphires but had instead left adrift alongside Brecht (snatching the fake book from her son and glaring at her

bemused husband, Grandmère placed the jewels inside the book's hollow and slipped it innocuously into her study). After twenty-one days, Papa became hopeful. Perhaps, he obsessed, if he could order the incomparable insanity of the Celestini bookshelves, reason would even return to the warring world. Humanity, after all, was nothing but a library. Papa finished his work a month later, happily optimistic and blissfully unaware that Malcolm and Leila had switched books around in his wake, sowing the seeds of new chaos in unknowable whispers, "*aadaab arz, aadaab arz.*"

Muzaffar was absorbed by the Celestini household through these abrupt impulses, through a family epidemic of mischievous inspiration, and, above all, through the unrivalled superiority of his cooking. Breakfast, packed food for the children's meals at school, lunch, a light tea for Grandpère and Maman, and dinner. The cycle repeated itself daily, Muzaffar's tireless work pausing only Thursdays in the afternoon, and sometimes when it had snowed lightly and slush had yet to fill the gutters. The elder Celestinis insisted he take more breaks, even offered to pay him for time off, but he shrugged them away with a delicate smile and an even more delicate mango mousse. How could the Celestinis complain? Malcolm and Leila never lacked friends throughout elementary school, middle school, and even high school as students crowded about them during lunch period, hoping for a nibble of sun-dried tomato ravioli or finely spiced *merguez*. In college, many a steamy night for both Celestini brother and sister began with a dark chocolate torte or several Portobello pancakes in a mint sauce, which always arrived at their dorms

neatly wrapped in white packaging and including a card that, in elegant letters, read, "*Aadaab Arz.*" Grandmère and Grandpère also benefited from Muzaffar's food. Despite their steadily advancing age, they never contracted arthritis, hemorrhoids, bladder irregularities, Alzheimer's, cancer, or even the common cold, though Grandpère still occasionally developed cases of gout (that he blamed on his ancestors). Like both grandparents, Papa and Maman thrived off their cook; during Muzaffar's fourteen-year tenure, none of the Celestini adults felt any older. Time thickened and settled about the house like beaten cream in a soufflé.

Muzaffar, too, didn't grow older, only his eyebrows evidenced the passing of time. They billowed and turned a quiet silver, two lost rain clouds above the doldrums of his eyes. This gray-ing struck the family as particularly odd since Muzaffar seemed altogether outside the bounds of history. Each of the Celestinis soon realized that it was pointless inquiring about him. If asked about the land of his birth, or his age, Muzaffar would laugh and later emerge at dinner with a grilled swordfish and declare, "This is where I'm from!" or after placing a goat cheese tart on the table, clap once, "That, my dears, is the sum of my years." Likewise, he explained his ethnicity with a chestnut soup, while his childhood was one of eggplants and quails. His family consisted of twenty-four cup cakes, he elaborated his political beliefs in dumplings, and the path that had finally brought him to the Celestinis' stoop appeared in the suggestions of seared asparagus. Grandmère suspected Muzaffar hid himself in his food so that the Celestinis would digest bits of him every day,

only ever knowing the man by his endless flavors. It seemed, to her, a wonderfully appropriate game for their sublime cook to play.

In this way, the Celestinis never saw Muzaffar outside his talent. But he was not what he cooked, or at least, not entirely what he cooked. Every Thursday afternoon, as the Tibetan refugee sung from his throat or as Viorel took black-and-white photographs of Leila and her little friends with their jaws set and fists in the air, Muzaffar drifted about the city. When the sun was out, he'd join pickup soccer games in the park at St. Luke's Place. During the World Cup, these games grew in length and intensity, spilling into the streets after the park closed at dusk. Muzaffar was always the referee. Other Thursdays, he went east to Ludlow Street where he joined an old Cantonese lady whose earlobes brushed against her shoulders and whose eyes were as still as his. She sat cross-legged on a bench blowing smoke-rings from a thin water-pipe. He liked letting the smoke out in slow thick streams through his nostrils and would sit there, watching buses and taxis blur until the coals died out. When it rained and only soggy black shapes slunk through the streets, Muzaffar ran alongside Alphabet City boys, spraying 'East Side' on unsuspecting West Village townhouses—but he always did steer the boys away from the Celestinis'. No one in the house knew of their cook's wanderings, none thought Muzaffar capable of anything else. So it was that whenever he traced his way back to his adopted home, past Mariko's ramshackle stall, through the misty lamplight of

Commerce Street till he reached the old stoop and the pink-flowered grey townhouse, Muzaffar belonged to New York City, not the Celestini kitchen. Etoile the Haitian maid watched him from the ground-floor window of the neighboring townhouse, watched as he paused before mounting the Celestini stoop, watched in winter as he skimmed ice from the wrought-iron railings with a slender forefinger. Perhaps it was understanding that drew her eyes. She, too, belonged to New York City—as much as she did to pots and pans and red-cheeked babies, a vacuum cleaner, or even to the divine smells of Muzaffar's cooking that spread through the walls of townhouses and into her daydreams.

She was still daydreaming the infamous day New York lost its topless towers, the day ash fell like snow across the neighborhood, the day Mariko forgave the future and closed her shop, the day before Muzaffar's last. Fire trucks and ambulances zoomed through the catatonic streets, chasing billowing black clouds. Schools with many windows and barren flagpoles emptied. Hulking office buildings ground to a screeching halt. Lower Manhattan stayed eerily silent, gagged by yellow caution tape and the soot-laden air. The Cantonese lady abandoned her bench, earlobes swinging behind her as she fled to Flushing, while footballs lay strewn about St. Luke's Place like the toys of mischievous ghosts. Somewhere, giants began to play with the television and wrinkled white men, staring grimly towards Heaven, decided the fate of language. It seemed to Etoile, now once

again beside the ground-floor window, that the neighborhood, the entire city even, was sinking into an alien world of ash, interminably grey, and powerfully lonely. She fumbled with the nozzle of her vacuum cleaner, longing to suck away all the soot, longing to return color to her Commerce Street suddenly stiff in black-and-white silence. But in their upstairs playroom, babies broke into wail and drew Etoile from her grounded flights of fancy.

In his kitchen, Muzaffar abandoned a promising lunch and slipped like shadow through the Celestini house. He had made a decision. Expressionless except for his stormy eyebrows, which writhed upon an unruffled brow, Muzaffar stole into Grandmère's study, found that book he knew to be a fake, and from its hollow, removed the Celestini sapphires, sneaking a storied heirloom into the pocket of his apron.

The jewels had been taken before. They were stolen first almost two hundred years ago, on the green island of Ceylon, where colonial officers made men slither through the mines in search of stones more precious than their lives. A grizzled jewel-cutter, his eyes turning into milk, slid the sapphires into his underwear and descended from the mountains, through a forest of eucalyptus trees, and came to the port. He sold the stones to a sea captain for enough money to soften a long, jagged life under empire. Tucked within a crate of tea, the sapphires sailed past the hills of Aden, into the bustle and dust of Zanzibar, and round the nose of Africa till they reached the Canaries

when pirates set upon the ship and stripped it of all its cargo. Craving the gleam of Malay pearl, or Indian silver, or even Chinese oranges, the pirates found only crate after crate of tea which they sold in disgust to a distributor in Cadiz. The sapphires soon crossed through the Pyrenees, looped around Marseille and tumbled through the Tuscan countryside to Florence, where they emerged quite unexpectedly in Elio Celestini's morning cup of tea. He jumped from the veranda of the villa, yelling for a larder girl who, with a quivering hand, pointed out the recently purchased package of Ceylon tea-leaves. Years later, Elio would tell his children of how, by God's infinite grace, the Celestini family had been given jewels as blue and true as their eyes, and that, as long as the sapphires stayed within the family, the Celestinis would be content and have no secrets to keep, and would never forget their history. The sapphires lingered long in Florence, only leaving in Grandpère's breast-pocket more than a century later when he escaped decline and crumbled grandeur for Paris and the warm arms of Grandmère. They rented a walk-up in the Marais, and together learned how to dance and how to think. In those days, sapphires glimmered and spun within the bowels of Grandmère's record player. But restless again, the Celestini jewels followed the inexorable historical current that brought the family to the grey townhouse on Commerce Street where they could shelve all their books and put their sapphires finally to rest.

Muzaffar waited a day before taking the sapphires out of his apron. By then, Grandpère had already opened the empty book. The Celestinis had skittered about the house, going through the motions of a search for something that could never just be lost, unwilling for the first time in fourteen years to bring themselves to the table and eat. It was a only a matter of hours before eyes turned on the cook, sapphire eyes crying both for their broken New York City and their suddenly missing past. Grandmère's nose bent viciously as Muzaffar removed the platter of tangerine cous-cous from the table. "How can you think of food at a time like this?" she hissed, "Is it all you care about?" He said nothing but glided back and forth from the kitchen, untouched dishes in hand, while Grandpère muttered black thoughts in the dark of the foyer bathroom. Maman collapsed in the sitting room, feeding herself spoonful after spoonful of her guava jelly as Papa, unable to reach the twins at their dorms, let the television wash over his numb eyes.

Alone in the kitchen, Muzaffar poured the sapphires out onto the countertop. The Celestini family jewels were each no larger than his thumbnail, uncertain teardrops under the pale kitchen

light. He scooped them all into one cupped hand, and with a flick of his wrist, dropped them into an already sizzling pan. Amidst onions, red peppers, streams of puréed tomatoes, powdered turmeric, cloves, and a mound of chopped okra, the sapphires tossed and fried. In all their travels, they had never encountered the fervor of a cook possessed, the heat of a man breaking from his adopted home. Muzaffar's eyebrows twitched with each shake of the pan. He stirred relentlessly, so frantic in his movements that even his eternally still eyes swirled, catching the blue, now brown, now green light of sapphires disappearing into a stir-fry. Then, he stopped, apparently satisfied with the thick smell of burnt okra clouding the kitchen. There would be time, later, he knew, for families to eat and forget, to float uninvited from place to place, to speak words no one understood, to love the city with their eyes, even to be a New Yorker and serve nothing, but not now. Not when colors had fled the world and left maids alone, clinging to unspoken odors. With serene and slow bites, he finished the entire pan, waiting for the poison of the Celestinis to spread and preserve lost history in the memory of his food.

Kanishk Tharoor
Yale University

CHALLAH ROLLS FROM TABLECLOTHS

Sarah Litner,
Decked out in hairglow,
Blond-highlights and a white dress,
Walked down Kingston like an angel gliding.

She wore knee-highs,
And sly grins as if she'd know
Something that no one else in this city of
Slow moving cars and Rabbinical epilogues could know.

Moved to the slow
Tap of Klezmer moans
And winos asking for change by the façade
Of a gaping synagogue staring over a thousand men passing.

He would have whistled
The first time he saw her and lifted
An eyebrow to the form of modest divinity
Passing by the grocery she cast her eyes ahead beyond him.

But men didn't whistle
At passing forms of beauty and neither
Did he only holding his breath and praying to
A God that he knew would not want for him what he asked.

Windows snap open
And breadcrumbs rain down from shaken
Tablecloths to coat the city streets like tar and a girl
Covered by Shabbat leftovers like rice thrown to track her footsteps.

The boy imagined that
The fistfuls of challah were accompanying
A smashing glass and that night alone in front of candlelight.
And then he turned his head down to the box, cut into it, and grit his teeth.

She wandered Utica
With the laktap of snapping
Gum and skip of footsteps on the road.
She couldn't have been more than 17 years old.

An old woman arose
From below the house cellar
Nose held high like a beacon to attract
Stopped with dish on her hips to watch the girl.

The girl read Tanya
To herself memorized
To make someone very proud
If someone existed to be very proud.

She climbed steps
Pressed a hand to the doornail
Pressed her hand to her lips and opened
To enter.

Up an empty
Staircase
And she
Opens the same
Books
To read
The same
Texts
That always seem to
Ask

Is this reality?
She wonders if it is.
If it isn't, then are you responsible for actions?
And if it is, how can it be, cast against the infinite.
For these she has no answers.

Just words she repeats.
And memorizes,
Her tongue learning the way to pronounce
Them even before she understands them.
Until the evening rests over the city and
The cry of a single pebble knocking against her window
Calls her forth from the infinite
And the finite
And the beingness of the everbeing.

The window opens and hair spills out,
And a voice into the darkness,
And a voice from the night calls back.
The infinite is forgotten in catcalls,
And voices spilling from windows in conversation
Like challah crumbs from tablecloths.

Mordechai Shinefield
Yeshiva University



*Jonathan Lisenby
Washington University*



Jen Renner
Washington University



Lana Harfoosh
University of Chicago



Selena Valenti
Washington University

HOBBS, RUN

Tom Hobbes had that old-time restless feeling again, one which strikes a not so inconsiderable proportion of men in their middle years. Specifically, he felt a need to go on a road trip, get out of town somehow. Ever since he'd written his magnum opus back in '51 the Royalists had been threatening from all directions, making him feel claustrophobic. So he set to work getting himself over that big ocean between Europe and the New World,¹ hoping to stake out a place where he could lay low for awhile, at least till Cromwell got around to disposing of all his opponents and things cooled down some. The more Hobbes thought about visiting America, the more he liked it. "There I could get some fresh aire circulating through these drye nostrills of mine," he thought to himself. Even the "Savage people of America" he would surely encounter in the New World didn't deter him any. In fact, he was bent on getting to know some of them. A little field work might bolster his recently published masterpiece, anyway. "I could rebuke

that antient Mongril of a Bishop and prove my vertue to him," he joyfully predicted. Hobbes was sick of that old lecher, John Bramhall, who was always banging on about how Hobbes's materialist brand of metaphysics didn't leave much room for God in the grand scheme of things. If he went to America, that would soon change. Bramhall would be shut up for good.

So Hobbes cashed in on some of his *Leviathan* royalties and got himself passage on that big boat heading across the Atlantic. After weeks of seafaring over the seemingly endless ocean blue, the ship came upon the richly vegetated shores of America. He rowed ashore in a dinghy with his traveling companion, young Maximal Gladeus, and they made their way inland, Maximal hacking down the overgrowth blocking his Master's way. Hobbes had no sense of placement or direction, but was sure there would be primitive peoples around here somewhere. And if he wasn't right: toward the end of the first day ashore they stumbled upon

¹ This particular incident related here to you, dear reader, is not accounted for in the scholarly treatments of Hobbes's life, nor was it included in that subject's very own autobiography, which I'm told existed at one point. Don't worry, though, as I can personally vouch for this episode's authenticity: While summering in a hippie commune off the coast of Virginia this very year (2005), I was poking around one day in the bushes behind our dwelling and found not the psilocybin mushrooms I so specifically desired at the time but rather an old sealed bottle containing a few rag paper scraps belonging to none other than Mr. Hobbes himself. In order to reach a larger reading audience than the tired little coterie of grey-haired chaps who subscribe to *Hobbes Studies*, this humble author has taken it upon himself to (slightly) fictionalize the contents of these papers, which I presume to be Mr. Hobbes's travel journal, and mold them into a short story. Hopefully, then, the publication of this episode of the famous philosopher's life will aid in furthering our understanding of his life and times.

a curiously clad group of warriors beating each other senseless with clubs, tomahawks, sticks, anything they could get their hands on.

“Why what we have here is a warre of every man against every man!” Hobbes happily exclaimed. “I must ask these irrationall fellows why this Evill Civill warre has ariseth.” He rubbed his hands together, scheming. “Perhaps it will not contradicteth my theory of human Nature. That would bee delightfull.” Hah, take *that* Bishop Bramhall. But as Hobbes sat there in the bushes he had second thoughts about his initial reaction. “Aye, but they exist in Spirituall Darknesse, these Heathens, for there is little Publique Tranquility to be found here or in any other nearby Vicinity, I expect. Neverthelesse, they captivate my Interest.”

Hobbes carefully jotted down some notes in his journal before emerging from his observatory there in the bush. He tiptoed over some dead bodies lying around, looking to find the least brutish chap standing about so he could ask a few, pointed questions of him. “Your Face is awful greene there, Master,” Maximal observed, trotting aside him.

“If I smell one more Carkass with my Nose around here my Stomach will surely

suffer hurtfull Paines,” stammered Hobbes. He clamped his thumb and index finger around his nose and thereafter spoke in high, nasally tones. “I didn’t account for the totall Pusillanimity and Miserableness of these Savages. They have surely fallen into a deep Sicknesse.”

At that point one of the natives jumped out of a tree and landed right in front of Hobbes. Not wasting any time, the latter started quizzing the former about being a “masterlesse Man” and what, exactly, he thought of not having “a coercive Power to tye his hands from rapine, and revenge.” The native started saying something incomprehensible to the Englishman’s ears, and Hobbes cut him off, furious. “Why, these Savages cannot even grasp basick Morall Sentences or even a little naturall Reason!” Well, apparently the native guy understood *that* because he whistled at his friends and quickly barked out a few orders.

Before long scores of savages were chasing after the two palefaced fellows. Hoping to escape with their lives, Hobbes and Maximal hightailed it out of there and headed back in the direction of the boat. Thankfully for them, the native warriors got tied up with one another before long and resumed beating each other senselessly, causing several brutish lives to be nastily shortened, Hobbes noted over his

shoulder. But the savage women, for God knows what reason, were still in pursuit. Uh-oh, this was a problem: they were gaining on him. But the ocean was in view and Hobbes, a natural philosopher at heart, calculated that he and Maximal would be able to make it to the dinghy with time to spare.

Indeed, he was correct. Before long, they were back at sea, putting distance between themselves and danger. "You Bitches," he cursed, looking back at the receding shoreline, female natives yipping and throwing hand signals in Hobbes's direction. He sat there, heart still beating fast, and thought things over while Maximal rowed. He rifled through his pockets, searching for his notes, but realized he must have dropped them on shore. "Well, perhaps one day after a Common-wealth with a Leviathan and Lawes has been establish'd there,

someone – a man with the requisite Noblesse and Gallantnesse of courage – will find my Writings and spread them around." Hmm. Hobbes turned around in his seat and spoke sharply to Maximal. "Actually, wait. If you ever relate the specificall Circumstances of this Disturbance here, Maximal, I'll tell Cromwell myself that your Allegiance is with the Royalists."

"Yes, Master." He rowed faster.

"If you concluded those Savages back there were brutish, well, then you have not seen Cromwell extinguish a Traitor. He can become quite Despotically and rather Unjust. I tell you this for thine own Knowledge, that is all."

*Tyler Zander
Washington University*

THE ASSUMPTION

Each car had a Wise Man
hidden in the trunk,
Jim, Johnny, and Jack,
waiting patiently to offer his counsel.
It was Sunday,
churches beckoned by the wayside
with open doors and mournful bells,
but we didn't have time
to pay such tolls,
and we were short on quarters
anyway. We would baptize ourselves.

We breathed the sea
and knew our sins
were pure.
John caught a wave
and announced from the shore,
“a miracle!”

That night we followed the stars,
walking barefoot on the sand.
Our caravan halted at the edge
of the sea, but the glistening void
ignored our upraised hands
and refused to part. Unfazed,
we lit our cigarettes against the moon
and toasted the hermit crabs cloistered
in their sad caves.
Our exhaled prayers disappeared unheard
into deaf, indifferent clouds.

A light shown down suddenly from heaven,
illuminating our unorthodox congregation.
Seized with fear, we reverently shivered,
caught, but not guilty.
Bowing low, I hastily hid
the bottles beneath our feet.
Piety dripped from our pressed palms,
but the accusatory beam
trembled with silent laughter.

Will Arndt
Washington University

RAGE AWAY, MY MAN

I ran into Dylan Thomas on the street yesterday
Skinker, actually.
It was about sundown and he was *pissed*
Sputtering and flailing and raging and shit, carrying on about some sestina
And I wondered what kind of drink it was –
Sounds like a Mexican thing, exotic juices and a liberal dash of tequila.
I wanted to stay and chat, but it was getting dark
So I slapped him a high five
And headed home.
I didn't want to miss *The O.C.*

Jordan Hicks
Washington University

SUNKEN GREASE

gliding fingers grease
wandering figures, wild-eyed
wheezing with checkered breaths
that whirl above
and weave within
our american – our *blessed* american –
surface

the box's hum numbs
hummnummbs
numbs our velvet vision
of bristled bodies heaving
upon sunken throws stained
with sunken sweat
of lousy loves
and illustrious one-night stands

Susanne Katus
Washington University



Anna Finneran
Washington University

A WOMAN ROOTED

Tuna lover, 50's mother
bake all day
in the hen house,
watch from kitchen windows
while drying paper cups,
endless toothy smile—
made bold by your blossom-colored lips.
The daily crosswords aren't getting easier,
but you continue to fill them in.
Spinach salads for supper
you are dining alone—
young babes grown, educated nicely
father is working as always—
do your joints ache sitting so long?
Housecoat to loafers to buttoned-up blouse
you are keeping the napkins in stock.

Jessi Witkins
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

HOOKAH FRIENDSHIPS.....

are fleeting
the shisha smoke can dance
up in clawing candy curls

Thursday's corporeal scratches
have stirred today's wicked sour soot
and now implacable exchanges dissipate to
leave narghile footprints blackened, cheerless
and bereft

just the same to feel ashamed
to admit to suited
second sins

and step forth. even thought it wouldn't change

a single thing; I'll resist and insist on innocence

until hubble-bubble
we smile again

catch as catch can

James Thomas
Princeton University

FREE OF DUTY

My vealers, asunder near the drops drain,
Muddle the vesper's call with their bell weather,
Surrounding me in rings,
As fingers pointing to blame.
And I have a while before I begin again.

Each day breaks, imperfect and unstill,
With sun splintered
Across most tuneful larks,
Who hold their figures in chill.
And I have till darkness before I find the will.

The lichen latch to the night ground,
In the ravine where offerings,
Free of duty,
Fall from the clouds.
And now I have this distance to travel before I turn around.

Aaron Koppel
Washington University



Heather McPherson
Washington University



*Colin Cristy
Washington University*

WHEN GRANDPA CAME TO LIVE WITH US

When Grandpa came to live with us—
it was because he needed oxygen

His lungs
thick with rainwater,
similar to the
heat-backed thunder,
which stewed outside

Strange enough, Wisconsin summer,
humidity so thick I couldn't breathe
outside

In the house
a whole woods full
of noises

a cowbird's call
 in Grandpa's cough
seven june bugs
 rattled
like pill bottles

The stir of leaves
 cracks of sticks—
 an oxygen machine

The long blowing
 of the grasses
and tree branches,
 steady hum of a sleeping
old man

Jessi Witkins
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

NUMBERING JACOBS

The detective known as Bo Jacobs, five feet tall and balding scalp, walked out his front door. He made a right, past his mailbox. He walked thirty paces, and then another thirty, and then another thirty. He kept track of each set of thirty, counting them like laps. One set, two sets, three sets. At the fourth set he made another right and continued. One set, two sets, three sets. A third right, and another three sets and then he turned. The building he faced was directly behind his own house, and he opened the front glass door. The doorman tipped his hat.

Jacobs, or Bo-Bo as he liked to be called, pressed the up button on the elevator. He waited for the elevator to fall. It fell thirty stories, clumped against the bottom, the door sprang open, and Jacobs entered. He pressed the button to the fortieth floor and the elevator climbed. One, two, three and so on, and Jacobs declared each floor out loud in a booming voice that echoed about the tight elevator.

At the fortieth floor the doors sprung open and Jacobs sprang out. He rolled out into a crunch and popped up from behind the secretary's desk. The surprise gave the poor girl a start and she clutched her chest as Jacobs entered his office. He

sat in his thick leather chair and stared at the clock on the wall. He counted to ten and the clock struck twelve. The phone rang.

"Bo Jacobs," the detective answered the phone. The man on the other line sneered. Jacobs would not have known this fact – he could not see through phones – except for the caller's next words.

"I sneer at you Bo-Bo. I sneer." And with that, the mysterious caller hung up. Jacobs left his office, grabbed his Borsolino from the hat rack, and entered the elevator. He rode forty one floors down, to the basement, and then took the stairs another 3 floors into the underground. Masked by mushrooms and ivy, the once garage looked more like the undergrowth of a carriage. Basked in the light of a streetlamp, an old man stood holding an envelope. His skin was tarried and smeared with the grey pigment of age. His face was drawn into a chronic sneer. He licked his cracked lips with a dry tongue and the organ got caught halfway through the procedure on a dry piece of skin. He coughed and a white piece of moisture fell to the concrete before him.

Jacobs approached. The man pointed to the moisture, an off color confection of the human system.

"A piece of my lungs," he coughed again. Jacobs nodded, his only response to any news.

"Do you have the information?" Jacobs asked.

"She likes Ben and Jerry's."

Jacobs sighed. "I know she does. She did since the second boy. Did she cheat on me today?"

"Not today, she didn't," the old man said.

"Not today?" Jacobs studied the old man's face for hints. "But another day? Yesterday?"

"I don't know. But I only watched her today. So I can't promise for yesterday. Today I can promise for."

"I want to hurt her," Jacobs said, squeezing his fist into his left palm and twisting it around like an orange. "I want to hurt her bad." The old man shrugged in response.

"I don't give advice, I only show pictures." He opened the envelope and showed Jacobs the pictures inside. Two children smiling happily, a dog chasing a ball, and a woman throwing a newspaper against a wall. "Just pictures. I like the one with the dog."

"It's not the same dog. The first dog died. It's his replacement."

The old man shrugged again. "I didn't say I liked the dog. I like the picture."

Jacobs took the pictures from the old man,

walked back up the three flights of stairs, up the elevator forty-one floors, through the office, and back to his desk. He sat down. The phone rang again.

"Jacobs," he answered. The cough on the other end was the old man's.

"I hated someone once," the voice said.

"It isn't the same," Jacobs answered. He hung up the phone and studied the painting above his desk. It was impressionistic. It showed a building, curving in the wind as if a building could actually curve like that. It had been up on the wall ever since Jacobs had bought the place from the previous owners. He snapped to remind himself of the purchase. Just like that, like that, like that, he snapped three times. Just like that he bought the place. Put the money down on the table, smiled, signed the contract, sat down at the desk. They asked him what he would do with the building. He had said at the time, "I'm going to be a detective." They laughed, but what did they care? They had the money.

The phone rang again, but Jacobs didn't pick it up. It kept ringing for two minutes. In the while, Jacobs counted twenty rings. When it stopped, the secretary came in.

"Your wife called. She says she has been trying to reach you but you wouldn't pick up the phone."

“If I leave my wife,” Jacobs offered, “will you marry me? We’ll be happy.”

The secretary didn’t laugh. She shook her head “no” and turned around and left. Jacobs knew she was engaged and was very happy. He knew because once he tried to surprise her and overheard her on the phone. She said to a friend, or maybe her fiancée, or maybe her parents, “We’re engaged and I’m very happy.” That was how he knew. He wanted to be very happy, and he thought that maybe she could make him happy.

When the clock hit three o’clock, Jacobs went to the elevator, tipped his hat to the secretary and rode the elevator 40 floors down. He got off and entered the crowded streets, which pushed him past thirtieth without any efforts on his part. It swept him down Madison before he could even argue. It was as if the crowd had a will to move him along. Jacobs thought that maybe if he got home fast enough, he would catch his wife. But then he remembered the old man looking through the bedroom window all day and night. Jacobs suddenly didn’t want to go home.

Instead he went to a kosher fast food restaurant. He saw an old man, another old man, also begging in front of the counter. Jacobs used to think that if he employed all the beggars, they would stop begging. But every single one he took off the

street seemed to have a trainee ready to replace him. Jacobs walked over to the beggar.

“Do you want to work for me?” Jacobs asked.

“What would I have to do?” the old man responded.

“Go to my house and look through my window. Through the second window in the living room. Specifically the second one. Look through it all day and tell me what you see. And take pictures. I’ll pay you one hundred dollars a day.” He gave the old man the keys and directions and a cell phone.

“I’m still hungry,” the old man said. Jacobs turned away.

Jacobs sat down and only drank water. When it was twelve o’clock, the owner asked Jacobs to leave. He did.

His home was only a few blocks away, but he loathed returning to it. At three o’clock he finally went back. Fifteen old men, who were once beggars, stood around different windows. One of them tipped a hat to Jacobs who tipped his hat back. He entered the front door. He put his shoes away and locked his front door. He put his jacket away and his hat and walked up the stairs to his bedroom. His wife slept, her chest rising and falling, and he watched her as he undressed. Finally, wearing only socks, he got into bed with her. He placed his index

finger against the small of her back, but lightly so she wouldn't wake up. He shivered to touch her. He didn't want to touch her. She continued to sleep. He wanted to cry, but instead he rolled over and slept.

When the alarm clock rang he hit the snooze button more than 5 times. He counted the amount of times he hit it in between his sleep. One, two, three, four, five.

He woke to one of the old men shaking him awake.

"I need some coffee," the old man said.

"How did you get in?" Jacobs asked.

"When your wife left, she left the door unlocked."

Jacobs looked around the room. In the darkness of the night before, the luggage was hidden. But in the light, the emptiness was obvious. The drawers were empty, the tabletops were empty. The pillow beside his head was empty.

"She took the kids, sir. She ate ice cream for breakfast, sir." He showed Jacobs a picture of the empty ice cream case, the empty children's room and the car driving away.

"Did she leave with her lover?" Jacobs asked.

"She didn't leave with her lover today," the old man answered. "She left with the children alone."

Jacobs was silent and said, "There is instant coffee in the kitchen." Then he leaned over in bed, and cried.

Mordecai Shinefield
Yeshiva University

YEAR'S END

We sit in a field at anniversary.
where blonded blades of grass beat our ankles
in pattern, wind bends a new mulberry—
threatens an impending break or buckle.
Frozen, the ground is worn and dust, it dares
the sky to bury already passed day.
The muted tree sighs are stasis, ours are
background to this adulterated age.
Eye on scope, stars separate for study—
my icy hand reaches for a warm ally.
In the dark, we are both the vine and tree,
limbs encircle a rise to shadowed sky.

I belong to this dusk, being already caught,
I will not fear one single, strangling knot.

Emily Flanders
Washington University

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WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT

My wife
shaves her
toe hair

Apparently
other women
do too

Michael Hedin II
University of Michigan