

S P I R E S



spring 2002 issues

SPIRES — *intercollegiate arts & literary magazine* — spring 2002 — Volume VIII, Issue I



S P I R E S

*intercollegiate arts & literary
magazine*

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*Gregory Farah
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INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers:

I am delighted to welcome you to the fifteenth issue of Spires. At the same time, I am saddened, for this will be my last. Nearly four years ago, at my first Spires meeting, I eagerly accepted the job of Treasurer. As a freshman among a seasoned Spires staff, I was overwhelmed by all of the information I had yet to learn. Yet I persevered, and I can say that I have learned more from my experience with Spires than from any class I have taken. The time has now come for me to pass the Spires torch, and I am confident that the experience will be just as rewarding for the future leaders of Spires as it has been for me.

Traditionally, in the introduction of our spring issue, we give thanks and bid adieu to graduating seniors who will be leaving Spires. I will not depart from this tradition, for we are losing some truly amazing members. As Senior Editor, Seema Mukhi has contributed countless hours perfecting the layout of Spires. Although layout is often a thankless job, Seema's humor and uplifting spirit never waned. Leigh Cullen, our Art Editor, will also be sorely missed. Leigh may be the hardest worker I have ever met. However, we are grateful for her hard work, and it certainly shows in each issue. Although heavily involved in many campus activities, our Literary Editor Sonal Kumar has always managed to come through for us. I thank each of them for their unselfish efforts, and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

There is another person, who, although not graduating, is an essential member of the Spires team. Mike Rogger has handled our account with the printer, Warson Graphics, since spring 1996, and it is about time that he receive a formal thank you. There is no question too trivial, no call too late at night, and no drive too far for Mike. Without him, Spires would not be. Fortunately, Mike will continue to be a part of Spires, and we hope he will be for many more years to come.

Finally, I must thank you, the writers, artists, and readers, for you are the source of our inspiration.

Sincerely,

Alison Passer
President

BORGES ON MY MIND

It was there, and had always been.
It was the bubbling of the pools of
gaseous clouds at earth's beginning,
and the unsure step
of the absent-minded
suburban housewife
getting out of her minivan
in a Walmart parking lot on an
April Afternoon in 1997.
So too was it seen in the pattern
made by ink smeared from the drop
of one tear of a grecian widow
onto the week's grocery receipt.
In it, is the image of this world's end,
and that of the one that came before.
It is there now, like the frenetic ones and zeros
of everflowing digital information.
It moves with the speed of maori drums at dusk
and the stillness of a
moon-bathed ear of corn
in a midnight field.

*Michael Sigman
Washington University*



NOSTALGIA

Long and white
Extending gracefully
From wrinkled fingers
Wiggling slowly to the beat
Of an old soul
Heavy with the burden of time
A string of smoke
Dances seductively upon
Painted lips
Erasing for a moment
The years from her eyes
The first puff
The melodic giggling
The collection of friends
Soon to be forgotten
Sweating with hesitation
As the ever present towers
Of academia
Loom disapprovingly
Behind
A moment shared
A moment fading
Along with the gentle
Orange glow
Left behind in the ash
Of every other moment
To have passed through

Tadeusz Ogorzalek
Washington University

Eric Whitney
Washington University

UNTITLED

Imagine a man,
Devoid of human wisdom,
Whose poetic eyes sense inherent beauty,
Whose ingenuous heart captivates
The untouched and untold truths.
Envision a soul,
Whose imagination can pierce
The petrified past,
And gaze prophetically
Into an uncertain future.
Enshrine the artist,
Whose intuition penetrates
the heart of the enemy,
As logical reality descends into the abyss,
An epic battle for the highest form of human expression.

Yonatan E. Weinberg
Yeshiva University

God,
Can a prayer be
silence?
Can a prayer be
the beating of my heart?
Can a prayer be
the color between us?
My life is so
going, going, go.
Can a prayer be
stillness in the night?
You know I need to
do this right.
If a prayer can be a poem
and a poem, a prayer...
Amen.

*Suzanne Wiltz
Tulane University*



*Katbriel Brister
Tulane University*

FOR MANHATTAN

manhattan, i've had more sex with ur red bricks
 than with my dreams of self-aggrandizement
gothic churches, skyscraper, brownstones, concrete stained with tar
feed me ur gathering places, ur mortar,
subways, tunnels, headlights, stench humid air in summer,
drafts in winter, silver poles, map boards,
i've played with ur concrete ligaments
kissed ur silence and while in traffic honks released my orgasm
i cannot withhold from u my fears, i cannot reject u, Translucent, each railing my
neurosis,
rapturous sidewalks sanction redemption with flavored punctuated patronage,
ur bridges are as spines and the seagulls can't squeal loud enough to stop me

manhattan, I've loved but not like this, now I breathe smog more perfect than thoughts,
ur children people the streets or ur breasts,
i relinquish myself to filth, garbage, and reflections on buildings;
i will hunt u spaceless, magnetize the electric fields of each beam,
neither of us rude—neither of us narrow,
legal derelicts in the continuum of nows,
fences are defenceless against me,
graffiti scrawls like twisted boy hair,
shriveled winter leaves are the folds in ur flesh

there are mornings when u've drunk enough to puke on sidewalks and leave beer bottles
randomly on others' steps, rummage garbage in the vicinity of other lovers.
affection filters through different men and women—different colors border ur thighs,
Different pitches of laughter on same days—;filters till suigeneris purity like
unperishable sex teases u

manhattan, the ring of subway doors closing incites me,
the dominican, the white school girl in uniform, the old lady with shaking eyeballs,
the chinese man with shopping bags advertising his love for u,

manhattan, rattle men like the express train,
climaxing ur lovers: jew and non-jew, foreign and illegal, derelicts & god fearing,
those enslaves by misconceptions.
love them through the changing colors of traffic lights.

Sipai Klein
Yeshiva University



*Jeffery Asbbaugh
Washington University*

DIRTY

Damn that smile. And damn the way her hair smells. It's not like she's the only one who walks like that. Ah, but the way she moves her hips. Stupid bitch. I guess I screwed up pretty bad this time.

"Shit K, don't cry . . . "

She's crying. She's sitting like a little ball at the edge of my feet. I touch her shoulder and she looks up at me expectantly. I don't have anything to say. So she pushes my hand off. Earlier in the night she was standing so close to me that I could feel her heat. Her glass was dangling between her fingers; and there was an unripe sweetness to the wine on her breath.

"I'm not your rag doll," she had screamed at me. She ran her fingers nervously through her black chaotic hair. Wow, rag doll. Isn't there a song about that?

"What's become of us?" She asked now in her own tragic and hoarse tone. Her black mascara has found shelter in the creeping wrinkles under her eyes and is streaked across her cheeks. She looks like a cross between an angel and a street whore. Beautiful and broken.

"Look in the mirror. You look pathetic. Pull yourself together."

"You did this to me." She flung her hands up in the air.

"It's not what I was planning."

"I knew I shouldn't come, but I did." She let out a nervous and haughty laugh. "I always do, don't I."

"You're so fucking dramatic."

When I saw her last night she was dancing bare foot and drunk. I saw her look at me over his shoulder and smile with the confidence of someone who's not going home alone. I watched him holding her as she moved. He

whispered something in her pink ear. From her expressionless face I noticed that she didn't care. And I remember thinking, "G-d she's really beautiful." Dancing with dirty feet across the tile or hung-over on my bedroom floor, she's just so beautiful. And I wanted her.

She left him mid-song to get another drink. She was leaning over the bar and she was playing with her earring. I walked over to her and touched her cheek. She turned to me and I could smell the perfumed sweat on her skin.

"K, come home with me."

She looked at me with one eyebrow raised and an arrogant grin spread slowly across her red painted lips. But I knew I'd conquer it. She pointed lazily across the room to a man I didn't bother to look at. Her eyes were rimmed in dark black the way she likes.

She knows people look at her. She knows they want her. But I'm the only one who knows that she bites her toenails. And I'm the only one who knows that she puts on her makeup sitting cross-legged on the sink. And I'm the only one who can turn her into what she is now, crying with her hair spread over my legs.

So now I'm sitting on the edge of my bed and the air in the room smells heavy. She rubs her eyes and then looks at her fists colored grey from last night's makeup.

She's not crying anymore and she slowly stands up. With an uncharacteristic and mocking modesty she covers her breasts with her folded arms. She turns and walks to open the door where the cat has been scratching out her rhythmic lullaby.

I watch her squat down to run her fingers through the mangy fur. The cat is black like she always is. She only comes in here when K is here. She hates me.

"Purr."

K walks over and sits next to me on the crooked

sheet. She pulls her dirty feet up against her chest and curls her toes over the edge of the bed. Her underwear is black. She looks up at me suddenly with a cruel and affected smile.

“Well, I hope, at least, you enjoyed yourself.”

“What?”

“No, really, I thought it was pretty good.”

I’m trying to figure out what she’s getting at. She cocks her head and leans back on her hands.

I put my hand on her thigh. “Oh yeah?”

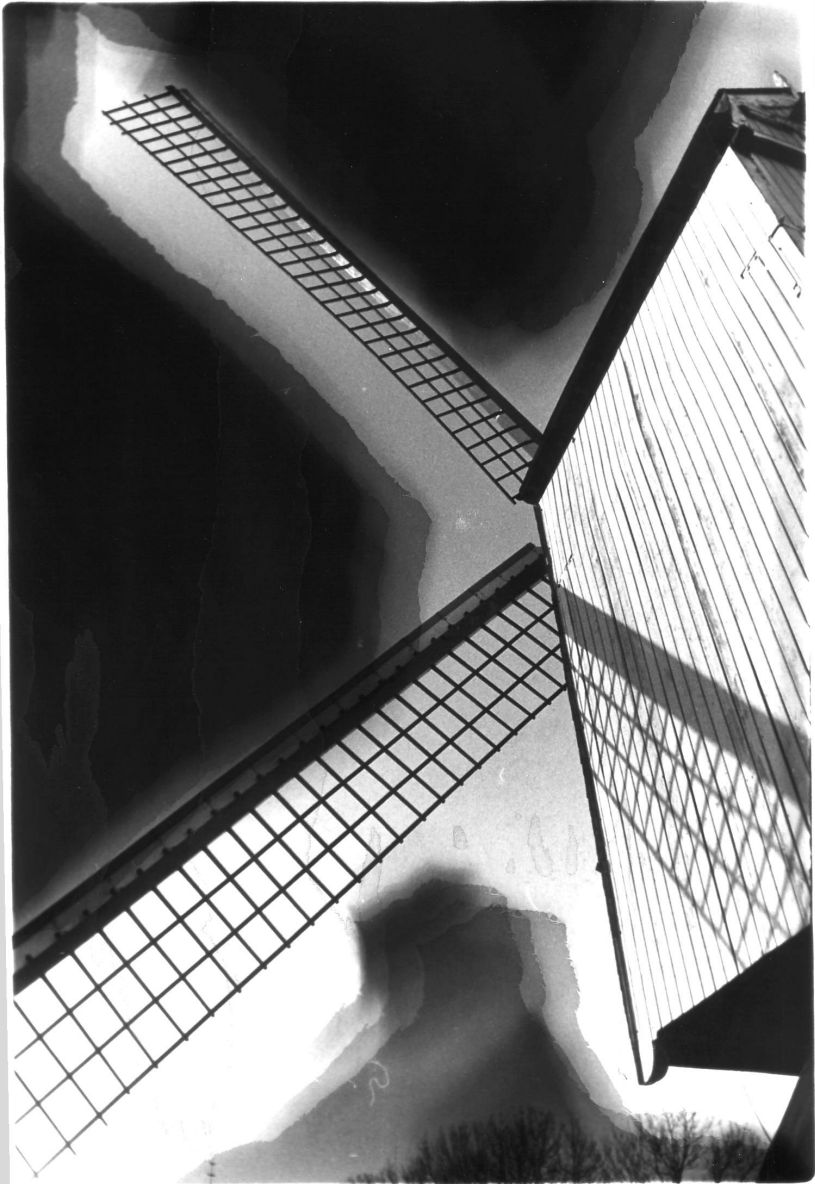
“Yeah.”

Nechama Ruza
Yeshiva University

SOCIAL DEATH

Blade protrudes
Silver through a pounding organ
The blue flood sweeps
Its universe into disarray
But the sudden volcanic eruption
Emits from my gaping mouth
Red lava
The remaining air escapes
Above she holds the handle down
Glares in anger at me
Till I can no longer be
You sorry excuse for a girl!

Kristen Wong
DePauw University



*Sonia Savio
Tulane University*

JERUSALEM UNDONE

Oh,
Son of Zion.
I'm crying again
but not for you.
Like the desert,
your deep eyes,
betray your every move.

Oh,
Son of Zion.
I knew all along,
Was gone before you reached me,
didn't you notice.

Oh,
Son of Zion.
Memory is naked
in the night sky
beneath the laughing moon.

Oh,
Son of Zion.
Where is your love,
Has she run out on you again.
Come out of herself only to find you

Oh,
Son of Zion
undone.

*Nechama Ruza
Yeshiva University*

AT THE THERAPIST'S

I'm a few minutes early for my appointment, right on time really, and I negotiate the maze of hallway, dust-filled everpresent construction. Past the elevator to find the right staircase, no not that one...

And I push the little metallic intercom button, the harsh buzz and click the door, and I'm stopped as I always am by the quiet waiting area. The soft pink of the walls (*pink walls?*) and the soft incandescent lighting, the goddamn incandescent lighting, and the soft pastel lithographs on the walls, and the soft comfortable couch (*almost too comfortable, he said mysteriously*) with the magazines on the end table splayed out in an unthreatening way. (Too many magazines and I'd feel threatened of course, or the right amount but organized too efficiently and—*NO! Not German Efficiency!*)

But before I take in my surroundings—the weight of my knapsack (filled with books I'm not using, just enough to provide the right weight so I'll feel the right way on the subway) shifted unconsciously to the crook of my arm—and a girl. Dressed like a New Yorker in the East Village in January. Well-fitting jeans—blue, dark, possibly new. A winter jacket, not heavy or bulky though, some kind of earth tone, small breasts. She could easily be that journalist I saw taking notes at that rally. Pale January skin—but I can't see her face because her smart haircut—short, straight, parted in the middle, but long enough to obstruct her face as she looks down to collect her things. And we both respect the quiet incandescent air of the office and the blank neutral unfeeling emotion from where she just left, and we don't look up as she walks by me and click the door and put my books down, soft comfortable couch, pink walls, incandescent lighting...

Shimon Klayman
Yeshiva University

CHRISTMAS

Clean shaven Santa
sings splintered
Christmas carols
borrows spoiled presents
from undifferentiated yuppies.

she wraps
herself tighter
and tighter still
cutting off all
connections to sentimentality.

The Sun cloud
drops veiled promises
drips soothing lozenges
served with luke warm sleep
and coca-cola dreams

He wakes
And whispers (quiet)
indifference to himself
Praying
He is heard.

Forgotten clitoris hides
behind pillars of strength
twin brother
breads contempt
shares androgens

she walks on thick ice
Bold-faced
type i've seen before
flaunting her confidentiality
flogging her salami

pokemon players
gather on concrete gravel
to catch them all
can you catch this one?
I choose you.

Her father's a farmer
choking chickens,
taming snakes,
spanking monkeys.
but he puts food on the table.

she learns to swim
but finds water
thicker than blood
warmer than
television.

she can't commit
so he loves her
the only way
he knows
buys her freedom.

Rami Cohen
Yeshiva University



Eric Yeung
Washington University

THE CHAGIGA

—to Micha

The cincture of homosexual Judaism has rebounded—
In all yarmulkes, to all suits—they Dance in all directions:
Heads heavenwards, feet above the Earth,—to the Circle
Of being One—fresh as stored rainwater in G-d's cistern.

Maybe messiah will arrive, to us—
All of us—until even an old rabbi's
Stammer will reach the aron & kiss the fabric covers—
Disentangle the words of the singers
& the musicians rhythm.

Yet, even if my most loved
Stood in the circle's center—"I wouldn't dance
Only write of you —until you
Will accept that I
Of me, the Homosexual gay Spirit—
Launched with ease—impermeable.

Not even Chasidim in bekashes at summer
Understand the heat under my cloak—
No hat has been as black as mine—
To be through the Dance in the ferventness of Yours,

The most aspiring sofrim are here
To laugh until all the students
Beseech stop laughing rabbis, like
Bnei Israel beseeching Too much Torah,
And flee for the Desert—so they stopped,
And prayed only in themselves—intricate
Shabbatos and Aronoth Kodesh—little kolelim
Inside of them—only to reform yeshivos
Into summer camps without simcha—
Into pornographic rejections—

Like slow wine of rippling giggles—like echoing claps—
Like the fear of putting on tefillin late—the awe of NaHaFoCho—
To remember the sexual evolution of the face,
Reach heaven, brake doors and doors of angles,
Replete with all throws against the sky.

I can't discolor the Cohen's linens—
And at his gold I can't stare—
The bells never subside—like unmoving
Doppler shifts in the color of their eyes—

Unchecked as springing tzitzit, as sprang tzitzits—
Sanctioned with any other Jew, every gay Jew—
With more spring than in Wordsworth's daffodils—even a side
Dancer is wholesome—even broken stares are all the parts.

Josh Emden
Yeshiva University



*Allan Butler
Washington University*

THE LURE OF FLYING IS THE LURE OF BEAUTY

-For Amelia Earhart

The sky is naked today
and so am I.
I've stripped my layers
right down to the core
and now I'm free,
just sitting here on the shore
that I've named Lilith.
Last night
I sat in the corpse
of my plane, and I cried—
not because I was alone,
or because Noonan's broken body
was still seated in the back,
but because I'd killed
my plane. Like a scheming black widow
I'd sacrifice
the only true love of my life.
There is nothing more beautiful
than flying through a naked sky
on an afternoon such as this.
I cannot remember
the last time I went this long
without flying, I'm a widow
that needs to fuel my spirit.
So I dance on the carpet
of sand with no music
and no one to lead my steps,
and now I cry again.
This time, because Noonan is dead,
and I am beautifully alone.

Micah Ling
DePauw University

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

From Rubin Hall, all windows are fly-eyes
my head heavy pounds, moving from colored brick
to opaque glass, to flickering fluorescent light,
bouncing like the raucous *bachata* beat.

My abode, my nest is six stories in the air,
A mud colored building striding a mudflat
Planted on the glacial excrement, the Harlem River
A Dutch canal-creek turned unruly by abuse.

Laurel Terrace; near suburban in it's death-throes,
A chasm of Greenery descending to pavement
Past it, the scribble scrawl of a river
Bronx Apartments take their first steps.

Then the domes of Samarkand, Yiddish minarets
Lifeless stairways, stale, do not speak of unity
Yellow brick and old trophies swallow stories
Faded banners tell the story of Yeshiva University.

Children play Basketball in the basalt alleys.
Looking at Doric columns, flavored *con pina*
Classrooms and apartments stare each other down
The garden is closed with a rusting lock, trees have
died.

Edifices of mauve brick muscle down
Two-story community clubs with tin roofs
Gazing at Yeshiva students, the spiteful wind
Toss their kippot, make them felt Frisbees.

A memorial from the Great War-
No urban archeologist to wash it's
Verdigris corrosion
But a homeless man, pauses,

Urinates

No taps played over an apocalyptic valley,
A cacophony of bridges and overpasses
Mute as abandoned, stripped cars
Crowned by a tower-Frankenstein's lightning rod.

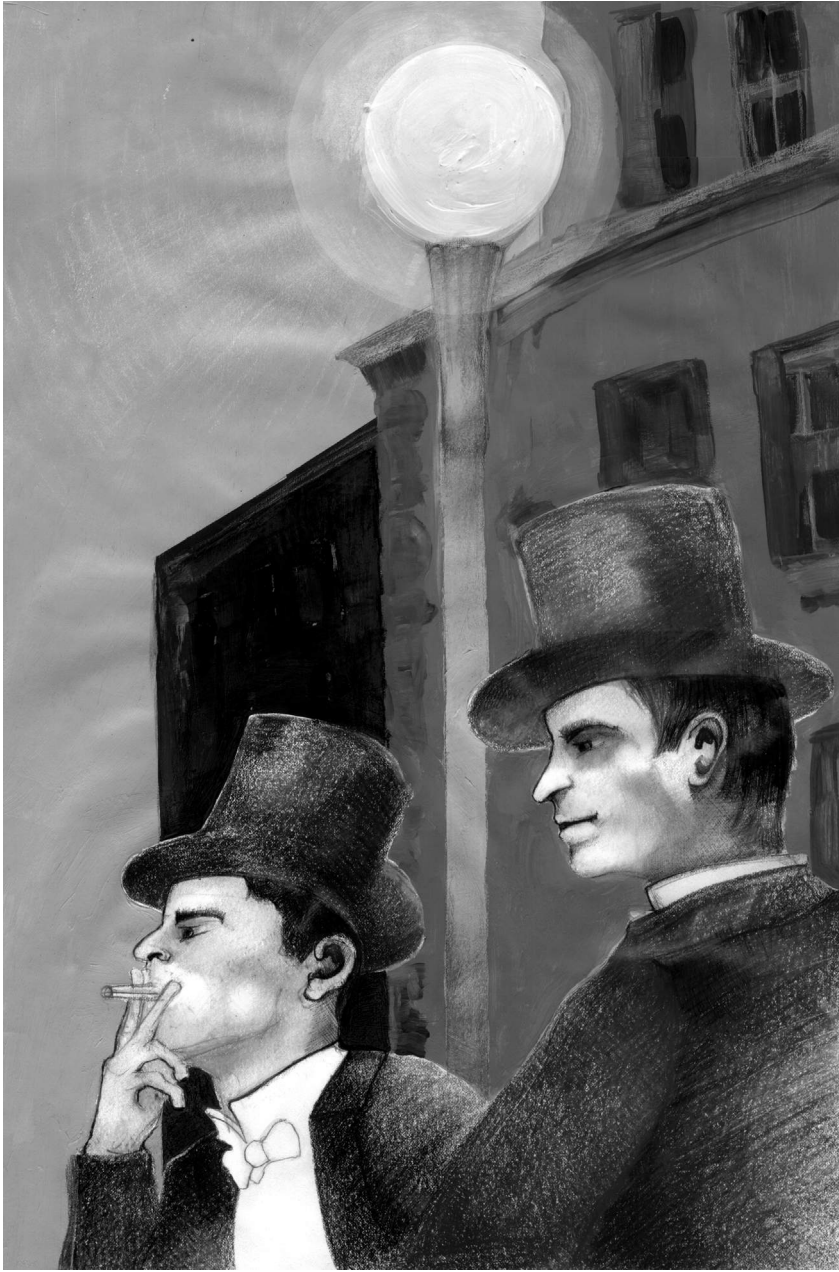
Thousands before me are sleeping, some making
love
Looking out at me, they will never see, imagine
[except for one who I fancy has a telescope]
to see a madman visionary, flesh packed in brick
citadels

Rock: below it all, abutting the subway
Is bedrock, riotously appearing above ground
And then ghosts of colonial battlefields
A grove almost a neighborhood anachronism

Before dreams, tears, sweat, gum, exhaust,
Jews, Dominicans, Armenians, Irish
A necropolis of religions and of races
Softly Singing songs of the homeland

And I wonder, can the earth absorb it all?
Fool-Living in the sky, grasping burnt earth
The Brick laughs... Raving over parks, rivers
Meandering on, ha!

David Druce
Yeshiva University



TRAPPED

I was with Jennifer in my car, the champagne-colored wonder, after getting ice cream late at night in the middle of a forgotten city. The north part of the city is fairly dark at night, more so than the rest, because many of the buildings are shuttered up and abandoned, many more just don't look like they're lived in, but may have some other type of activity going on inside. It's a spooky place to be, especially if you've just exited off a highway, and you don't know where you are. Jennifer was driving while I was drunk off of the ice cream.

And we came upon the water tower. It's a column, a huge white doric column that's at least three stories high, probably less than ten, but it adds an air of unreality to the environment. As we drove around the column, Jennifer curved, and exited onto a ramp into a large gravel parking lot slanting down towards a brightly lit complex. People were walking and standing around parked cars in dark colored coats, listening to music. The windows were open, and the air was crisp and cold, sound bouncing off everything, an announcer yelling "Welcome to Triple A auto racing! Anyone can enter!!"

There was a track of broken asphalt with random garbage strewn about. It looked like squatters had been living there only five minutes before cars entered onto it, their cardboard houses being knocked and torn about. Racing on the track were an assortment of beat-up earthy colored sedans from the 1970s and early 80s, with no markings. They were all unqualified citizens racing around at 100 miles per hour, and Jennifer was heading towards the track.

The entrance was just an intersection, a gap in the concrete wall, and Jennifer poised us there, waiting for a chance to enter. "Jennifer this is fucking crazy, don't you know that?" Jennifer was

constantly attracted by new things, endeavoring ways to explore the world. Unfortunately, anything she tried incredibly annoyed me, and so general tension existed between us because we had no choice but to be around each other all day long.

My whining had made her move to saying things like, "Well, you just never want to do anything, do you?" "You just don't appreciate nature." She said that after she led me into an above-ground sewer (with obvious "Danger—do not drink, fish, or swim" signs) and made me try to guess what kinds of animals live there after finding a footprint in the mud. This took half an hour. Then she sent me away to find a paper plate to keep the footprint on. Cursing and tired, I walked to a nearby gas station, and after explaining myself, was awarded three paper plates, two plastic knives, and a fork. After trying three times to capture the footprint, she got part of it, and then tried to walk with it the three miles back to our home before I convinced her to throw it in a garbage can. But, back to the present situation:

"This is no Olympic event, this is insanity itself! You're going to get us both killed!" I was screaming at the top of my lungs, trying to be heard above the din of spectators who were also screaming (each for their own personal reasons, I assume.), remnants of a chocolate chocolate chip milkshake flying out of my mouth. My voice was barely audible above the roaring of the cars.

Now sitting in the back seat, no longer lying down, I should have jumped out of the car and run off. Surely Jennifer wouldn't continue with this thing without me. Perhaps, for her, this was some kind of death bonding experience.

Boom!

One second of sheer terror, and we are in the infield, surrounded by the speeding cars, surrounded by madness. This, apparently, was the prime location for tailgate parties.-in the vortex of a dust cloud. There were many bonfires with

groups of people standing around, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows.

“Jennifer, I am so tired of this. I just want to go home, have some hot cocoa, and watch television.” “Oh, dear, it isn’t that bad. Really, what else could we be doing? And how are we going to get out of here anyway?”

Most infields have some kind of underground walkway beneath the racetrack, and so I suggested we park here and walk underneath, and call a cab and go to Denny’s, or something, anything but this. That will be an experience in itself, I said, and any entertainment for us here isn’t sustainable.

“I can’t imagine being amused for however

long this rave of death takes. It’s obvious that there’s no safe way for these fellows to exit the track. This is a gladiatorial race of death.” There was no shoulder space for the drivers to slow down and stop, only a concrete wall surrounding the track. Even the spectators were at risk because the wall was only the size of a highway median.

We were still on the side of the pathway through the infield. As if spring loaded, I jumped out of the car, and then I got into the passenger seat.

Peter Jones
Washington University

Deia Schlosberg
Washington University





*Kathriel Brister
Tulane University*

ANNIVERSAIRE

The 21st anniversary of my birth.
Another pointless marker that
Helps us to get through the
Quotidian letdown that is life.

Bleu. Chic little place.
With the fluffiest chairs,
Matisse knockoffs,
Interior brick walls,
And candlelight.

“Table for 1, please.”
“a carafe of Merlot.”
750 ml’s of vin rouge.
Hand raising glass to mouth.
Brim between lips
At a 70% angle.
Slowly,
Drenching my epiglottis
With vin on its way to the stomach.
First,
Slow sips.
Then,
Longer, heavier sips.
My tickled is being brain.
“A piece of gateau would be lovely.”
A loud “thank you” as he walks away,
Cash in hand.

Out through the large front door and
Into the chilly autumn air - my favorite kind.
Then,
Stomach takes revenge on mouth.
And I lie next to a puddle of rigatoni and Merlot.
And I
Smile from contentment.

I check my thick, wool pants for
Any trace of my dinner
And continue on my way.

Avi Gitler
Yeshiva University

4.

Jason stared at the blank screen of Sparks' computer. It was two twenty-five in the afternoon. Jason had spent the last five days wandering the streets of New York trying to discover something. The only thing he had discovered, though, was how much he missed home (Sharon) and how truly miserable he was.

Blank, the entire screen was blank. What the fuck could he do with that? You can't create something from nothing, you need an a priori. Jason knew he needed something to aid him in his quest for enlightenment. He glanced at the dormant bong, still packed with weed from the night before.

"Not yet," Jason thought, "not yet."

He tried to brainstorm. "Think funny thoughts," he told himself. But nothing came. He was stuck. Jason felt the quicksand that was his ADD gradually pull him further and further away from the surface. He was drowning in his own lack of discipline.

"You call yourself a fucking comedian," Jason spoke aloud. "You're a fucking suckedian, that's what you are. A stand-up sucko. "Ladies and gentlemen the suckedy stylings of Jason Rosen."

Jason stood up and walked over to his still unpacked duffel bag. After rummaging through it for a few minutes he came up with a picture of him and Sharon. It was one of those cheesy pictures from a booth in the mall. The kind that takes three pictures then spits them out into a slot on the outside, like a soda machine. The first picture had been a best friends picture. Cheeks pressed together forcing huge smiles that showed all teeth. Like two little schoolgirls. The second was the proper photo. Jason was resting his elbow on his knee and his chin on his fist. Sharon had her shoulders back and her hands folded on her knees, which were folded very lady-like. The last photograph was the casual

shot. Both were slouched slightly. Sharon pouted her lips slightly. The camera had gone off a little early, and had caught Jason glancing at Sharon out of the corner of his eye. He had given the first two to Sharon, but kept the last one for himself. He didn't want Sharon reading anything into it.

It was this picture that he found now, at the bottom of his duffel bag under his dirty socks and underwear. He took the picture, walked back to the computer and taped the photo onto the screen. Sparks probably wouldn't appreciate it, but he wasn't home so Jason did it anyways. Nothing came to him. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. It was like trying to get a bunch of Junior High School kids to answer a question in History class.

Jason tenuously typed the word "dick" on the screen.

"People love dick jokes," Jason thought to himself. "What could I say about dicks that are funny?"

Jason deleted the word "dick" and typed in "poop". Jason chuckled to himself. "Poop."

He deleted the word "poop" and tried it with "boner", "vagina", "weasel", "masturbate", and "tubesteak".

Nothing came to him. Jason stopped typing and just stared at the blank screen around the picture, and then at the picture.

"Girlfriends," thought Jason.

"Girlfriends are great," typed Jason and waited for more, but the well seemed dry. "Girlfriends are," he spoke aloud, "soft, and they smell good. And they never forget your birthday, and they pretty much give your otherwise meaningless life some meaning.

"Yeah, that's some really funny shit, Jay, good one."

Finally the phone rang, giving Jason a reason to get up from the computer and move a little.

"Hello?" Jason spoke into the phone.

"Hey, man," was the reply. "I'm goin' crazy

over here, I'm totally dry.

"Uh, I'm sorry to hear that." Jason figured it was one of Sparks friends, so he decided to be polite.

"Yeah, thanks, man. Anyways, I need three cassettes by eight tonight."

Jason didn't know anything about any cassettes, and he said as much.

"I don't really know anything about any cassettes."

"C'mon S-man, it's me, Nick."

"Okay, Nick, I guess you want Sparks. I'm a friend of his, I'm staying at his place.

"Oh, okay, is the S-man, around?"

"No, the S-man's not here right now."

"Alright, I'll try back later."

"Take it easy."

"You too, thanks."

Jason suddenly had a sneaking suspicion that Sparks was a drug dealer. These cassettes this guy was talking about must be eights. He had heard that term used by some of the dealers in Chicago when they would talk on the phone, in case anyone was listening. Jason felt a sudden chill run down his spine. He was living with a drug dealer. If Sharon knew she would totally freak. Jason looked around his surroundings with a new sense of apprehension.

What if it's bugged?

What if they're watching the apartment right now?

What if they raid us?

Will I get arrested just because I live here?

I didn't know he was a dealer, I was just staying here until I could get a place of my own. Yeah, I smoked some pot while I was here, but I didn't know he was a dealer. Honest.

Don't make me go to prison, I don't want to be someone's bitch, I'm very delicate.

Jason walked back to the computer, sat down, and began typing.

"So, I found out my roommate's a drug dealer. I shouldn't really have been surprised, though, there's been a van parked outside our apartment for about two weeks. You'd think that Flowers By Ingrid would've figure out where they're supposed to deliver by now.

"The great thing about living with a drug dealer, is that there's always plenty of drugs around, however there's also plenty of drug addicts around. I swear, if one more guy offers to suck my dick for crack, I must might let him. Seriously.

"I don't do drugs, though. I mean smoke a lot of pot, but that's not a drug, it's a plant, it's okay to smoke plants, I mean, everybody smokes cigarettes, and I haven't heard anybody complaining about that.

"No, but I think if something is a drug it should come in tab, pill, or powder form. If it's not one of those it's not a real drug. Take shrooms for example. Everyone talks about how great shrooms are. But it's not a drug, they're mushrooms grown in cow shit. If you eat cow shit, you're gonna get fucked up. But c'mon, lets not call it a drug.

"Seriously, If I started offering people mushrooms grown in my own feces, they would lock me up. And we're not talking about prison, people, we're talking about Bellevue. It's a mental hospital, for those of you who are retarded. Because I'd have to be crazy to eat my own shit. It's not illegal, but it probably should be."

Jason knew that some of these would need retooling, but he felt a certain sense of satisfaction over what he had accomplished.

"At least three minutes of funny," Jason thought to himself. "Not too shabby."

Jason hit the save button, saved the file as "Me So Horny" , and shut down the computer.

It was there, the four foot bong, staring at him, beckoning him closer, tempting him with the sweet, sweet, green.

Jason, not one to resist any sort of tempta-

tion, gave in to his urges, and in no more than thirty seconds had a flame to the bowl and was sucking down thick, white smoke. Sparks came in to Jason lying on the floor, staring at the glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling. It wasn't dark, and the stars were not glowing, but that didn't deter Jason.

Sparks nudged him with his foot as he lowered himself to the floor. He lit the bowl, and lowered the top of the bong to meet his mouth

Rami Cohen
Yeshiva University



Eric Whitney
Washington University

We descendants of Danish indecision
Out of humour
Standing between two evils
Waiting
for winter to fall

Erin Harkless
Washington University

PAPER BOAT

the hush of the trees marks
the beginning of something special,
you mimic my creases and folds
and I notice your wrists,
so thin and perfect

then the stirring continues
as your shadow plays
with the ripples, dodging this way
and that-
a sliver of your frame
brushes against my
paper boat

drawn closer
wave after wave after
wave of a magnetic tide.

Jonathan Lee
Washington University

POET

How beautiful he was
behind the podium and worn buff button down
decaying before my very eyes.
Honest – as only a poet can be.

I imagined him a rucksack troubadour
keener than Kerouac
for the Sadness –
interminable and defiant
in the face of Gautama's blue sky –
had not stuck his spirit in a bottle
when the paper turned to yellow.

He took instead to Drecksolage,
his thoughts to sparrows perched
and chirping on balsam branches
Puncturing the soggy lethargy
of midday dejection
with syncopated strut.

And he put that strut to verse
And set that verse in swing
And graced us – although ashamed
to stray so from obscurity-
with odes to serendipity

Sung by one slightly wilted and worn,
like a favorite book
purchased used and used all the more.
Tuneful, lyric verse
unassuming
tender
sage-
what poetry should be.

Emiliano Haut-Vaughn
Washington University



*Gregory Farah
Tulane University*

TORN TOGETHER

You disappoint me
then say
I am your
everything,
and the pain
in your eyes
when you tell me
you are never upset
at me
only at yourself
when you hurt me,
and I sit silently
swooshing a straw
in ice and Bacardi
as you reach down
my dangling leg
gently removing
paper stuck
under my shoe,
and you leave me
aching for you
to make sense
to me,
yet you don't
and you can't
but I'm still with you.

Sara Trappler
Yeshiva University

FOG AND FROGS

fog
and frogs
leap through
the open windows
having rolled over the
hills and trees and buildings
in a mass, filling every empty space
like a plague.

they come in, uninvited
dancing all around,
simultaneously stealing my attention
each from its own direction,
all together overwhelming understanding—
these tiny drops racing around my head
thickly surrounding me
 not water nor air
these gleeful amphibians leaping blindly
 not fish nor mammals
landing with thuds all over the ground,
and on my feet.

infinite frogs and fog in every direction,
and i am about to scream,
but i'm too afraid
a frog might leap down my throat.

so the tension builds,
clouding my claustrophobic mind,
which leaps around from thought to thought
in restless spasms
and i too become
fog and frogs.

Bob Mango
Washington University

BIENVENIDOS

A couple contemplates life
Over chimichurri sauce
Hot on tortilla chips and tongues.

Enchilada pink walls
Welcome the frenzy
Of mariachis serenading no one in particular.

“I’ll take my margarita to go, por favor”
Salt stinging and sweet.

A dead river snakes through
This place
While women from Nebraska
Clutch disposable cameras
To wide eyes shaded by red plastic.
They fan their hands fast to still the heat
And stare towards the music

Appreciate the cultural exchange.

Erin Harkless
Washington University



*Melanie Reinert
Washington University*

On the fifth floor of the library, you get all kinds of crazies. There's the nutty guy who's obsessed with deciphering Heschel's hermeneutic as reflective of an adolescence of sexual repression; there's the case who scours millennia of Jewish texts in an effort to finally declare, once and for all that his political conservatism is justified by codified precedent.

For every one of these men, there is a woman. Sometimes, there are even extras.

That's how I found myself talking with Bayla Liss one enchanted Thursday afternoon in mid-November. Bayla holds a Frank Dictionary and a volume of *mini-shas* in her left hand; she's wearing a gray sweater over a blue oxford, with a jean skirt.

But Bayla wasn't always the Bayla we know now; indeed, she was a rather different entity as one of the few observant Jews in Tucson, Arizona's third-largest high school. There she was an arts devotee, studying architectural works. She'd wear blue jeans and a tie-dyed, hooded sweatshirt while spending hours talking with her jeans & faded-black turtleneck, mid-thirties art teacher, who'd always reminisce about the trip he took to Paris as a graduation present from his grandparents in 1983.

Of course, if Bayla was going to seriously study architecture, Bob ("Mr. Patterson" to the jocks, but "Bob" to Bayla) was convinced that she'd need to visit New York. Not coincidentally, Bob spent three weeks there in 1986 after his girlfriend at the University of North Texas died; her wake and funeral were held in Far Rockaway.

Bayla did visit New York, but only through the window of a Peter Pan bus passing through on her eventual way to Nova Scotia. Architecture in New York was all about phallic symbols; if you

wanted to know how to design for people, you'd go somewhere where people built their own homes. So Bayla bussed her way through rural town after rural town for a year after high school, also visiting reservations and studying mounds, pueblos, and the like.

"If you stare at a home for long enough," she was telling me this afternoon, "you get to see more than what's there; you see what's not there, what's purposely left out."

By now we were departing the elevator on the fourth floor, having abandoned our individual studying thirty-five minutes earlier when she noticed my copy of the latest Hitler biography.

"I really bought it for the binding," I told her, "it's revolutionary."

She wasn't very impressed, but paid me the favor of remaining attentive as I showed her how the book would open without bending or creasing the edge.

"Gee, that's, um, interesting," she said, and began telling me how the Manhattan Bridge was built in such a way that it cannot compensate for the repeated bending and twisting it suffers at the hands of the ruthless subway line.

Soon enough, I knew that she was studying at Revel for what she hoped would be an eventual Ph.D. in Talmud. She was living in Williamsburg. She did undergrad at Towson.

And, like I said, after thirty-five minutes we were on the fourth floor, where the models of old synagogues are. Under the pretense of heading there to have her explain the structural underpinnings of these prayer-houses of yore, our conversation became anything but. We were shushed by the young men studying Orgo three times before she abandoned her lesson, and we were laughing at the way the little guy had indicated to us that, if we wanted to keep making noise, there were some hypobaric chambers in Belfer that we could use.

We slinked back, away from the studious young men, afraid of the studious young men. In the far corner, she lifted her hand and, waving it, and all its attendant sweet smelling-ness past my nose, placed her palm flat against the brick wall.

“Feel it,” she commanded.

“Feel... what?” I offered.

“The wall,” she answered.

Imitating her straight posture, I placed my palm on the bricks, too.

“Can you feel that?”

“What?”

“Just try and feel it.”

“The humming?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, I feel it.”

“That’s the living building.”

“What’s ‘the living building’?”

“Follow me.”

She scampered over behind the closed-off area and sat on the floor. I sat, too.

“Now focus,” she again commanded.

“Okay.”

We sat there. For the first few minutes, I watched as she maintained what I figure is a near-approximation of the lotus position; her eyes were closed. I assumed that she was expecting me to close my eyes as well, but, well, what if she opened her eyes after I closed mine? Worse still, what if I closed mine just as she were opening hers, and she caught me closing my eyes?

So I sat there staring at her until probably ten minutes had past. When she finally opened her eyes, she asked me, “did you feel it?”

“Sure,” was my unsure reply.

“Whatever, you’re a rookie, come on.”

She got up – very fluidly, I noted – and stepped out of the closed-off area, pointedly clicking her heels against the tile as she passed the studious young men on her way to the elevator.

The elevator ride was silent, as I pondered whether or not we were going to 3A for the same reason every woman goes to 3A, knowing that it wasn’t prudent for me to ask why.

When the doors opened up, she ran. I lagged behind in a brisk walk until she’d made it to the numbered stacks, when I picked up my pace and jogged right up next to her. She cut away, down a set of stairs and in-between two stacks; I arrived a few steps later.

There, in-between those two stacks, she again reached for the wall; again, I imitated her. Again, I felt the humming. Again, I heard her refer to “the living building,” but this time it was only in my head.

“Let me ask you a question.”

“Go ahead, Bayla.”

“Thanks. Is this building solid?”

“Yes.”

“Is it immovable?”

“I suppose.”

“But you feel it moving right?”

“I feel it humming,” I replied, timidly. She was not happy with the answer.

“God-dammit, David, what do you think humming is?”

“I’m guessing, ‘movement’?”

“Okay, here’s the deal. The building’s here; has been for forty-odd years. It’s not going anywhere, like you or I or Ahuva-down-the-block go somewhere. But it’s moving. It moves in its own way.”

“So?”

“So my floor 3A isn’t the same as Ronit’s floor 3A, because it moved.”

“Okay...” I think she lost me.

She ran down another flight of stairs and hurried over to a window, pointing to the steam from grates outside.

“See that?” she asked, “that’s the building’s

breath – it breathes, but differently than us. And somewhere, there’s a pipe letting out waste, and somewhere, somewhere, where gas or water is leaking, this building is bleeding.”

She grabbed my hand and dragged me past more than thirty ogling computer users to the periodicals section.

“If we move this chair,” she said as she pushed it with the toe of her boot, “we’ve changed the building. It’s no longer the same. Irrevocably, this building is different. And you’ll feel it, I’ll feel it, and everyone will feel it. We changed the building, and the building will change us.”

She was still holding my hand – rather tightly – and my fingers were a bit sweaty. Hers were still ice-cold and dry.

Steven L. Weiss
Yeshiva University

DISQUIETUDE

Reaching, in the night
my hand finds a body
that is not yours.

Dreaming, in the night
my conscious conjures ephemeral images
both beautiful and bittersweet.

Crying, in the night
my tears tell their story
to a solitary pillow.

Suzanne Wiltz
Tulane University



*Deia Schlosberg
Washington University*

SATURDAY NIGHT

An old wooden door keeps beat
To a sleepy tune
The screen hangs from the frame
Like a drunken sailor
Laughter dribbles into the night
Swirling with the moans of traffic

Tadeusz Ogorzalek
Washington University

Eric Yeung
Washington University



LOVE POEM (A FRAGMENT)

Oh I love thee more than the silence of roses
And the bleating of wheelbarrows
Not more but like the fire-thrush
I burn-flow down when lava summits burst
Not more but like the great moon-dragon
I consume my green egg in the sky
My love for thee is ionization, the extra charge, Salve
Caesar to his Friend Cicero from Like Friend Pompeii
I love thee the more than gargling laughter of baby children
When they have seen pink and purple dream-frolicking
I adore thee more than the hyphen of a scripture
Which told me I was God's chosen one personified
I adore thee more than a building concrete mesh of glass
Which soars to heaven above gods own winged odd-men-out
I love thee more than the streets, whispering their secrets to cold men and
nights that would care to listen.
I love thee more than the dew pearls on a new-spring goose, unconditionally
guaranteed of the fresh-like-substance

Shlomo Schwartzbard
Yeshiva University

THE AFTER ANTHEM

This gray curls
Like silver floss
with urban voice
this building's word

That we say, light allude,
to men in blue
below, not His navy
that navy, of deep and round remnant water
from His day
before this ash curling
rises a movie box
-a static screen of
his and theirs
with car cackling, and steel lace,

watch us, we say,

while this new lace
will make this box,
ours,
when you whisper in his reaper ear
in 3 button garb, grab
this lava move
when you
sigh
this city gray shy

but watch over us, you in blue,

on circle
shamble, from the bubble flux.

I remember the bubble flux,
Solid spheres
rising and rising and rising.
Inverted rain made our
Armageddon -
quiet and clear
cotillion night left
us nothing but
nymphless hush
circling circles Empty

we'll paint this box
with surfing gray
we will make lines, liquid lines
I swear first yours
and theirs
through exhale

And laughing lets loose
this lava move
and the line will die and dry

be it gray, heather
wholly lace and easy eyelet
And they will vanish
in breath and building
(though you watch,)

this Urban Die,
(on guard,)
whispering
(and charge if need)
for me and his and theirs
because I am soft spoken,
and he is bashful,
and they,
funny dwarfs,
sad, sad, sad, and shy.

Elana Hornblass
Yeshiva University

DISJOINTED REALITY

Did they execute him?

locked doors open to
industrial odor
left in the cell until
feeding time
if you want a coke talk to
the guards

He wasn't my only child.

visitors become mother to
a mother
alone in a room with
two beds
plastic mattresses protect from
nighttime accidents

I know you're sleeping with her.

wait when he's stuck at
the office
the t.v. drones the wonders
of Viagra
dinner is young pigs in
soggy blankets

They give me these things to keep me here.

orders from flowers to
get well
capsules counted out into
paper cups
good-byes through glass when
doctors come

*Kate Boudreau
Washington University*

PROTECTED

The sandcastle crumbles:
the walls come tumbling down
and I feel them sink
into my soul. I build
the towers back,
make the moat and pebble-wall,
bigger and better
each time, but eventually
things fall apart again.
I pile coconut shells
along the shore
to keep the water out,
but when the shells fall over
like a pile of dishes,
they put on a concert
of tiny drums,
and their music reminds me,
I'm no stronger
than a sand-crafted wall or the shell
of a sweet fruit.

I'm learning to praise the god of salt
and sand and tiny-drum music,
learning to love the overgrown world
that doesn't know of my walls,
and learning to see the slant of light
that shines for me;
a light that I've been given
to taste but not to devour.
I build my walls
to remind myself that I can do nothing
to scar the shore,
and I'm learning to cheer
for the tide, because now, I want to hear
the coconut concert
more than I want to see
the protection that I simply can't control.

Micah Ling
DePauw University

Sunil Manchikanti
Washington University



DON'T PANIC —OR—WE LOVE YOU

Robin shaved her legs only sporadically. Mostly she liked feeling fuzzy: live mammalian limbs, or two branches limber with moss. Unfurred, pink skin looked either mechanical, like hands, or denuded. People stared. Women diverted their eyes, and men made it a point that she take note of their notice. At first it was hard and she felt defensive.

Her plot to install locks on the two doors leading into her new bedroom had failed. Her family had been living in the sold, city house all summer while gradually relocating to the suburban place. She had left early to meet the locksmith, and when he phoned to confirm the appointment her parents had answered and canceled it. There was no phone service yet in the new house, and she waited for him long enough to cause her to be late for her grandparents' wedding anniversary bash in a restaurant shaped like a windmill. Two varieties of hasenpfeffer came and went without any mention of the locksmith. Robin's courage was enriched. Soon afterwards, she wore capri-pants on a trip on the city bus. A man across the aisle kept staring at her lower legs. She could tell what was drawing his eyes, and she turned her face full upon him, but his gaze persisted as if her indigence was of no consequence. She missed her stop, and the bus accidentally deposited her outside of Omar Poos Law Library instead of the dentist's office. Inside, she found the computer bank. With a minimum of furtiveness, Robin ordered eighty-eight dollars worth of sex-toys—edible underwear, sensual cinnamon massage oil, glow-in-the-dark body paint, and lubricants—on the machines available for public internet use. She paid with check #001 from the account she had opened on her sixteenth birthday. Her order was delivered on Labor Day in a box that said only WET in moist, blue stencil, which did not give her away, though was not quite

as anonymous as she'd hoped. As subterfuge, she wrapped up the items like a Christmas gift, and stowed the package under the basement stairs. The following week at the Goodwill, she purchased a misshapen wind chime and a book entitled "The Manly-Hearted Woman," which had a Native-American woman warrior on its cover. The wind chime was apparently homemade. Its bunch of thick, clay oblongs were dented with smushy, irregular impressions that made them look simultaneously phallic and fecal. From their proximity together in the plastic shopping bag, grubby pieces of clay crumbled against the novel, whose cover-illustration was the color of old snot, anyway, Robin thought. In the illustration, the woman's headdress stood defiant against the zephyr of its mustardy background.

Robin stepped outside the thrift shop, where there was also a breeze. Discarded slurpee cups rolled down the riverbank (which body of water had been reduced with pavement to nothing more than a pattering, narrow gangway of sluice) in gutted diagonals. All the people who had once put their lips to the derelict wax containers were now on their ways down the sagging streets, each secretly excited by the ominous Friday sky. She pictured them in stale public school auditoriums or in their greasy jeans on the buses, finally in their funny, city houses that contained dowdy, risqué things. She smelled the approaching clouds and let everything ache for hours, until strong verbs came in lieu. The next afternoon, outside with her younger brother, was fine. A weekend sun held forth above the backyard clothesline, and green sprouts brushed their ankles. Will stared up at the sky through 3-D glasses while Robin took down and folded the laundry. "Pop quiz: what's your favorite flower?" he asked, jamming on sunglasses over the red/blue lenses.

"If you really want to know, I think violets smell the best."

"I like the ones that turn towards the sun, like they really know where it is."

"Plants are actually geniuses, Will. They make their own food through sunlight. They are the true vegetarians because they don't have to kill anything for nutrition."

Will itched his ankles. "That's why plants are so smart," Robin continued.

"Right...but you wouldn't be here without Mom and Dad!"

"That's why moms are so smart. They make babies out of practically nothing."

"Untrue! Women have to EAT to get the nutrition that babies are made from!"

"Exactly! That's why moms and plants are so smart!"

Will gave up. He pretended to be distracted by a squirrel that had popped up on the fence post. Will wobbled his head back and forth at it, like a benevolent, disjointed rock-star, and his clumsy, double glasses threatened to loose themselves from his face. The squirrel returned his gaze keenly before galloping off in the leaps and bounds peculiar to those mammals.

At sunset, they took a bike ride around the circular streets of their subdivision, where they encountered several roadkill victims. Will was careful not to further disrespect the remains of the squirrels by inflicting bike treadmarks. From time to time he dismounted and gazed down at the still, small bodies, but it made Robin nervous to stop riding dead in the middle of the street. She imagined little dark eyes peering down at them from tree branches. She thought she could discern tiny squeaks in the air. With a stick, she mincingly transferred one limp figure to lie beneath the boughs of a droopy pine. On the ride home, her pant legs kept getting caught in the bike gears, and she asked Will to feel her forehead for a fever.

That was not a good year at school. Robin misplaced her homework quite a lot and was

rejected for admittance into the National Honors Society; reading lost its appeal when she dated a boy who hated books. On their second date she tried to be encouraging, and lent him her library card; it got pitched into the homecoming bonfire on the occasion of their third date.

In addition, the nuns accused her of drinking alcohol underage, on school premises, out of plastic soda bottles. "That's not soda," they said. "No one drinks soda like that." Robin's attendance was not required at the family reunion. She took the opportunity to retrieve her goods from underneath the stairs, and discovered that everything promoted as "edible" on sex sites was only theoretically so. The edible underwear did not fit the contours of her pelvis; the ricey, cellulose straps tore as she knotted them, and the garment wafted down around her ankles as she shifted her weight to reach for the body paint, which was also "edible"; but chemical blue and orange sat in cold lumps on her skin, and her fingers left tracks down the middle that bludgeoned her designs into two. It numbed the tongue when tasted.

She imagined feeble mammals on the furniture around her in the dark, her purse an injured cat curled and collapsed upon itself under the desk, a fat, softly pink kangaroo embryo in the lap of the recliner.

The telephone in the hallway rang and rang; there was no one else at home to answer it. Robin lay prone and disappointed. She fell asleep grinding honey-tinged body powder between her molars. It was gritty, but she could not articulate her criticisms, so the room remained silent.

Each night after that one, at bedtime ...briiing...briiiiing...briiiiiing. She had no recollection of her dreams in the morning. At breakfast it always surprised her to hear that she had sleepwalked to the phone. She never fell down the stairs, so her parents expressed no alarm. Things continued on in this fashion, until one day

after school. “Phone call for you. Someone *Hasenpfeffer*?” Incredulity on the part of Robin’s mother, who had been in the process of untangling a disemboweled cassette tape caked in a gritty, clay powder, when the phone rang. Robin disregarded the things in her mother’s hands and walked to take the upstairs phone off the hook, descended to hang up the kitchen phone, and climbed again up the central stairway to speak to the caller.

Though there was only silence on the other end, she held the receiver to her ear for minutes. Then she heard her own voice speak something familiar. She could vaguely recall this conversation. Yes, it was the segment wherein Robin questioned why she sometimes saw memories, and the squirrel replied that, “Eyes are the humanest sense.” The interaction continued: “Are you angry from being small and squished up?”

“A small and squished up hamster, say, would be compressed. The light would shine inside, but the rest is dark. The light is interrogative, exposing the little brown and white plush thing.”

Now Robin spoke, her voice emanating from the present this time, in a tone of revelation: “That could only be dark.” She went to check.

The nook under the stairs was vacant. All in a rush, she remembered how she had hidden the bloody underwear from an unexpected period under her bed. She had bled all morning one day in the eighth grade, and it had soaked through even her thirsty plaid uniform skirt. Too timid to ask another girl for assistance, she had stewed in her own juices until officially dismissed for the leaky walk home for lunch. The male art teacher had walked by just as she arose from her chair; she recalled his making a half-hearted motion to wipe her thigh-shaped smear from the wooden seat. When she had placed the disguised WET box there weeks ago, Robin had forgotten about the underwear. In the years intervening between eighth grade and the present, the garment had apparently

been removed. Now, in the darkened subterranean space, strands of audio cassette tape lay unfurled amidst the shells of desecrated Christmas wrappings. She was not shocked, only resigned, and she returned to the telephone. “Go consider what you’ve lost,” the voice said. Robin sighed into the receiver.

Under the Christmas tree, unviolated packages lay all aglow. In the new year her menstrual period would conform to the calendar, even coordinated with her friends’ cycles. She had only to scream out if she needed womanly advice or support. Her voice rang out in high spirits across the lunchroom. From time to time she tested her friends’ loyalty in the face of scandalous gossip that she planted herself.

The boys all said that she smelled good, like fabric-softener. The ones with Anglo-Saxon surnames dared to phone her at home. Her father insisted on meeting them prior to dates. She slept soundly after weekends of heavy petting, and kept a dream journal concerned with the ins and outs of going steady.

Something stirred in Robin when she watched the boys spit off the Ferris wheel, but the feeling was vague and painful, so she let it glide away.

At home, her voice rang out in high spirits across the kitchen table, through the living room, outside on the pool deck.

She was always the first to answer the phone.

Besides art, her favorite class was biology—she had a surgeon-like precision for dissecting fetal pigs, and the boys didn’t mind that she came away smelling like formaldehyde once a week, because it made her so jaunty and agreeable. Robin got her tongue pierced, then her belly button, and punctuated the holes with ornaments in iridescent steel. She started wearing thong underwear, and volunteered to supervise the kiddy table at her uncle’s wedding reception.

Robin drank beer out of plastic cups on the weekend, and drank milk in the school cafeteria. She copied her homework from friends and always contributed to class discussion. Her grades picked up, and her parents bought her a car. She took the abstinence pledge; she started getting better at math.

“Energy is never lost or gained, Will. It only changes form,” she pronounced. Robin never went into the city anymore, by bus or by passenger vehicle. The inhabitants of her consciousness were clean-faced. When her parents went out at night, she threw parties. She never thought again about the

necessity of locks on any of her doors. She always remembered to flush the toilet and to wrap her sanitary pads in toilet paper before burying them at the bottom of the trashbin. Her mother was her best friend.

She kept a distance from the school library. She hadn't been in the basement of her own home for weeks. She couldn't stand stubble. Robin shaved her legs every day.

Rebecca Weisser
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THE POINT OF NO RETURN...

she stands alone on a loaded bus
staring ahead at a bubble
her eyes are fixed on a point
of no return...

she babbles a few words
nobody understands
her papa hides in the crowd
not at ease with his god

his baby girl is parked
at that babbling stage
holding candy with both hands
letting the baba slip on a bib

her incoherence resounds
in the faces that turn away
stealing a glance

hoping to forget

Amado Chan
Tulane University

OVERDRAMATICISM

My chest constricts. . .
[actually] I suddenly notice
It's prolonged constriction.
Suffering a legitimate
Phenomenon!
Or a product of my compulsive imagination?
[Hypochondriac!]

Each fiber
Draws closer:
Cellular fractals condensing,
Seeking a warmth
And an intimacy
[that should delight and soothe].

The heat sparks vulnerable,
Tendrils of tissue.
The union of these tension strands
Is marked by a third degree blaze—
Singeing across my chest as I try
[dramatic, isn't it?]
To inhale, and extinguish the flame.
The air, my awareness, ignites it further.

Fibers, once comfortable in their distance
Are intent on flooding me with their desperate discomfort.
[Ah, throw paranoia into the mix]
The more I resist, attempt to block the throbbing—
The closer they strain, determined. . .
Interweaving and detonating “miniscule infernos”
At every glowing meeting place.
[Delusions of grandeur; schizophrenic break—
too much creative energy]

My chest knots into a solid
Sphere of flame—each fiery cell has united
And engulfed a partner in crime
Despite my desperate attempts to maintain serenity.
[momentum builds; dramatic energy augments]
I fear for the next instant—further flame, indubitably.
But I cannot comprehend how it could worsen.

And suddenly, the plane of flame extinguishes,
Yielding not the charred ruins of a chest cavity,
But instead the ultramarine Catalan oceanscape
Salvador painstakingly provided for me.
My memory is fleeting—
My “unforgettable” agony left me inclined to accept
accord.
[resolution.]

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