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Something Rich and Strange
Journal of Fine Arts
Yeshiva University · Spring 2013




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Photography: Joanna Ross-Tash and Ilan Regenbaum
Painting and Drawing: Mia Guttmann and Yaël Roberts

We would like to express our gratitude to Dean Fred Sugarman of Yeshiva College and Dean Karen Bacon of Stern College for their support and guidance in producing this valuable undergraduate project. And, of course, thanks to all of the students who submitted material for publication, without whom this undertaking would not have been possible.



Yeshiva University



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Hideaway

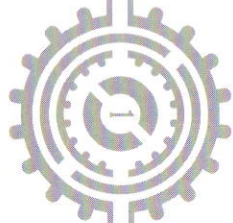
Jonah Wilkof

I chase her breathless up the rungs
A step behind, in step with love
Twisted knots, carved hearts in bole
She's staring out, the moon half full

Bowed wood still creaks a wordless tune
But something's changed since our first June
She's found a way inside my head
and filled the dark with her instead

The fireflies' dream, light the night
Pulsing and bursting in luminous flight
She whispers words and shakes the earth
So few, so true, so full of worth

A rousing gale ends all thought
The tree-house roof is ripped clean off
The stars and spheres come crashing down
In light and dark and warmth we drown



The Selkie

Elana Levy

He went to the old man to ask, in absence of my father,
For the taking of me

And following my voice he found, half-gray on the rocks, seized
And peeled off my skin, bit by bit.

Lay me on the sand, drowning bare and raw and burnt under the sun
I was to be his bride. And to a bright place

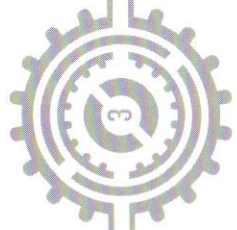
A house smelling of salt I cried freshwater tears
And drank

It was I, coughing up air, that spoke me cursed, cursed, cursed
And I swelled and bore to the thought of the sea

Cradling my dreams in that dry, bent house
seals hidden behind the walls like paintings

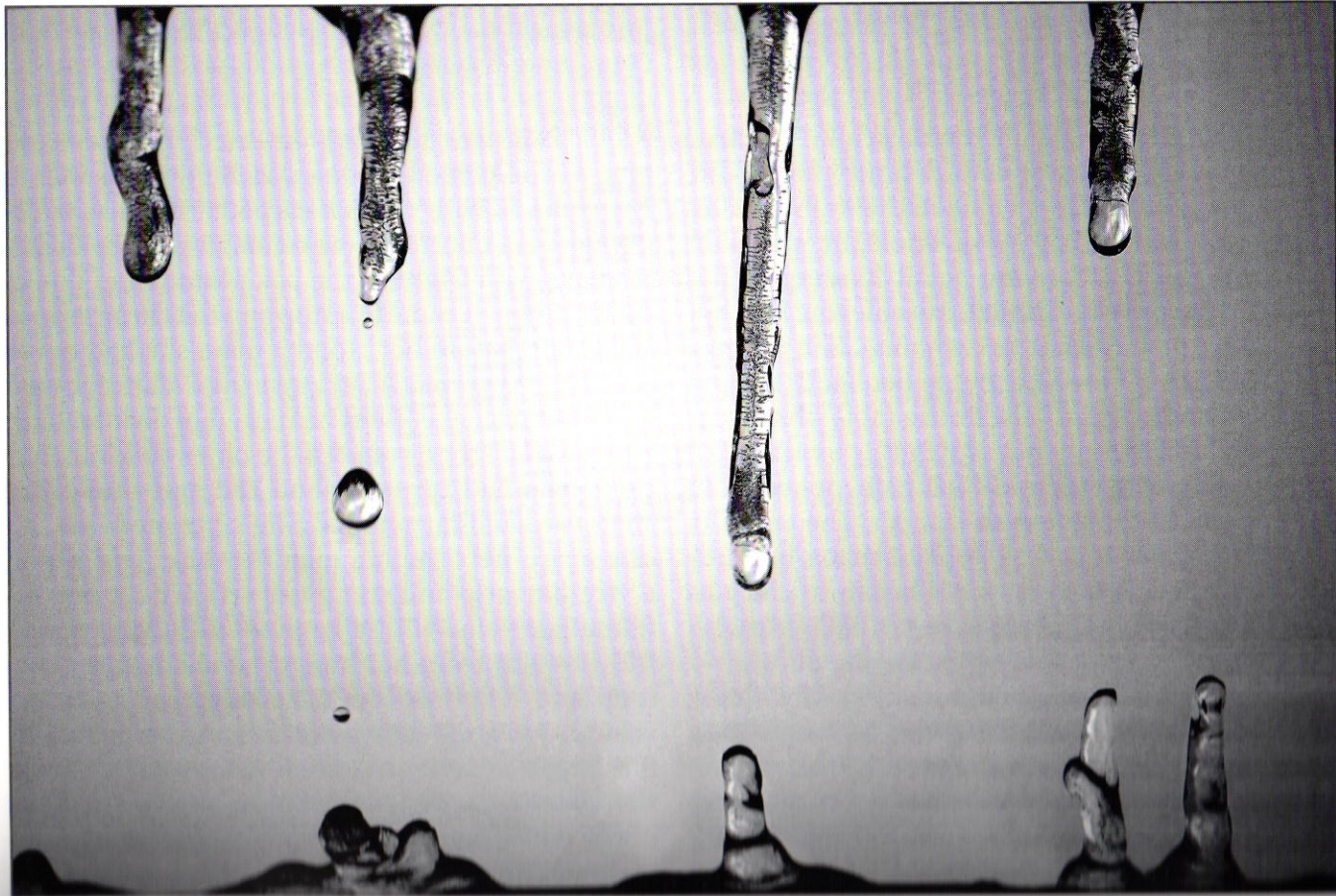
unholy
Forbidden.





Untitled

Jenny Wiseman · Digital Photography





A Whimsical Repast

Sara Olson

The auditorium was filled with school children happily eating lunch at round stone tables. The ceiling was glass and ivy climbed the walls. Bushes dotted the room. Instead of linoleum, the floor was dirt and mulch. One small kindergartener with curly brown hair smiled mischievously at her classmates, her green eyes twinkling. She pulled a green felt Robin Hood hat out of her backpack and placed it on her head. The entire table of six year olds giggled. The laughter spread as one by one, every child put on identical felt hats, pulled from bags or lunchboxes or even thin air. The teachers would have been trying to stop the chaos, but they had all turned into trees. Birds began to chirp as sweet music wound through the air, colliding with the laughter to form a lavender display of color.


The curly-top kindergartener shrieked with joy and leaped into the air, gliding aloft far longer than was natural, and landed on a table top across the room. She was barefoot; they all were. Laughing, she ran like a kite at the wall of the auditorium, intending to bounce off it, but it was no longer

solid. Her surroundings seemed to gray and blur as she passed through, and then she was in a metal box with a black carpeted floor. A panel of numbered buttons was on one wall. She began to shake with fright as the box plummeted down, down, down. It came to a stop and the chrome door slid open. Before her stood a man; she had never seen a man before. He was wearing a white lab coat and a surgical mask and he reeked of disinfectant. Behind him stood some of the older children, but their hats had turned blood red and they wore steel-toed military boots. She screamed, but no one heard her. The tall man in white held her in a vice-like grip and stung her arm with a needle, filling her veins with a crystal fluid that drained the strength from her body. She slid to the floor, limp and helpless. The other children crowded around, taunting her, chanting poisonous words. She began to sob, tears pooling around her body, the water growing and spreading, reflecting the harsh white lights of the ceiling. She seemed to melt, sinking into the pool of tears as darkness


hovered at the edge of her vision.

Now she was swimming in the ocean, the summer sun warming her, touching her wet curls with gold. She felt free and blissfully alive. Dolphins and porpoises cavorted beside her; the sea spray glistened like diamonds suspended in the air. She grabbed a proffered fin and rode the dolphin to an island of pure white sand. The sand was hard,

upward into the sky. Grinning, the little girl ran up and up and up until she came to rest on a spongy surface that smelled like fresh rye bread. She looked across a river of peanut butter and jelly to see an identical spongy shore on the other side. Mustering all of her remaining strength, she jumped high into the air, cartwheeling and landing with a soft bump on the wooden seat of a

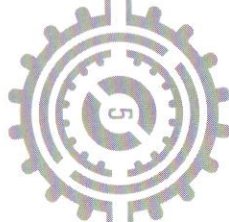


The teachers would have been trying to stop
the chaos, but they had all turned into trees.



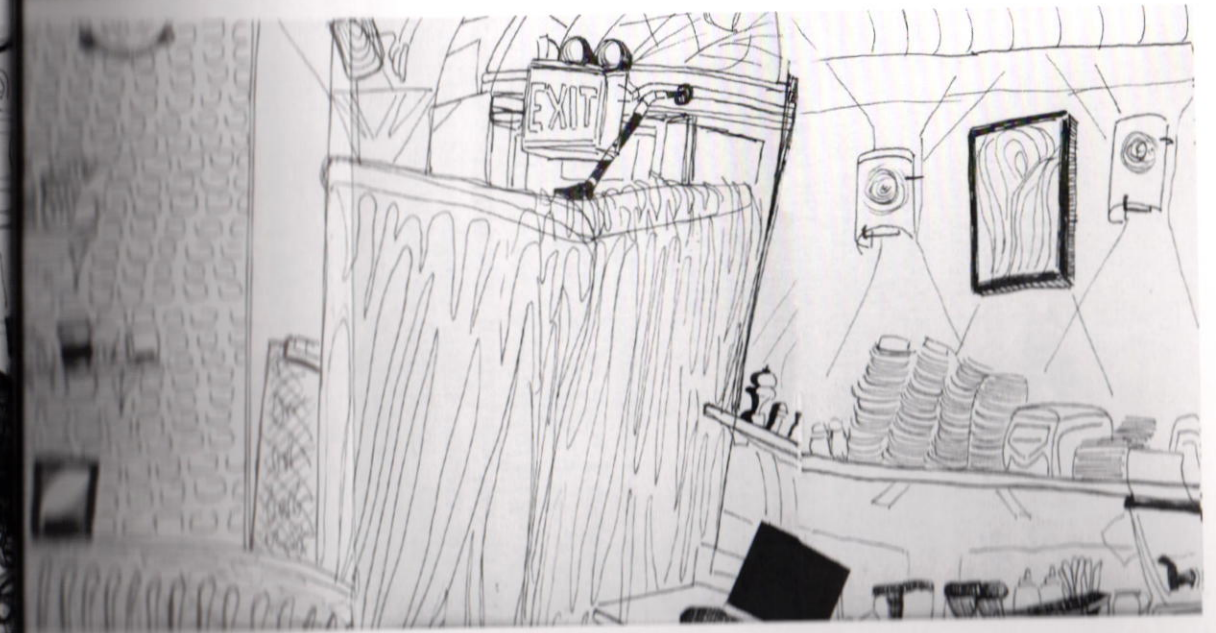
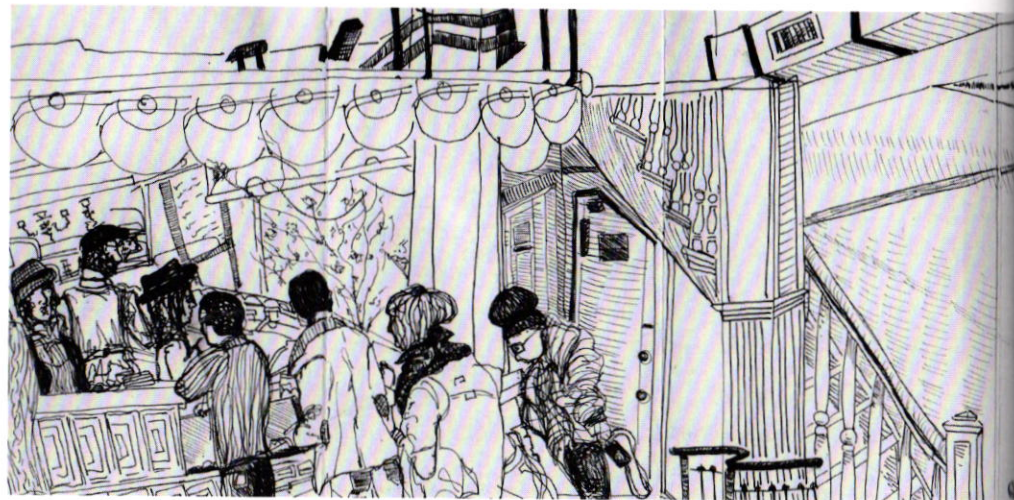
and crackled like paper when you walked on it. In the center was a box made of chocolate, filled with finger paints and glitter. The little kindergartener began to paint, her face serious and determined. A gooey rainbow took shape. She sprinkled it with silver glitter and backed away to survey her handiwork. The giant rainbow in the sand peeled away from the ground, and became a path leading

school desk. The classroom was decorated in cool shades of green with pictures covering the walls. Her teacher presided over the class from a five-wheeled throne, bestowing kind smiles on every child. The curly haired kindergartener sighed contentedly, opened her lunchbox, and tucked into her sandwich. Inside her backpack, her green felt hat smiled.



The Continuous Café

Netanya Bushewsky · 28.107" x 8" · Ink on paper





Fruits of Her Labor

Yael Farzan

My grandmother expresses her love in fruits.

Because she is a classic Sephardic Jewish grandmother, she is preoccupied with food. And feeding us. Even now, when I'm twenty, she still calls me weekly. I am halfway across the country, but the first thing she always asks is, "Yael Joonie (Persian for "dearie"), what have you been eating lately?"

She especially adores fruits, and the childhood memories I have of the seasons are categorized with these fruits:

Spring in my mind is apricots, their pits carved out cleanly; soft green avocados, peeled and cut in long, creamy slices; mangos, cold and slippery and bright yellow, that we would pick up with our hands even when she gave us a fork. Strawberries, too, with the green leaves cut off. And pineapple – she carried heavy prickly pineapples home from the market and spent at least an hour washing and cutting them up for us. We would be playing, and she would call, "Children! Come eat the apple pie!" We would giggle at her mispronunciation,

and she would retort, "Apple pie, pineapple - same thing!"

Summertime meant blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and watermelon. There was no shortage either – she bought so many of those little clear boxes of berries and washed each box carefully, one by one, and combined all the berries into a bowl. I remember coming home from camp every day to see my grandmother sitting at the breakfast table, the sun's rays spilling light on her from the open windows. Wearing a pastel-pink cotton gown, SAS slippers, and large plastic reading glasses ("the better to see the fruits with, my dear"), she would be surrounded by a grand array of her colorful subjects: a huge bowl of berries, right next to the plate of fresh-cut, cold watermelon, and the bowl of sliced red peaches, too.

In the fall she would buy hard, juicy figs and tell us that we should remember to eat the whole fig, including the peel. I remember her washing them in a bowl by the sink, then hobbling over slowly

and putting them down on the table, the drops of water still glistening on the figs. We would murmur something (I hope it was thanks) but continue with whatever we were doing, because we were young. Now we know better.


She would sit on the chair, hunched over, un-seeding pomegranates one seed at a time. The result? Hundreds and hundreds of tiny red

of the process taken to prepare them.


I left in the winter. Winter meant pink grapefruit (which she would peel completely for us, down to the red juiciness inside), little tangerines, and oranges.

But especially the oranges.

My grandmother has an orange tree in her backyard of which she and my grandfather are

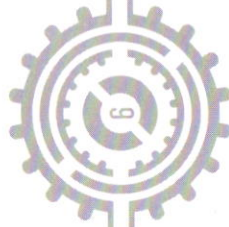



She would call, "Children! Come eat the apple pie!" We would giggle at her mispronunciation, and she would retort, "Apple pie, pineapple - same thing!"



pomegranate seeds that we would take for granted. She put them in a Tupperware container and gave us spoons and told us to eat. Then, the next day, she would give us the leftover pomegranate seeds to take to school as snacks. Now, I cannot believe I just popped the seeds in my mouth quickly, the pleasure of their taste lasting only a tiny fraction

incredibly proud. My grandfather would water it every day, and my grandmother would stand by and point to oranges that were ripe. Then my grandfather would shuffle slowly to his ladder, climb up, and stretch to pick the chosen ones, the best ones. When I got home, she would have the sour, yellow, delicious orange slices on a little





China plate for me, and say proudly, "These are from our tree!"

And as I got older, even if I wasn't hungry, I would take the orange slices, compliment their deliciousness, and finish the entire plate—because if there was one thing that gave my grandmother happiness, it was her grandchildren eating (especially fruits), and if there was one thing that broke her heart, it was her grandchildren not finishing their plates and scurrying off. She'd

was heading off to college in Manhattan, and to me, it was just a plane ride away from California. To my grandmother, I was traveling to the other side of the world.

She made my favorite foods every day – pancakes in the morning and eggplant every night – and of course, she brought me her oranges daily, working overtime, double-shifts. I would eat them, with the orange drops of juice dripping all over the plate, and I would exclaim because I



My grandmother expresses her love in fruits.



look sadly at the half-eaten figs, the remaining pomegranate seeds, the fresh cashew nuts she had painstakingly cracked by hand, and keep looking and looking and looking until someone finished the fruits, and then she would break out into a wide, filling smile

She cried every day for a week before I left. I

knew it made her happy.

The day before I left, she came to see me off. She brought a huge bag with her and told me to fit it into my suitcase. "I don't have room, Mamanjooni (Grandma)!" I told her.

"Oh no," she trailed off, and just looked inside her bag, and looked and looked and looked, a

little sadly. My mother motioned silently. "Wait, I'll make room!" I said quickly. I opened her bag. Inside, there were little Tupperware containers packed to the brim with orange slices.

"These are from our tree," she offered. I took down all our oranges from the tree and saved them to give to you."

I hugged her and thanked her, and sat on the ground to try and fit them into my already-stuffed suitcase. And then I was off.

I got a call as soon as I got to the airport. She had to give me instructions about the oranges. "Make sure to refrigerate them as soon as you get to your dormitory," she insisted.

And after I had eaten them, I called her to say thank you, and she laughed, voice cracking, and my grandfather had to take the phone.

Every phone call after that, I remembered to thank her for the oranges.

"I miss your oranges, Mamanjooni." And she would laugh delightedly, and I could hear her smile seep through the phones from her house in

California, land of the oranges, to my cell phone in Manhattan.

"I miss your oranges," I would say when she would ask when I was coming home, and I would tell her three months, and she would sigh.

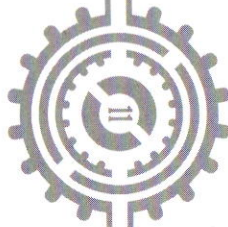
This lasted for a few months until one day she called and asked me how I get mail in the dorm. "Do you have to go to the post office? If I need to send you something, can I just write your address?" I answered her questions, but told her she didn't need to send me anything. "I'm fine here, Grandma."

"No, no, don't worry," she insisted,

"I'm sending you our oranges!"

Her love expressed in fruits. "I'm sending it with next-day delivery," she continued happily, "so they won't go bad and so you can eat them tomorrow!"

This time, we switched roles. "I miss you, Mamanjooni," I whispered.

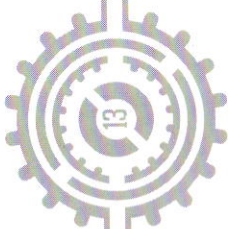




The Garden Party

Esther Hersh • Digital Photography





Sadness

Sofiya Eidzelman • 11" x 17" • Mixed media on paper



The Elevator

Evan Schwarzbaum

The elevator took its time getting to the 35th floor that day. Nothing alarming, but Jon happened to have been in a rush to get to the office for his nine o'clock. He looked down at the carpeted floor and then back up at the many unlit buttons beside the elevator door. He glanced to his right and, accidentally locking eyes with the lift man, quickly averted his gaze, though not before recognizing the man's presence with a short nod and a contortion of the face which, for some reason, he felt communicated "hello" to people he didn't really want to talk to.

Now he was locking eyes with himself in the elevator's side mirror and wanted to give himself the same nod-contortion-huff combination, but thought it might put off the liftboy. Jon's jet-black hair couldn't quite keep the word jet in its description those days. It's not that he was going gray, but at a certain point, when a man passes the age of thirty, has two children, and despises his job more than his own appearance, his hair might be black, but jet-black is just an exaggeration. His black pinstriped suit imitated the coloration on his head, giving off the same experienced and professional feel; from his experience, the big execs preferred to work with a man who had a little gray in him and wasn't afraid to show it.

A bell, a gesture from the liftboy, and Jon was out of the elevator. The truth was that Jon hated elevators. At least long rides in them. That time between the things he needed to do. The gaps in his life that weren't already filled with meaningless content scared the shit out of him. He never knew what he was supposed to think about. No secretary, no schedule, just a liftboy and a mirror that reminded him of truths he'd rather have forgotten long before.

And indeed, he left them behind as he walked into the office, past a bright fluorescent light fixture, a cherry wood desk with a sexy redhead behind it, three copying machines, and a ringing phone. The ringing phone was for him.

"Jane Timons, Gallagher Consulting, how may I help you?" It emerged from her lips less a question than a line from a middle school play. "Mr. Anderson, Atlas Copco on line 1."

Standing in the doorway to his office, Jon turned his head to look back at Jane. "Tell him to leave me a message. I'm on a business trip."

He tried to lo
didn't.

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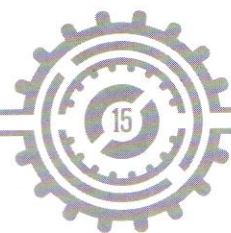
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Jon was
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He tried to look at Jane when he talked to her; the other consultants didn't.

The nine o'clock came and went. Pens scribbled, spun around fingers, pointed at figures, and bent under the pressure of tense consulting teeth. Eyes barely blinked as they took in slides and graphs and bullet points. Several hours alone in front of a computer, and Jon was ready to take a deep breath. He didn't though, because he didn't really have time for that. He did look out the window, marvel at the clear blue sky, and shake his head.

Jon moved quickly through the office but, as always, paused to smile at Jane and communicate the slightest recognition of her existence. He preferred to walk quickly in general so as not to waste time, but also to minimize the time between activities—those gaps in existence he so feared. He now returned to that one gap he could not control: the elevator. The cafeteria was on the 32nd floor, only a few flights down, but the staircases in his building were alarmed in

“Where to, kind sir?”

case of fire. Jon hated that. Just another reminder of this generation's laziness. And somehow they couldn't figure out why their kids were all obese.

Jon's eyes already carried small bags, if only the size of the small carry-on he brought on business trips. Between working late the previous night and the morning's grueling meetings he thought he'd eat something refreshing. Maybe a salad, or something with tofu. Certainly not a day for ham and cheese. He pressed the button outside the elevator and thought about how good ham and cheese would have tasted. There's always next time. The red arrow lit up accompanied by a high-pitched, amorphous sound. The door slid open and the liftboy gestured, ushering Jon back into his favorite, mirrored place.


“Where to, kind sir?”

Jon wasn't sure when the liftboys started speaking Victorian English, but he mumbled something that made it clear he could do it himself. The orange light behind the twenty-eight button lit up, surrounding the black numbers with a bright but blurry hue. Jon had


now begun to accept his leaf-fated meal, and thought he'd go with feta this afternoon rather than his habitual mozzarella. He focused his gaze on the elevator rug's complex and incestuous geometric pattern to avoid repeating that morning's awkward confrontations. He tried to wrap his mind around it, but the shapes continued to twist away from his grasp. The red LED lights scrolled to 32 with a ping and the door slid open.

Jon was still looking down when he strode through the door, so he couldn't yet see the strange world before him. What he did notice was the hardwood floor beneath his feet and the lack of redolent cafeteria stench in the room. He recognized the smell. The smell of his wife finishing a shower, lemon furniture cleaner, and that distinct smell he identified only with his house.

He instinctively raised his right arm to flick on the light in the foyer. The same as he left it. Nothing moved. He could hear the ten-o'clock news playing to a den empty of people. The beige couch still sat there looking comfortable asking him to sleep there for the night



Jon felt himself falling back into a world where he had no control, not when he was thirty-two, and not now. He tried to exert his authority.



as he had too many times to remember. A soft rug, mahogany side tables with cheap romance novels—Nancy did love those. Smiling pictures of his little boy—an infant wrapped in a blanket held by an exhausted mother; holding the couch to try and stand; Jon looked away. How did he get back to this hell-hole? He couldn't tell whether to laugh or cry. The truth is, he didn't really believe it yet.

He peeked into the candlelit dining room and then into the kitchen, where the dishwasher's low and steady rumble played the soundtrack of the past. A few cotton balls pasted on a piece of red construction paper formed a rudimentary snowman. He lifted it to see a teacher's





handwritten identification of the artwork: Aden, 4-C. Jon knew what that meant; he remembered hitting on Aden's preschool teacher at the Parents Day recital. For someone who taught four-year-olds she was pretty feisty. But obviously Nancy walked over and, well, that was that. Jon thought himself a bit of a caveman in that sense: shitting where he ate was almost a matter of principle. But then again, when you're on a leash so tight, it's hard to get far enough to shit anywhere else. Four years old. Wow, that must have been three years ago. Yes, Aden had recently turned seven.

For a moment Jon made sure his calculation was correct but, as he reached into the fridge for a quick late-night yogurt, he stopped himself. How the fuck did he get here? Back in the hallway, he stared into a freshly Windexed mirror. Still had the same salt-and-pepper he had five minutes before. But somehow he wandered into the night of his thirty-year old self: Nancy. Aden. House. He hadn't seen the place since the divorce. He picked up Aden from school to avoid seeing the Ex; let's just say Jon thought that even if cheaters sometimes prosper, they never make it out with a clean and easy divorce. Last time he saw her she actually spat in his face. Jon was no germ, but that—not to mention a whole list of other villainies (which he had vigorously typed one late night after work while Nancy slept)—was incentive enough to keep him away. Now he stood enveloped by the scent of her Pantene shampoo.

Jon heard the water shut off and the slam of the magnetic shower door. "Honey is that you? There's macaroni in the colander. The sauce is in the fridge, I just restocked." She knew he was there. She could hear him? She didn't want to kill him? Jon didn't respond.

He made his way back to the staircase and then up towards the bedroom. She's filing her nails. He opens the door and, when she looks up, she puts down the file. She's wearing only a towel; well two towels, one covering chest down and one wrapped on her head. Somehow still not sexy. Her naturally red lips spread and she lets out a small sigh, the kind that means she's relieved and not the opposite. She stands up, approaches, and embraces him, both arms as far as they reach, her face nestled in Jon's warm neck. A small peck on his lips, then another. Jon stands motionless. "How was your day honey? Mine was horrible. I think I just smiled for the first time all day. And you know exactly why." Jon had no idea why. "Oh, I love you Jon," and

another peck on the lips. They were soft, if nothing else. Red, just the way he liked them, just the way he remembered them. But he hated her. But now he remembered how good she was with her tongue. He resisted.

Jon felt himself falling back into a world where he had no control, not when he was thirty-two, and not now. He tried to exert his authority.

"Let's go check on Aden."

They stood over his silent bed. Aden's thumb was in the process of being wrinkled by his succulent mouth until Nancy intervened, pulling it out gently as she did every night. Jon knew that didn't work; Aden still sucked his thumb now, and he was already in second grade. Nancy slid her arm around Jon's back and held him. Her hand was warm and so was her body. Her terry robe was pink and had her name embroidered—a valentine's present from god knows when. Jon stared at Aden without blinking. When he blinked, the decision had been made, and his arms were around her, pulling her close to his body. Jon kissed her on the forehead and then the neck. She looked up at him and his eyes met hers for the first time in more than two years.

That night in bed, they made eye contact more than he could remember. He knew her body and she knew his. The product of their love lay asleep in the next room over. A bowl of macaroni and a fresh stock of marinara sauce were ready-made for him in the kitchen. They laid next to each other breathing heavily. Nancy's lips spread again.

"I liked that."

Jon touched his nose to hers, then gave a peck on her lips.

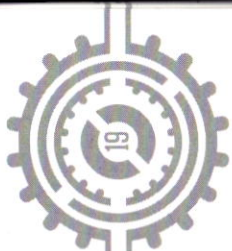
"I love you."

Jon woke up at 6 a.m. like he always did in the morning; after shower, breakfast, and travel, he'd make it just on time to work in the city. Women's hair products cluttered the shower, but he found his own in the heap. He threw some pop tarts in the toaster for breakfast and watched the morning news for weather and traffic reports. On his way out, he grabbed a Tupperware, filled it with macaroni covered in marinara.

He twisted the knob on the front door emphatically but held it there, closing his eyes. He pulled it open and looked up. A ping, a liftboy, a brightly lit mirror.

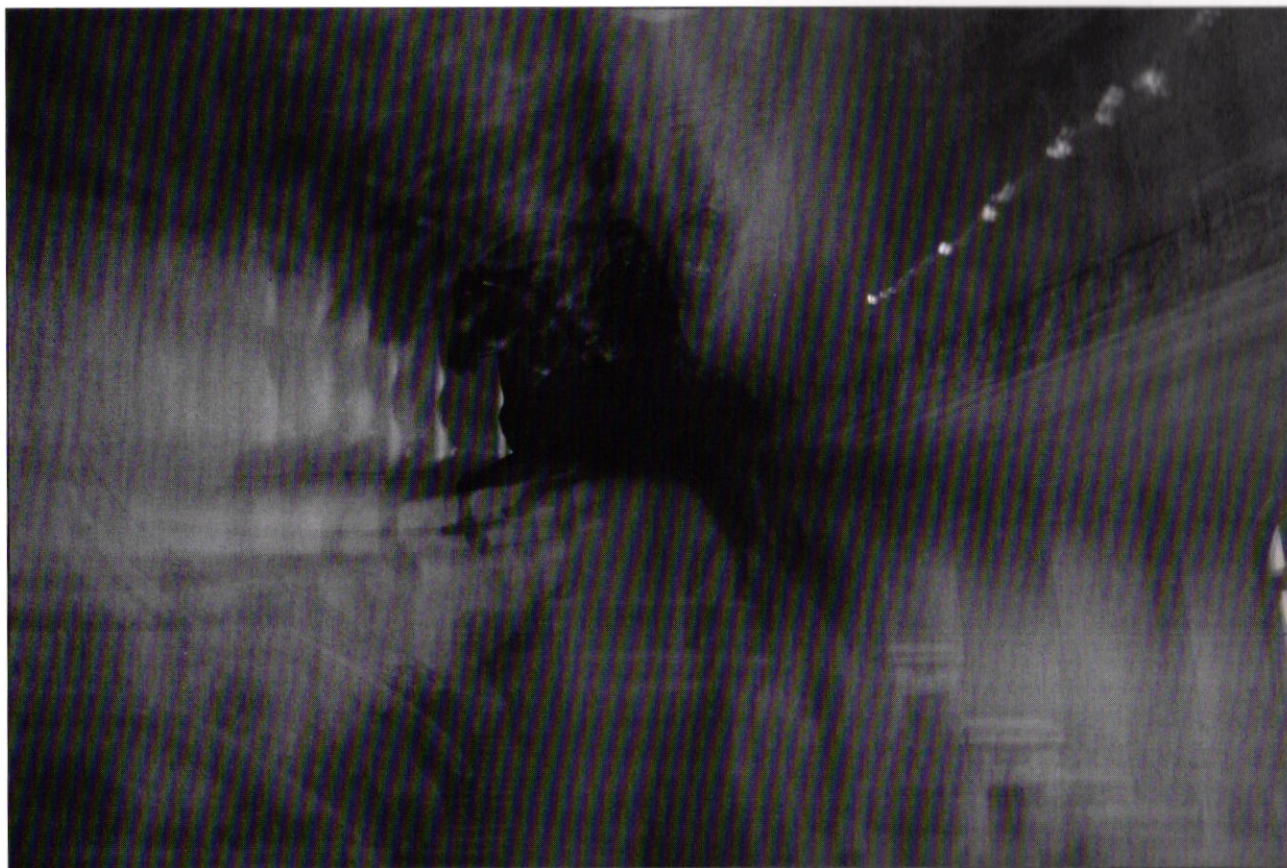
"Where to, kind sir?"





Regressions in Berlin

Deby Medrez Pier · Digital Photography



Marriage

Elina Mosheyeva

I will not forget when
the white of your dress swore to
the black of my suit and
the red of your stains chose
my god as your god, too.

Periodically I would glimpse at
the way your face changed and
your voice shrilled from
—someone older, far from the woman
I was sure you were, then.

I journeyed away and always returned
the expectations you once had for me to
be supportive or present or
responsible to you, too.

Because our life was perfectly
full of love and perhaps you
missed the part where
you accepted my flesh as your
flesh and I took a part in it, then.

Woman, do you regret the
light departure from
the house you knew would never follow
you with the three children you
bore to god and to me, too?



Untitled

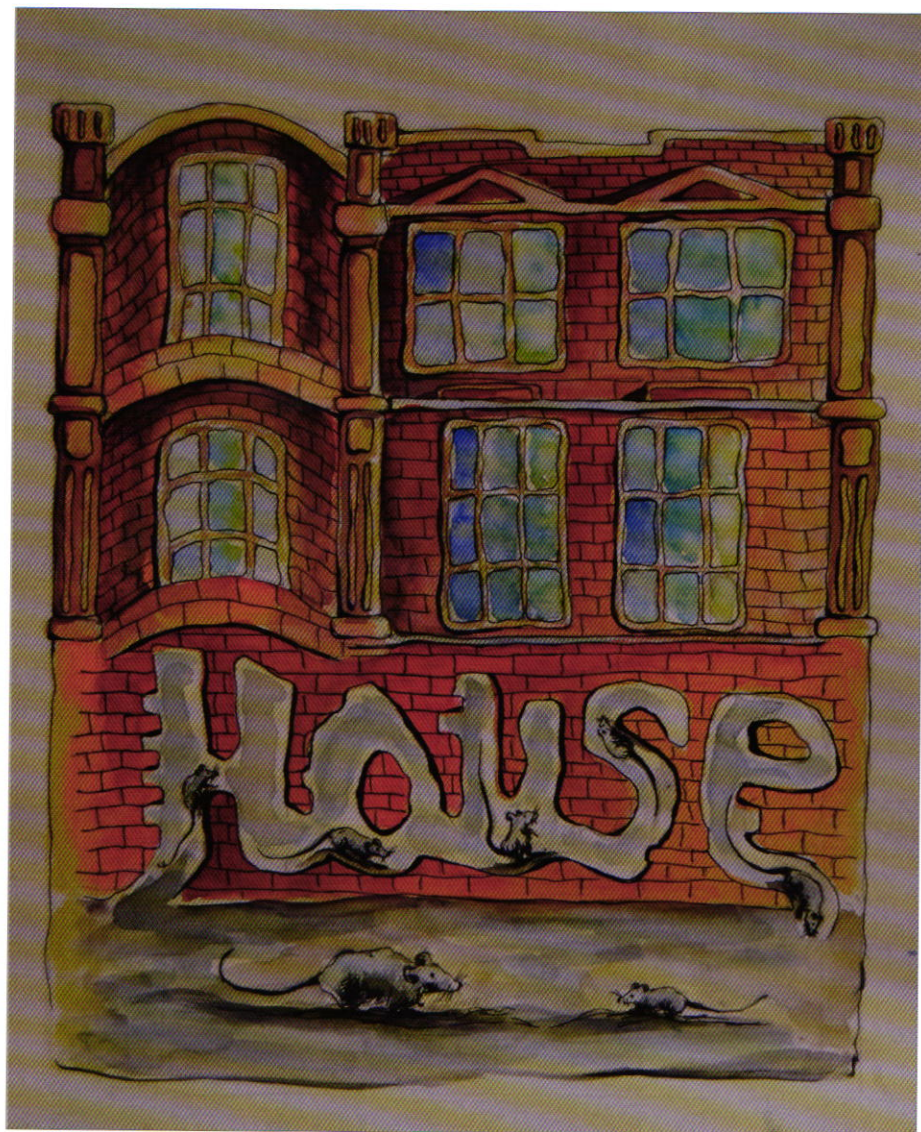
Ilan Regenbaum · Digital Photography





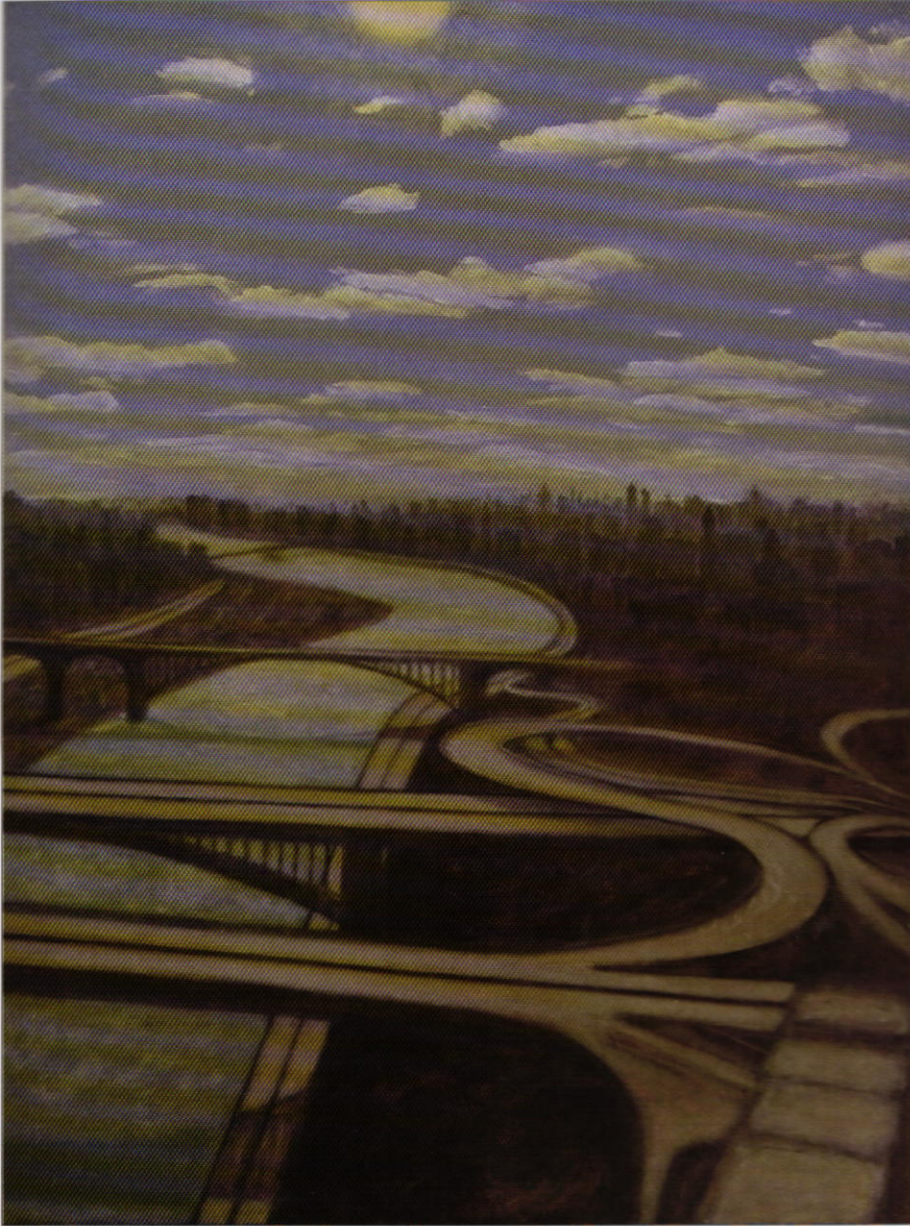
House

Sofiya Eidzelman • 11" x 17" • Mixed media on paper



Heights & Shadows

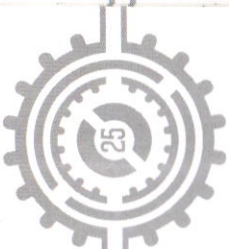
John Vahedi • 18" x 24" • Oil on canvas



Esther in Paradise

Avigayil Kelman · Digital Photography





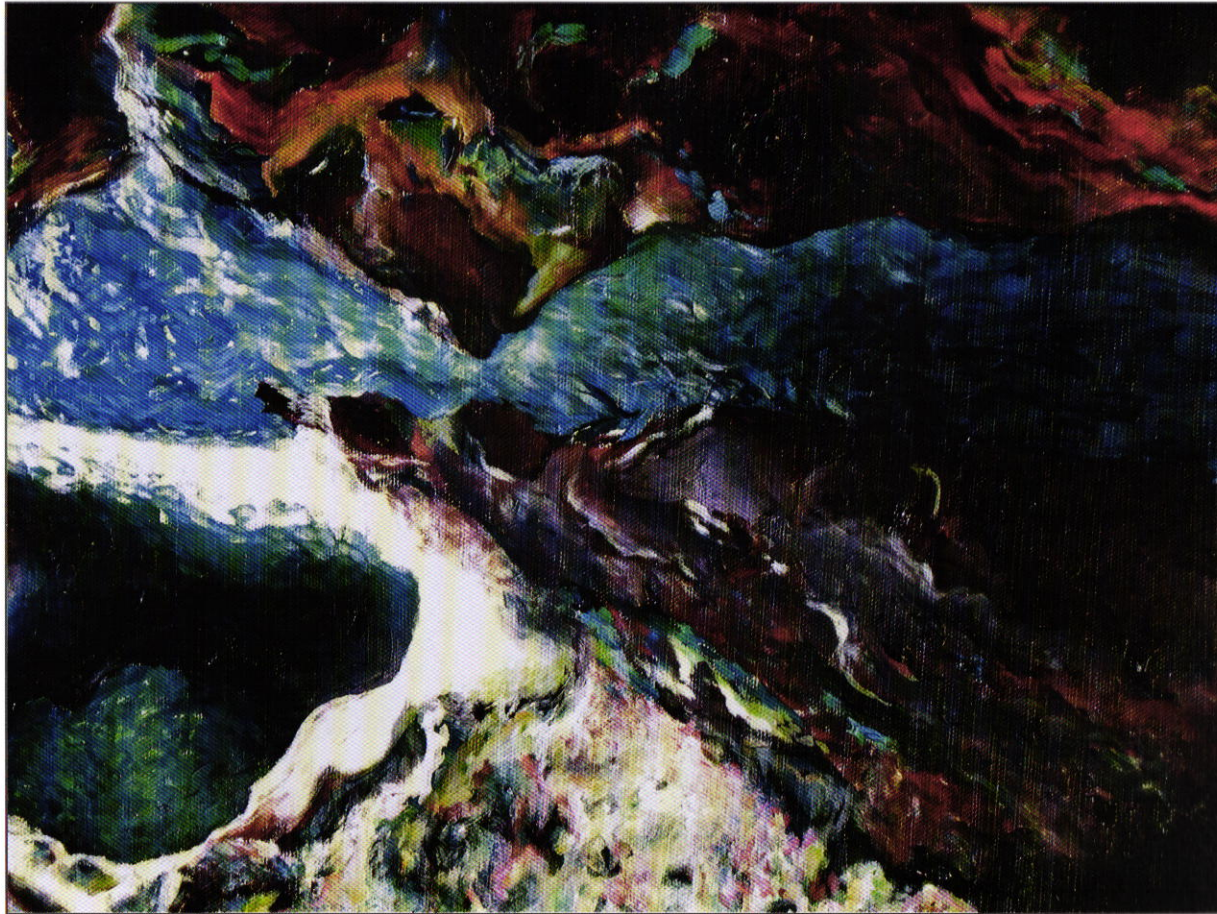
Aspirations

Rochel Spangelthal • Digital Photography



The Sound of the Water Kissing the Stone

Leora Niderberg · 12" x 16" · Oil on canvas



Untitled

Talia Saghian · 8.5" x 11" · Lithography on paper



The Sound of the Water Kissing the Stone

Leora Niderberg · 12" x 16" · Oil on canvas



Not Far from Lorimer

Joanna Ross-Tash · Digital Photography





Beware of Honey

Meredith Lane

Beware.

The Queen swarms around.
your work better be
finite.
spotless.
sweet.

i – the worker,
How dare i?
Tsk Tsk.
Task unattended,
L o n g e r than a
Timely single sigh.

Just curtsy
a forced façade.

Bullets in her eyes
of black.
Enlarged.
Revealing.
Golden ripples
Stung me.
Left me pierced.

A final display of
Gratitude.
A smirk,

presented my ultimatum
on a plate of chipped
silver paint.
my worth.

“Get back to work.”
Buzzed The Queen.

So i did.
If not,
i'd be
wings clipped.

But my
Bitch Boss
Paid. Oh,
Honey is
Bittersweet.

Make do,
Because.
9 to 5 is
Easily
Medicated.
Tolerated.
as long as
5 to 9 is
Smothered golden.

Upstairs and Downstairs Neighbors Would Have Heard Faint Shouts

Sruly Heller

The upstairs and downstairs neighbors would have heard faint shouts, distant screams. These screams would wend their way down the block, passing via oral transmission from house to house, porch to porch, stoop to stoop, till every last mother and father on the street knew what broke down a day earlier.



Windows, plain, about seven feet across and bisected down the middle, are wide open, and I notice that as I scream, as I shout. It's pretty nice out, but when it begins there is a pall, and it feels overcast all of a sudden. I know it's nice out, sunny, but then I know that it isn't. I am in the master bedroom, and then I am in the long hallway, then the living room, the wall, and back again. I am yelling and screaming, cursing and crying, throwing emotions this way, that way, anywhere really. But especially out those wide open windows.

It lasts for several hours, a half-day, or maybe thirty-five minutes. I honestly cannot recall, and no amount of prodding will bring the temporal dimensions back. There is my throat, and the red carpets, the green carpets, the long hallway like a tunnel, the golden haze of the living room chandelier, and my parents beds, between two windows and two closets. My noise carries through all these, and more. It makes its way up the stairs and through the back porches to our neighbors the Satmar Chasidim, and downstairs to the son of our landlord, with his young wife and silver SUV parked right under our porch. We live in a three-story apartment house, one that feels a lot smaller tonight, and will be even smaller tomorrow.



I spent my nights, sometimes days too but mostly nights, exploring my neighborhood, as young Americans sometimes do. My compatriots were Yanky and Leiby, both older than me, one by a year, the other by two, skinnier, taller, and stronger, of equal resolve and





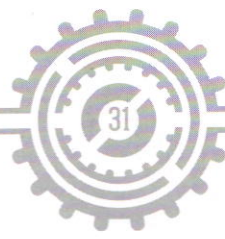
pluck. We began at around age five taking our bikes out, and seeing what's up. We saw our share of Brooklyn grid short cuts, interstate rail lines, and even the foreign areas to our east and south, where pale Yiddish ended and oddly pigmented symbol language began. Our main area of question was a desolate factory district, starting right behind our house, and continuing for a quarter of a mile, from where weird smells and strange noises wafted through our rooms in the late hours of our youth, rocking us to sleep in its cacophonous South Brooklyn embrace.

We got around with two wheels usually, two legs sometimes. We got our hands wet, dirty, sandy, and occasionally cut wide open. We yelled at open spaces, tried to catch the waves surfing away towards civilization in the distance. There were toys, but those we quickly abandoned as five became six, and seven loomed over us, a mountain of promise, a temporal passport beckoning. By ten, we had the whole

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area figured out, every element encountered and logged. We turned to speed, danger, the promise of crazy, wild, fun, no rules. We stayed out till ten, ten-thirty, riding our bikes near the edges, playing tag on the tops of cars, breaking every rule.

Our families were bound by rules, different sets, but with similar levels of focus. Theirs was the fur of Old Europe and the Pale, ours was the New American devotion, derived from Lithuania, written in new blood. We didn't pray together, didn't dress alike, but our parents seemed to think we'd make fitting neighbors, and we were here thus. My parents were slightly more permissive, allowing themselves a TV, and some sense of contemporary fashion, the latter shared with the



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mother upstairs. Downstairs was a mystery to me, a young couple with no discernable sense of anything beside their quiet disdain, borne of what passes for privilege where I grew up. Together, we three families broke none of the same rules, and a few of our choosing.



One day I destroyed the equilibrium of our three-family apartment house. Three families, close quarters, in a neighborhood where ideology was not just a potential wall, but the universe itself, and the family in middle, my family, had a matriarch whose mental state began at her whimper and ended at the front door; beyond lay chaos and smoke. Every other actor present worked hard to contain it, and her, and for some time it worked, for some time it was contained,

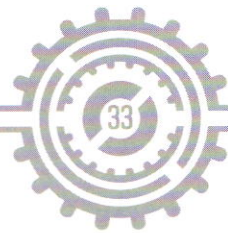


They were shocked, utterly and completely
floored by what their walls and windows
told them one day, the revelations given
through glass, plaster, and brick façade.
He was no boy, not any longer, not with
those words.



and quiet. I took my hammer to it on the day I learned that I had the choice, and thus the ability, to react to my mother's whims, and my father's dark, sometimes bloody embrace. He was one for throwing out names, punches, kicks, water, soda, saliva to the face, the body. For some time I contained all this myself as well, knowing that it happened with the partial regularity that made the idea of normalcy easier to cling to than the acceptance of terror. Then one day, I still do not remember when, I decided to do something else, make a different selection. That day I opened my mouth and broke our lives, broke my





life, made a mess, such a mess.



Avraham Shalom loved his two children very much, and he told that to them, often. They were cute; they took cute photos, photos that stuck out in his wallet aside from the cash and plastic. He spent every penny his wife left over on his kids, on Sruly, growing out of his blonde hair, from whose mind such entertaining, yet outlandish things came, and on Mendy, who waddled by, scoring on cuteness and political daring, always getting himself a reasonable cut. He loved his two children, and he loved his wife, and together they all conspired to make his life a living hell. This is how he put it, and he put it out there often, as much as would come out of him. He felt sandwiched, dependent on his parents, beholden to a wife that would rattle him, bones and all, and children, increasingly loud, ever more attentive to the attractions of the toys Toy“R”Us so helpfully advertised in those weekend circulars, circulars he thought he told his kids they couldn’t bring in on the Sabbath, a clear violation.

He won’t forget the first time his firstborn told him to die, told him to go fuck himself, told him that it would be better if a bus fell on him, and his skeleton was crushed, and his life made no more. He remembers the boy running away from him, trying to get him to shut up, how the fuck yous and die you assholes penetrate his chest like hot rounds, like silver tipped reality checks. One moment Sruly is standing at the door to his room, one foot on red hallway carpet, the other in the children’s room green, calling him monster, bastard, nazi. Oh Jesus, the window is open, and everyone can hear. The window is open, and everyone hears. DO YOU SEE THAT YOU FUCKING STUPID KID? YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT? EVERYONE CAN HEAR YOU FUCKING CANCERSTICK, EVERYONE CAN HEAR.



The upstairs neighbors, quiet people, family people, devout people, always liked the young boy from downstairs who played with their children. He played with them all, he played with them nicely, and though he clearly was from a more lax background, he never brought in anything they were uncomfortable with, though a few words here or there never hurt. He was a good boy, and he was always welcome.

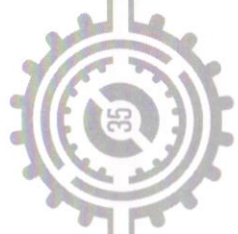
They were shocked, utterly and completely floored by what their walls and windows told them one day, the revelations given through glass, plaster, and brick façade. He was no boy, not any longer, not with those words, Those Words? Where did they come from? Who taught them to him, where did he hear these things, these disgusting things? Were they really letting him watch those horrible films downstairs, letting that into the house, and in front of small children? This is horrible, and they tell him so the next day, when he comes up to see the boys, to play. They tell him what they heard, and they ask, where? Why?

He tells them the truth as best he can, though he looks down the whole time, crying. He doesn't know where, but he won't say why. Not to them, the upstairs neighbors, and not to anyone else, not for a very long time. The why is his family's most prized possession, one that won't be given up till he truly realizes its value. Until then there is only the what, the what, a four-letter stand in, a better one than home.



I never played with my neighbors again, wouldn't go up to their house till some time later, when my father was in the hospital, and never since. Yanky, Leibe, and myself ceased our mapping of the Boro Park wilds, exchanged now only cursory glances in the thin hallway on the ground floor, holding the door for each other, avoiding eye contact. No more partners, no more running around late, for a few years at least. More nights at home, more nights in the thick haze of the living room, in the black spaces the hallway down, in the base of the el shape connecting the master bedroom with the children's. More fodder for the cannons, more breaking for the broken. The neighbors down the block hear about us, and our loud, alien, violent noises, our intrusions into their life, and the way of it. We are now more evenly matched with the dirty orange and gray factories outside our back porch, our only close neighbors now, emanating smoke, clanging in cold South Brooklyn nights. They howl, they howl and shriek, they always have, and now we sing together. I learn another four-letter word, one sadder than the rest, one word for my new life after the screams. Now every day and every night I sit in my room, I hear my parents shout, the buildings moan, and night after night I choose one partner, and we duet.





Options

Mati Engel · Digital Photography





Return of the Child

Hannah Rozenblat

Trudging back with the sunset
The streets seem silent
Not recognizing to welcome
The wandering child with upturned face
Weary eyes gazing at the dark house
A lone light emanating from the second story
Not in welcome but in accusation
Of the child who wished to escape
The child returning defeated
To a house that does not know to welcome
The child approaching it silently
Not knowing how to greet it
How to reply to its accusations
Wondering when the summer roses grew around it
If it had really been that long
Quietly entering through the back door.

By the Way

Arel Kirshstein

I think I'm gay.
There's not much more to say.
It's honestly no big deal:

I'm still the same person
with whom you bustled in steamy
kitchens of platonic love. Back then,

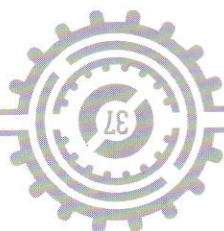
I thought I loved how your cheeks
burned red from our flurry to and fro,
near our oven's fire. Back then,

You hated the turmeric
turning hands yellow, but I loved
its rich semblance of saffron

against simmered tomato. Back then,
your long black curly hair,
unevenly dusted white

with powdery flour, caught
specks of sticky dough. Back then,
your feminine almond eyes

were the only eyes I could see;
except now they do nothing for me,
but bud the occasional almond tree.



On the Corner of the Lower East Side

Hannah Dreyfus

To her childhood eyes, the endless shelves of bolts and screws rising towards the ceiling seemed to stretch towards infinity. The clamorous bustle from the street outside melted and hushed as she entered the dimly lit shop, big door, cheerful bell ringing to herald her arrival, swinging shut behind her. For a moment she would stand, back pressed against the glass, the shoulders of her small silhouette rising and falling as she breathed in the musty smell of familiarity.

It was her grandfather's shop. The hardware store he had built as the child of immigrants, determined to make a country, that would never be his parents' his own. His mother, Hencia, the formidable monarch who arrived first in America, before single-handedly bringing over her ten siblings from the Old Country, helped to build the shop. She used to work behind the cash register, never too proud. A hardened happiness would pervade her demeanor, as she rustled back and forth among the aisles, ensuring everything in order. Her son had built this shop—*her son*.

Her son, Avraham, was the eldest. He did not remember the Old Country, the tiny town in Poland from whence his family had come in the early 1900's, determined to escape the impenetrable gray and monotony of the old ways. Prepared for change and chance they came, hearing the same tale of streets paved with gold that had fallen on many a less able-bodied and sharp-minded ear. When they reached the crowded streets, pounding with the roar of commerce and merchants rolling pushcarts, pulsating with grime and raw ambition, they never once looked back. As ugly, as crowded, as riling the conditions, there was life in this new country. Life and reason to start anew, room to build. On the crowded, dirty streets where he played as a little boy, weaving in and out through the humming pushcarts and bodies, Avraham imbibed the rhythm of this new life. Learned the enlightened language his parents would only ever speak with hard, awkward edges.

He married a woman who, beautiful and wealthy as she was, could never fully hide the humble roots from which she too had come, though she tried with admirable persistence. Though she had been born in this glorious land, her parents still spoke that outlandish





tongue, Yiddush. They still clung, with childlike dogmatism, to the traditions that followed them like a shadow from the Old Country. Her mother still wore a rag upon her head, still abashed at the thought of revealing her hair in public. Her father still kept his prayer shawl and phylacteries high up in a mahogany cabinet; if not often used, always revered.

When she did walk in on him, sometimes, wrapped in the white shawl, the peculiar black boxes of the phylacteries perched upon his forehead and arms, his head would be resting in his hands. He was bent over, pressing down hard on his temples. In those moments, she knew he was remembering the old days, mourning their irreversible loss. In pink ballet flats she would rush away from the glass doors, her

When they reached the crowded streets, pounding with the roar of commerce and merchants rolling pushcarts, pulsating with grime and raw ambition, they never once looked back.

father never knowing she saw.


But she was not a remnant of that past. It was not her past. She had no memories—not even the hazy, childhood reveries—of that country. For she, the child of immigrants born in a New Land, had nothing but the present; a present she was determined to make her own.

She married him, admiring his ambition and drive, perhaps. Or was it his willingness to be molded in her steel hands—his willingness to forget if she told him to forget.


Except for the moments that defied forgetting. On the morning of

Yom Kippur, he brought his one son (and they had only one son—she had neither patience nor time for more) to synagogue, and he stood beside his father, who looked up towards the Heavens and asked God to forgive a weak man.

Their little boy, Bert, grew up; their two requests—to forget and to remember—struggling as ferociously in his heart as Jacob and Esau in their mother's womb. The heir to his father's business and



And, silently, beneath a white prayer shawl, he would turn his eyes upward and plead that God forgive a weak man.



his mother's fortune, he was expected to expand the hardware business, a task he dutifully and successfully performed, opening a manufacturing branch in Brooklyn, to be passed down to his son. A successful, sprawling business bloomed out of the small store, once filled with nuts and bolts, tucked into a corner of the Lower East Side.

The little girl who would come to her grandfather's shop on the Lower East Side on a Sunday morning was Bert's little girl. His youngest. She would go with her father, hand-in-hand, long, light brown braids swinging down her back, to stand behind the counter, small heart filling with pride at the importance of the small tasks she was given. Afterwards, she would go with her father to Ratner's, the famous kosher dairy restaurant on the Lower East Side, to order a large bowl of soup, served with steaming roll. While she grew up in a home, bereft of tradition, this became tradition.

But there was one more tradition her father refused to cede. He would always bring his little girl, like his father had brought him, to services on a Yom Kippur morning. And, silently, beneath a white prayer shawl, he would turn his eyes upward and plead that God forgive a weak man.



Map of Self

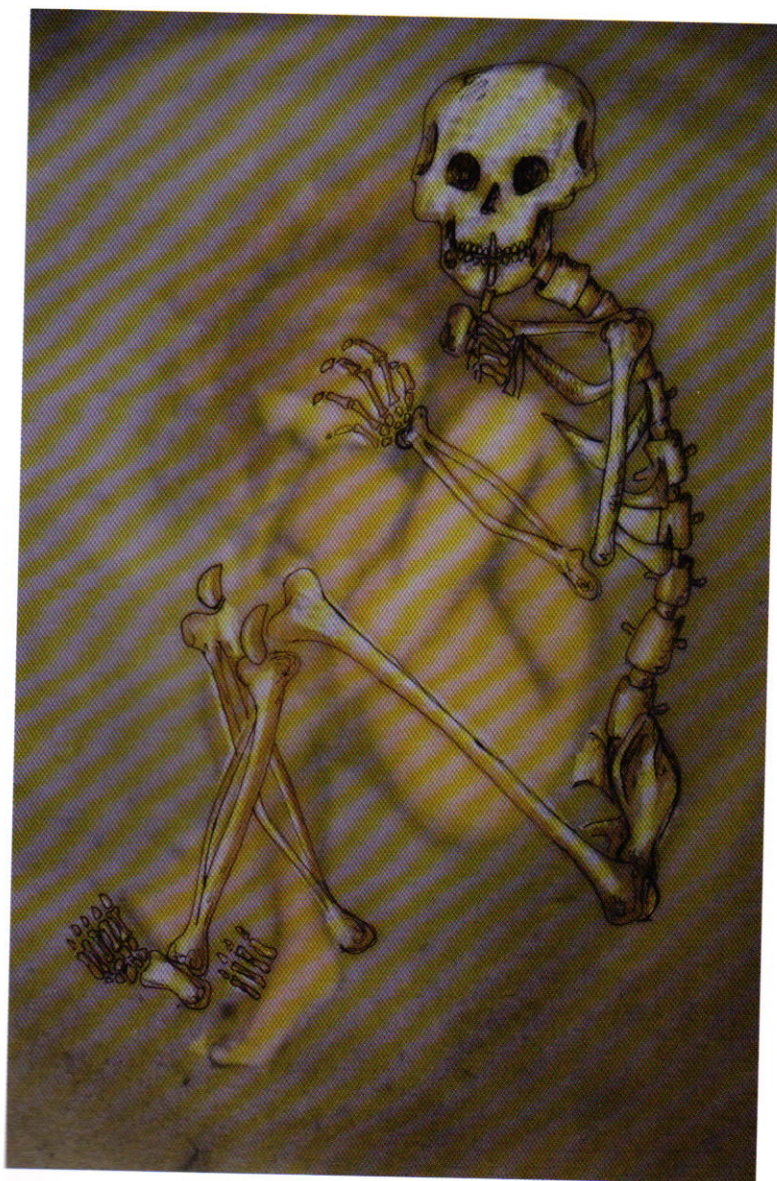
Yaël Roberts · 12" x 20" · Lithography and Linoleum on paper



Dream Sequence

Mia Guttman · 9" x 12"

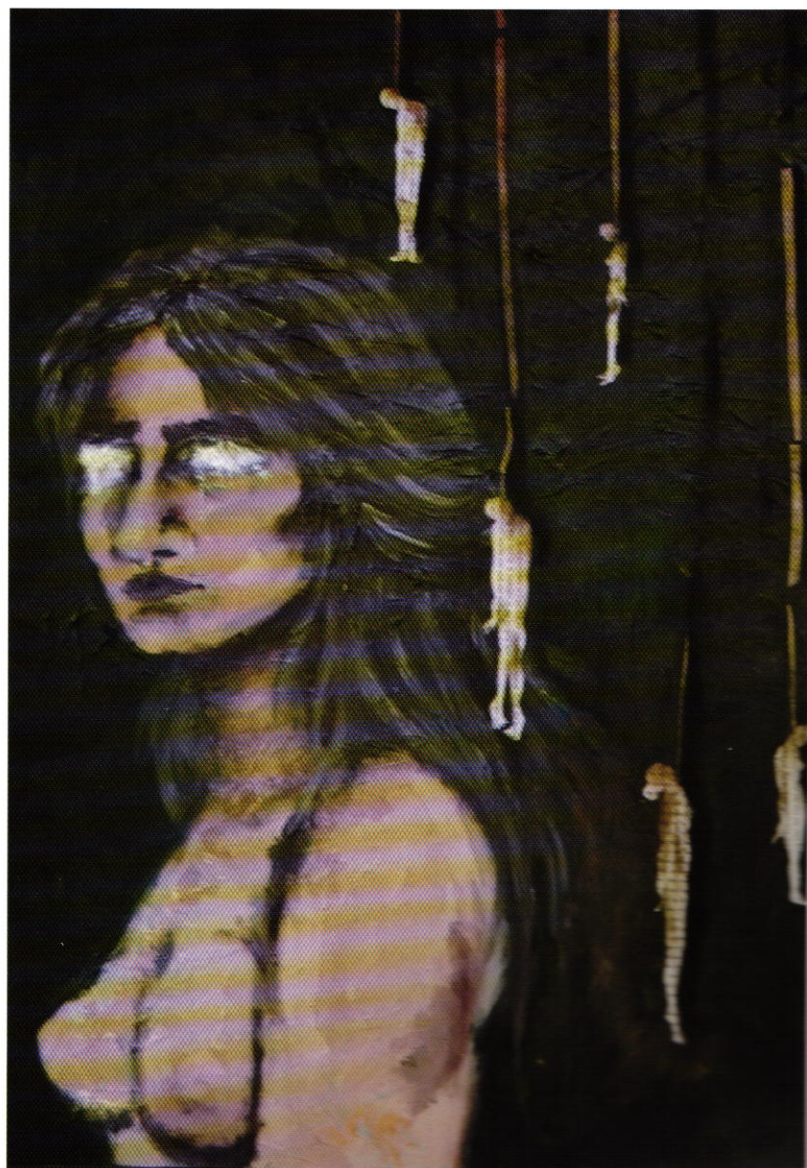
Pencil, crayon, ink, and white charcoal on paper





Dream Sequence

Mia Guttman • 12" x 16" • Oil on canvas

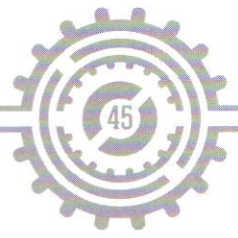




Light

Aimee Rubenstein · Digital Photography





The Average Jew

Esther O'Campo

The Average Jew
Didn't hear about it in school
He cried through the obligatory
English class reading of Night
But not out of shock
Because he knew what was coming

The Average Jew
Hasn't learned the commentaries about
Ishmael and Sarah and "mitzachek"
But he's learned people make fun of him
For not laughing at Nazi jokes
Because G-d forbid someone have the chutzpah to say
That in the 21st century murder still isn't funny

The Average Jew
May have met a survivor
May have taken his kids to see one
In a museum or at a nursing home
Because he knows these people are mortal
But chances are he's read at least one memoir
Because he knows books aren't

The Average Jew
Has a large working vocabulary
Of words he can't even pronounce
Like Majdanek and Sobibor
Chelmno and Theresienstadt and Dachau
Sonderkommando and Einsatzgruppen and Judenrein

And when the Average Jew
Talks about "the camps"
He doesn't mean for summer in upstate New York

"The war" doesn't mean Revolutionary,
Civil, or of 1812
And "before" or "after" it
Are significant in terms of millions
Alive or dead

The Average Jew
Cannot escape the connotations
Cannot blunt the sensitivity
He watches a movie that shows
Human skeletons piled into mountains
And is assaulted by a kind of visceral
Tearing nausea
So in Rwanda the bodies had black skin
So?
He knows that picture

The Average Jew
Would like nothing more than
To erase, to forget
To sanitize history for his own comfort
Would like to be more like the
Average Gentile
Who doesn't have quite so much sanitizing to do

But he is incapable of pretending
That his great-great-grandfather, or his
Wife's third cousin or his
Best friend's mother's older sister's
Husband's great aunt's brother
Died peacefully in his sleep like he should have

We must all try to forgive the Average Jew his weakness
That he cannot be other enough
To say look, it wasn't me
It wasn't anyone I knew personally...

Which, c
Favored
By their
Who nev
While yo

But if no
It was al
And ther
Is it that

"To my i
"Who sa
You thin
And say
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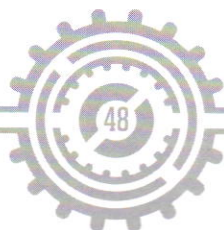
The Ave
Because
And his
And he'

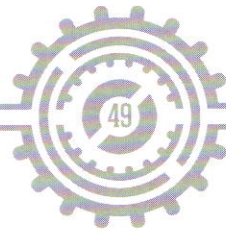


Say Something

Daniel Goldberg

We stand together, our bodies close. I don't know your name and you don't know mine. Neither of us care, and why should we? In five or ten or twelve minutes we'll be out of each other's lives, you a little poorer. The people around us don't care to look at us either. They, like you, are simply on their way home from work, just taking the train, like you. I like the A-Train because it rocks more, juts more, and stops short more. It gives me the chance to get to know your life. I take your things—my dinner—from your pockets. Pockets lined with fur. Pockets full of sand and lint. My hands are gentle and swift. They wait for the short stop, the jerking of our bodies forward and then they're in. I'm in your life, for a moment. I feel the small note that you left for yourself: "dentist aptmnt on wed at 7 " or "call Erin." I poke myself on the toothpick from your steak lunch, and I try hard not to jingle the six keys on the key ring, which opens the door to your warm home where your loving and anxious wife is already cancelling your credit cards. Don't worry I'm not stupid. I take cash only and the pictures. But it's not about the money or even the pictures. Usually I don't find either. You have two or four or six pockets and I get just one shot to guess where you keep what I need. I don't take phones. I have no use for phones. Usually, I get nothing, nothing except the warmth, of course. And it is all about the warmth. Not just the body warmth that accumulates in your silk pockets but the warmth of the stuff that makes you, you, the warmth of the million things that make you not me. The warmth of your life that burns and kindles the every step that you take: to and from work, to and from church and your son's baseball game. I can feel it. You carry it all day and everywhere. Even when you have no pockets to carry it, you carry it. And when my hand rides ever so slowly into the pocket of your life I can feel it and know you're alive and know it deeper than anyone else on the train and I love that, and for that pained moment I feel the ecstasy that pulses through wrong, through vice, and through hurt. When I pull out, even with my next five meals secured, I'm always disappointed. I've been in your life and you have no clue, you never will. I feel cheap. I feel used up. Maybe someday, next to my dead





or decaying body, wrapped in the denim jacket I always knew would become my burial shroud, you will find this hopeful letter, and that will have some value to someone, maybe. People have terms for what I am, but when you look at me you can't tell any of that. You pretend not to see me at all. But you do. You see me. I know you see me. You must see me because we hold each other's glance a little longer than we should. I never shy away from these exchanges even though I suppose they could get me into trouble. Now your eyes are towards the windows watching the graffitied subway walls, wondering how anyone could have stood there to spray them, or why anyone would want to, or whether you remembered to bring home all three pieces of Tupperware from the office. Your wife always nags you to bring home the Tupperware. Your mind drifts between whole thoughts and the

You pretend not to see me at all. But you do. You see me. I know you see me. You must see me because we hold each other's glance a little longer than we should.

violate green hum of thoughtlessness. Your thoughts are wholesome and flat, not robust thoughts, they are fresh and real, mundane and good. You never considered re-smoking a found cigarette. You've only smoked once in your life—hated it. I smile condescendingly but for no good reason. My life is no realer than yours; it's just real different. Different real. Badder real, I guess. I finally get the jerking stop I need, and everything happens in slow motion. Every head on the train bobbles in unison with a choreographed perfection that can only be achieved unknowingly. I see it. No one else ever does. My right hand rises to the level of your pocket. My body is flung up against yours. My index and middle fingers extend down into your left pant pocket. I clasp your frayed leather wallet, and then I linger

just long enough to learn that you never leave home without telling your wife you love her, ever, and that your son inherited your terrible eyesight. Then as our bodies pull back into our initial positions, I slide your personal pocket shrine into my life. Your eyes quickly turn to mine as your eyebrows tighten to make a crescent in the center of your face. Your thick and unmuscular left hand slowly rises to feel the lump in your pocket. Only there is none. You nervously check your right pocket, then your butt pockets, then your jacket pockets: nothing. Only one other pair of pockets to check: mine. You know I robbed you, but not the kind of knowing that you act on, or, at least



When I pull out, even with my next
five meals secured, I'm always
disappointed. I've been in your life
and you have no clue, you never
will. I feel cheap. I feel used up.



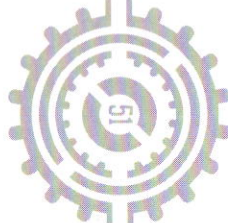
not the kind of knowing that *you* act on. After all, maybe you dropped it, or left it at work. Then again you felt something, and I do look desperate, with sad, wide eyes carrying the mark of a hundred nights sobbed to sleep on a damp concrete floor. But you still don't *know*. I don't cower from your indignant stare. With shaky hesitation you ask me "have you seen my wallet," which you immediately regret asking. What a terrible way to approach the situation Thomas H. Fenton of 434 Truman Road, Riverdale New York. So terribly weak. I don't even respond. If you think I took your stuff, say it like a man Thomas H! How are you going to tell your wife, Caroline M. Sloan-Fenton, about this? Say something! The conductor's muffled voice announces 181st street, the train slows and the doors open. Goodbye Thomas H. I miss you already.



Nostalgia

Aimee Rubenstein

Unconscious Satisfaction
tastes like afternoon breakfast
With memories for dessert
Like looking at ceilings
Because they are more similar to our hearts than we
realize
Just follow the lines
Because life is just over
Compensating.






Super Skinny

Evan Schwarzbaum

black and long and tight and smooth
and tight.
the seams are sewn the zipper up the button through
the hole.
slide your fingers down wrinkles
wrinkle out.
hold you like she does
at night
wrapped around an ankle a calf an
upper thigh.
not so fast not there not yet
not now.
peel them down from waist to hips to knee
to toe
you just can't wear them out tonight.
but why
if jeans make the man a man's man
you'll be.
but no you shan't you can't you won't
for if
you wear them out tonight
those jeans will wear you
out.



Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into **something rich and strange**.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! Now I hear them—Ding-dong, bell.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 1, scene 2, lines 397-405.