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Contents

1 Generation . . . REBECCA LESNIK
2 On Construction . . . RONIT KIRCHMAN
4 Photograph . . . WHITNEY LAWSON
5 My Fallen Sweet . . JOSHUA KAMENSKY
11 Photograph . . LILA SUBRAMANIAN
12 Afternoon . . . RONIT KIRCHMAN
13 Drawing . . COURTNEY MILLER
14 De Consolation . . SUSAN KIM
16 Photographs . . SHIRA WEINERT
18 2 translations . . PETER MORRIS
20 Drawing . . DANIEL FILLER
21 Beethoven’s Boots . . YOAV GRUNSTEIN
29 Photograph . . DARIA MARTIN
30 Print . . CLAYTON MERRELL
31 Africanisms . . SERENA PARKER
33 Photograph . . YOAV GRUNSTEIN
34 Drawing . . DANIEL FILLER
35 Kalaloch . . RACHEL DILWORTH
36 Photograph . . SARAH RAFF
37 While Richard Slept . . ISAAC CATES
39 Photograph . . ELIZABETH RANDALL
40 Photograph . . TIMOTHY MCCORMICK
41 Jonathan Leaves the Gay Life . . PETER BORN
47 Drawing . . DANIEL HISEL
48 3 Video Stills . . HEATHER MARIE VERNON
56 No Icarus . . . SONYA B. POSMENTIER

Cover: preliminary drawing, “Library of Babel,” by Daniel Hisel
The house speaks uncertainly of collapse;  
We're surprised that something so solid should  
Creak beneath the weight—of what? Just winter.  
No, there is another word for vacancy;  
This sudden chill, as of a touch withdrawn,  
Has left us reaching for the name of death,  
Reaching for the name we might have chosen  
And finding it weeks from now, scrawled across  
A page—how unwise to have written it.  
Words fail; they fall through our cradling fingers  
To blanket the grave and barren soil.  
No one expects to live beyond the child.  
Not wanting the contrast that color brings,  
We wish for a white and eternal freeze;  
But nothing stops: the fey lilies push up  
From the thaw; the islands of earth expand;  
Hated carpenter bees hover under  
Eaves, a steady mist of sawdust on leaves  
The windswept sign of their hidden routine.  
And the sound of them chewing chewing through  
Sweet pine reminds us that there's always time  
To excavate another room, to build  
A wooden womb of nest within the walls.

Rebecca Lesnik
There was once a building here which seemed articulate in its own right, its own architect; with pieces gathered from physics it assembled something real, a real idea coming clear out of construction, perfect, and present not in the reenactments of memory [what did it look like, anyway?] but in the one Moment which one knows must be the one for it passes. In comparison, we are hopelessly inarticulate, debased creatures of complexity, slaves to memory and its minutiae, and to the blind ticking of timepieces which wind away attention from the proper construction, and ever so much more real.

But apparently you want to talk about something real. Like those times we fought hard and won something sometimes. [You struggle for the proper construction, realizing right now that I feel articulate by comparison.] Or when we gathered scrap pieces and made.... exactly what slips your memory.

You keep remembering still because your memory keeps you from losing your sense of what’s real, while I oppositely fear mine: when pieces remembered and real seem so similar, one loses a sense of which, and cannot articulate what the difference is between one and the other construction.
We both remember that elaborate construction
which we built together once from scraps of memory
in an effort to remember something neither of us could articulate—
for once it seemed both perfect and real—.
That's because we were in love, and to us as to everyone
in love, small works seemed masterpieces.

Now it seems we've fallen to pieces,
not even ruins of the original construction,
haunted ourselves with faint feelings which one
by last one passionlessly abandon memory,
not like ghosts: unreal,
and, faced with remembering absence, inarticulate.

Really, it's time we abandoned these pieces
of inarticulate memory. No reconstruction
will ever tell us what we were when we thought we were one.

Ronit Kirchman
Whitney Lawson
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

4 ~ The Yale Literary Magazine
The banquet was, in a word, sumptuous and elegant; the chandelier cast rainbows over the canard, and the salad was sculptured. Chad had come with Delilah, who, in between each course, would smile discreetly at the ceiling, as if to cue an angel hiding in the high rafters. Delilah was magnificent. She wore an emerald brooch and a pink corsage; she could fly by steepling her hands and furrowing her brow; and she was a top shareholder in a major pharmaceutical company.

After the dessert the Ambassador from Greece keeled over dead, his face turning purple, his chest sunk. "Betrayal!" shouted Chad, grabbing a rapier from above the mantel and driving it through the uncleared duck.

"Resistance is useless," said the Ambassador from Poland. "The poison should consume the infidels within minutes. I would enjoy the sorbet."

"You'll get no such Mephistophelean satisfaction from me," proclaimed Chad. He jumped up to the chandelier, skinned-the-cat, kicked the Ambassador from Lithuania in the chest. "Revenge shall be mine!"

"But, if I may inquire discreetly, and not without a little sarcasm, and in order that I may fully understand your curious \[and somewhat barbaric\] motivations, how do you intend to find out who the plotters are, and who the innocents?" rejoined the Ambassador from Poland. "Yes, really," said the First General, "I should not at all like to be slaughtered were I not part of the poisoning group, the 'antagonisti,' if you will pardon the phrase,"

"—Indubitably," coughed the fallen Ambassador from Lithuania.

"It's quite simple, really," explained Chad, who had by this time eviscerated the Colonel from Andalusia, "simple process of elimination. We can assume, one, from the historical
tradition of the Slavonic feast, at which invited kinsmen were slowly poisoned amid toast and drunken song, as well as from the grand pomposity of our host M. Crnkovicz, that there is no middle ground, that those unpoisoned are poisoners. Two, we can safely say that the poison is universally fatal, and that no anti-dote will be supplied, as that would undercut the unpardonable heinousness with which this affair has been conducted. Therefore, we either all \[a\] will die or \[b\] ought to die. Q.E.D.; I shall then kill every living man in this room.”

“Bravo!” exclaimed in unison the Ambassador from Greece and the Representative of the Sioux Nation behind him, as Chad’s rapier pierced their parallel hearts, a shishkebab of diplomacy.

“Your logic is formidable,” concluded the Ambassador from Poland, “and your skill is great. I shall fight by your side, if you shall allow me.”

“To arms!” they shouted.

This was Chad’s greatest mistake.

Modern society has brought with it many benefits as well as many drawbacks. Today it is the custom to kill one’s father and marry one’s mother, unless one is female, of course. This has resulted in the waste of a lot of perfectly upstanding young women, Daughters of the American Revolution, who are perhaps made love to once or twice as adolescents but eventually consigned to the scrapheap of spinsterdom. It has also resulted in a corrosion of the gene pool, and a de facto system of primogeniture. At the onset of a generation’s menopause, when mothers cease to produce the X chromosomes of their own great-grandchildren, there is a revolution, and the pendulum can swing: it has been the fashion, as recently as thirty years ago, for one \[female\] to kill one’s mother and marry one’s father, and at other times for one to go to college, marry someone of distant genes from the English department of that or a nearby school \[if one’s alma mater is not co-ed\], get a job with room for corporate ascension, and have 1.8 children and a puppy, Rex, Fido, or Rover. These were the best of times and also the worst of times.

Dickens is undervalued by our society. His unpublished collection of essays, My Fallen Sweet, are at once both compelling, romantic, and Sophoclean. One ought to read them; one ought never to switch the conversation to Great Expectations or, still worse, James’s Portrait of a Lady.
Later, in the anteroom, putting on his coat, Chad pondered his mistake. "The Ambassador from Poland was never on my side," he said. "Accepting his offer was like the United States' sale of arms to Iraq in the late twentieth century," he said, using 'simile'.

Delilah shimmied, and her undulating brooch cast a green eyepatch over Chad's left eye, the good one. Delilah had flown above the room during the carnage, swooping down at opportune moments to take seconds on the sorbet. This is what she saw, played again in her mind for your limited, weak third person vantage:

"To arms!" shouted Chad and his compatriot, the Ambassador from Poland. Chad hopped about the long pine table, china crunching beneath his NKVD-issue black boots. Snarling, pushing down his eyebrows, killing the assembled dignitaries from the Assembled Diplomats of the Modern World, shouting slogans of faltered political movements. The Ambassador from Poland watched as the finest protocol masters of his generation took their dying blows, some of which came just in time to bypass the painful surprise of the taint he had administered to the red wine only an hour earlier. He devilled, he villained, toxically.

With his feet planted firmly in the carrot mold, Chad spun, the point of his rapier pressed against his chin thoughtfully, with each rotation lowered an inch or two, two and a half. As the radius of a spinning object increases, its moment of inertia decreases, enabling the object to spin even faster. This is bad physics but good action. The tall whorl accelerated; carrot flew, spattered the walls a sick orange. Out of the spin pointed the sharp rapier; it extended, and invited the heads of the four Ambassadors seated centermost at the table to join its rotational velocity, and they spun off, ruined tuxedos, startled the help.

The Captain of the Mayflower wept and prayed. The fate of his flesh was sealed and apparent; the fate of his eternal soul was also known, only not to him. He felt fulfilled, as if he was Doing His Part. His soul, peaceful, met Death gracefully. His body was ravaged by the point of Chad's weapon. The coffins were necessarily closed.

Delilah, hovering in the rafters, sang out a song of victory. Every man in the room was dead, with the single exception of Chad and Crnkovicz, the Ambassador from Poland. Chad breathed a sigh of relief. Delilah drifted down into his arms. They kissed. The ambassador watched, envious that he neither was nor had a woman like Delilah.

"Ah, how sweet, how human," intoned the Ambassador. "What you have forgotten, my young
friends, is that I was your chief enemy from the start. Although your logic was infallible—everyone in
the room who did not poison the dignitaries was himself poisoned—you made one tactical error: you
accepted me, the architect of the plot, and indeed the only poisoner of the group \[a revelation which
does not harm your logic in the slightest\], as an ally.” The Ambassador, grinning with mustached
sadism, drew from behind his back a large hook. “I shall impale you presently.”

A skirmish ensued in the redundant, violent manner of such things; only the savoir faire with
which it was carried out deserves mention, and not a word for the details. Truth lies in the details. So
there they were, two dinosaurs, advocates of a dead era, hapless prey to the tar pits, thrusting, parry-
ing, engaging the enemy, seizing the day. A bow, a smile, a tour jeté; these were their semaphore
flags, the language with which their bodies claimed water rights in the desert of history. They had
that rhythm thing, that cool, clean oceanic feeling. This was about texture. It ended when blood was
drawn and Crnkovicz’s pale head \[of course\] lay in the carrot mold, not unhappy, just another
fragment.

“It is too bad,” mused Chad, “that these dances must end so messily.”

“You ought to have run him through the heart,” sympathized Delilah.

“Custom demands,” answered Chad, and he hung the rapier back over the mantle.

We just can’t get this out of our head: Why wasn’t Delilah engaged in the melee, or struck
down by the poison? By Chad’s own deduction, shouldn’t she have been killed, either because of poison
or vengeful action? Equally disturbing is Chad’s situation. Had he no logical imperative to cut his own
throat? The story, it seems, is not tight, nor well-administered.

First, let us deal with the most immediate of problems: if the Ambassador poisoned everyone at
the banquet, why is neither Delilah nor Chad dead by now of poison?

For Chad, the answer is quite simple: his metabolism is highly resistant to poisons of all but the
most virulent and exotic types. He will not feel the effects of the drug \[a derivative of deadly night-
shade\] until long past his prime, at which point memory’s weakness will preclude immediate and rele-
vant treatment.

For Delilah, the answer is more involved. Poisoners are often liars, too: a man needs more than
one trade to survive in this increasingly complex and incoherent world. The Ambassador from Poland
had an accomplice in his evil deed, and it was Delilah. One does not learn to fly without surrendering
a certain portion of one’s goodness. He poured the poison, she worked the ticket booth. They spiraled flirtatiously, never catching up to that mutual pursuit, obscure in the clouds. It was not love at first sight, only craving; it burned itself up, up, and out.

But those were superficial answers to unimportant questions. The situation begs this analysis: Why didn’t we demand both of their deaths? Logic certainly did. We made allowances for Chad because he was our hero, and we have precious few of those these days, and we made allowances for Delilah because she is a woman, and we do not wish to see women hurt in any way, as they are so precious.

Chad is unaware that he has an assassiness for his help-meet. Delilah does not think this should come between their relationship, so she will never tell him. They will go on holiday in one of the next few episodes. Hopefully they will join us in the Valley. But they had better hurry. Soon the tarantulas will migrate into the Valley, and then we will be asked to leave; but we will not mind, because the perfection of their landlubbing 'V'-formation will present a gift irrefuseable in its simple, decadent holism.

Delilah will not kiss me. I knew her, she was a kind senior sorority girl to an unlikable disaster of a freshman, at the University of Scranton in Scranton, Pennsylvania. We were in Aesthetics 201 together. I did not know how to dress then, and the teacher drew cruel satisfaction from making an example of me. Delilah walked with me after class through the cold streets of Scranton. We made fun of the proles together. We talked like undergraduates, and when we came to one of those urban oil-prism reflective puddles in the crosswalk next to the Salvation Army, she sauntered into the store, I gazed at the petroleum rainbows discarded by errant autos, and she came back out with a ten-dollar trench coat, London Fog, no lining. With chivalric timing she threw it over the puddle. It floated like an island. As we trod over the textile bridge, it sank slowly into the swamp, and our white ankle-high socks were black with grime when we reached the middle of the intersection.

Elisabeth will not kiss me, either. She is spending the summer abroad, in Indonesia, exploiting the natives. It is an exchange program, run by her college, Drew University in northern New Jersey. While she is away, an Indonesian will live with her family and run an environmentally irresponsible pharmaceutical firm. She is very excited.

The first time I met Elisabeth, she surprised me with her literacy and her zeal. She told me I
was not the first boy who tried to kiss her hand by way of introduction, nor would I be the last whom she had kicked in the groin for doing so.

Later, outside a auto-body shop, she told me of her origins. "I'm a pink-neck. My father was white trash, my mother was a redneck."

She said, "Do you know anyone of pure breeding?"

And I? I could not answer. I did not. I wept in her lap.

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Joshua Kamensky
Today is strangely ripe for mid-September:
The sky sweats on the stone, and rivers run
Through every pore. Expectant doors and windows
Open wide like the jaws of a panting dog.
The people lying naked in their rooms
Pull at their own skins: it’s shedding time.
At noon each one dreams of the giant fruit
Of the world, peels it raw, and strips away
The skin, exposing heat and meat and need,
as if desirous of the seed, and unashamed.
This is the last and only day of summer,
Of what the summer promises to be,
And cannot be: a moment bursting into madness
Out of youth before the autumn hardens.

Ronit Kirchman
Courtney Miller
CHARCOAL DRAWING, 15 X 22
"You are in despair," Lady Philosophy said to Boethius, "because you have forgotten what you are."

As if, she continued, there were a way to be certain of your uncertainty: as if it were the meaning of the passing scene, the prisoners' grave poses, each an echo of another's pose. As if despair were the only home you could live in. Remember that no home is anyone's, for long: even the deepest pain washes away in time, like blood from a wound, and the loss you suppose is yours, you will lose as well. Do not be certain you are yourself. The sentences that you engrave your soul into are not stone. Their passing may grieve you; but passing must become a home, not a grave, one your voice will know the way back to at all times. Uncertain of who you will become, why do you propose meanings that will fail you once you change? Others impose nothing on the passing moment; they merely move through it with a certain sublime readiness. And home, for them, is this way of moving. Do you think it's too grave
a recompense—that uncertainty may be the grave
of despair, but it will also decompose
every other house, every possible way
of passing
through life without ending it? Perhaps, yet a home
constructed of certain
tough elements—cement, iron, stone—is no more certain
a shelter against doubt than doubt itself. In this grave-
like prison, which is your home
for now, you try to oppose
what is worth noting against what is worth nothing. Passing
your life within these walls makes the difference hard to weigh.

Yes, the stone is cruel. But you are not alone in suffering from it.
It is not your right to feel outraged. Better people than you have suffered worse,
passing away, yet composed themselves, certain of no home but the grave.

Susan Kim
Shira Weinert
GOLD TONE P.O.P.
The Enemy
Charles Baudelaire

My youth was like a tempest, dark and savage
but here and there shot through by rays of sun;
the rain and thunder had performed such ravage
few flowers would remain when all was done.

So now I reach imagination's autumn
and must, with rake and shovel, work the ground
where holes like graves lie round, each at the bottom
filled still with water, overwhelmed and drowned.

And who knows if new flowers of the mind
can, on such water-scoured surface, find
the strange nutrition that sustains their blooms?

O sorrow!— Time, the enemy obscure,
devours life, empowered all the more
when it is our heart's blood that he consumes.

translated by Peter Morris
I am the Empire in its last decline
watching the blond barbarian soldiers march,
doing the crossword, indolent and arch,
as sunlight dances in a slow design.

The soul grows sick enduring boredom's length.
Down there, they say, are wars and blood and strife.
But O, had I the power to find strength,
the will to bloom at last in this dull life—

But O, had I the power or the will
to die at last— Boy, are you laughing still?
The banquet's over. Nothing more to say.

Just poems, mindless, only fit to chuck
into the flames; just servants run amok;
just apathy to what caused such decay.

translated by Peter Morris
Daniel Filler
Charcoal and oil bar drawing, 23 1/2 x 33
On top of a bouncing canvas stretcher carried by four soldiers who did not complain about the weight because of the urgency of the situation, and under a hot white sun that seemed to fill most of the clear desert sky, lay Private Beethoven. His helmet wobbled on his head as the stretcher bounced on the shoulders of the running soldiers, and it sometimes shaded and sometimes did not shade his tightly closed eyes from the sun. Under his eyelids he saw alternating bursts of orange and then purple. These were the first things he had seen since he lost consciousness.

Private Beethoven, whose real name was Bettleman, was flexing his entire body and twisting from side to side under the tight straps of the stretcher, trying to overcome the intense biting pain burning what was left of his foot. The pain seemed to shoot up his leg through his weak knees and through the sickness in his stomach, until it filled his head making it throb and swell. He kept his eyes tightly shut and could not see the sergeant's white T-shirt wrapped around his foot. He could not see it darkening into a brown red but he could feel exactly where the bullet had gone through. He thought about how his foot must look and began to moan a soft moan of pain and regret, which was broken into small bursting cries by the bouncing of the stretcher.

The young sergeant running in front of the four soldiers carrying the stretcher heard the moan and thought "Cry, cry you fucking bastard, just don't die on me." He did not turn around or stop running, although the soldiers called out to him that Beethoven was moaning. He was proud of this tough, heroic indifference, acting as if his soldiers shot themselves in the foot every week. He knew that his indifference would not be missed by the soldiers, and later, when they returned to the training ground, they would whisper to the others and he...
would once again be respected and feared by the entire platoon. But he did not know how long it would last this time.

At the moment it had happened, they had all been shocked into immobility by the noise and the blood. Although later they would joke about "that asshole Beethoven who was too smart for his own good," they had all been scared out of their wits when it had just happened. And although when the sergeant had heard the shot and had heard them calling him and had seen Beethoven lying in the sand he had at first been frightened too, this fear had turned almost to relief when he saw how helplessly the scared soldiers returned to him in their panic. One could even say that he felt good now, as he remembered how he had impressed them with his skill and experience. He had handled his initial reaction very well, even heroically, and they had all seen how he snapped into action as soon as the shot was heard. Only Beethoven did not see this because Beethoven had passed out the moment the bullet ripped through his foot and into the hard packed sand beneath it. He had not seen any of this and was only realizing what had happened now, as they approached the white dusty trail that led from the training ground back to their small camp.

When they reached the small road the sergeant stopped running and looked for the truck. He had radioed for a truck before they left and had told the driver to meet them here. He had spoken very calmly and professionally, and had appeared almost bored with the whole affair, and he knew that this too was not missed by the platoon.

He told the four soldiers to set down the moaning Beethoven by the road and ordered them to finish off one of their canteens.

"And when you're finished I want you to hold them upside-down over your heads so I can see you're finished. The last thing I need now is four dehydrated soldiers," he said, forcing an irritated tone. He also forced himself not to drink although his throat was dry and sticky from the run.

As they waited for the truck, he knelt down over Beethoven, remembering how tough he had been and how they had watched him, wide-eyed.

"Your friend shoots himself in the foot right next to you and none of you do anything, eh? I have to run down from the top of the hill in the middle of an exercise to bandage him up. What's the big deal? What have I been training you for the past month for, eh? So you can just stand there in nirvana, like scared calves?" He came from an affluent neighborhood north of Tel-Aviv, but he knew more southern Tel-Aviv slang than any of the soldiers who, with the exception of Beethoven, came from the poorer areas of the city or from southern Israel. He also shaved as seldomly as his superior officers would allow, and now a soft black fuzz covered his gentle face.
But despite this, and despite the fact that his fatigues were soft with age and baggy from so much running in places and situations that the soldiers could only wonder about, he still had problems with them. Ever since Beethoven had begun smiling at him as though they shared some secret, the other soldiers had stopped fearing him. They had started making fun of the slang he used, on his tongue their slang seemed like another language, and in their eyes he saw mockery where once he had seen a confused, fearful respect.

He told the soldiers to sit down as he poured water from his canteen into Beethoven’s mouth. He looked at him, shaking his head and lowering the corners of his mouth to show disgust. Then he looked at Beethoven’s foot, aware that the soldiers were taking in every movement he made.

“And the worst part of it is I lost another shirt,” he said, and then glanced quickly at the soldiers.

Now their faces were alert and servile as they watched him with their empty canteens raised dripping over their heads. “Sheep,” thought the sergeant and stood up over them, while Beethoven rocked from side to side in his stretcher with his teeth clenched and his eyes closed tighter than before. The sergeant looked down the white road that wound between the shallow yellow hills with his eyes narrowing as he filled them with authority. Beethoven was twisting with pain and his hands searched the sand and rocks for something to grip onto. The sergeant could hear the four soldiers whispering but he did not turn around, looking interested in the burnt yellow-brown landscape.

He remembered how this morning they had all smirked and looked at him with scorn when he gathered them together at attention and shouted at the entire platoon over the incident of Beethoven’s boots. Some even laughed stupidly when he first mentioned what had happened but Beethoven didn’t laugh. He had even stopped smiling. He had been distant ever since he had found his boots early that morning. He stood still and looked straight ahead with his wet eyes and wetter boots.

The sergeant screamed at them for what they had done until the veins bulged in his neck. He screamed that he did not understand who could have done such a thing, who could have done this to a fellow soldier? He screamed and they stood laughing and blinking in the sun. He had forced himself to use his hands when he screamed, just like the soldiers did, waving a threatening finger in someone’s face, or pursing them when he asked whether they were trying to make him really angry. But still they had only laughed. Even when he took away their weekend leave they laughed in his face. He remembered how weak he had felt when he stood in front of them, not having anything left to yell and being able only to give them a hard look while his mind raced to find a way out of this without making a weakling out of himself. He had felt a sharp despair at his powerlessness and knew that
nobody else could help him, that Beethoven’s boots were just the beginning.

The sergeant now winced when he remembered how they laughed, when, having run out of insults, he shouted “Hooligans!” at them. He had not known that this was the exact word Beethoven had used when earlier, in the darkness of that morning, he had woken and discovered the shit in his boots.

When the sergeant shouted “Hooligans!” at them Beethoven had suddenly shouted “Yes! Hooligans!” and although the sergeant yelled at him to shut up, the entire platoon burst out laughing and would not quiet down for a long time. The damage was done.

Only moments before, in the training ground, they had refused to obey any of his orders and had told him to “ask nicely.” He remembered the familiar feeling of loneliness that he felt out in the desert with those rough, sweating, mocking faces staring back at him. These animals, these bastards who could shit in someone’s boots and laugh about it, had stared at him and laughed at him as they would laugh at some small bird they had trapped, amused at its helplessness.

But now things had changed again, and he began to admire himself in the same way he imagined they did. The four dark, unshaven soldiers still sat with empty canteens raised over their heads, and this pleased him. He motioned for them to let the canteens down. He looked down at Beethoven’s twisted face. It still had a softness that irritated the sergeant, a softness that could only have come from the serenity of an eighteen-year childhood, from compliments and praises whenever he succeeded in some high-school exam, from feeling worried-about whenever he came home later than expected, from knowing someone else would solve his problems for him whenever he could not, or did not want to.

Now his smooth face was covered with muddy streaks where tears had mixed with dust, but it was still lighter than the hard faces of the soldiers behind him. The sergeant looked at the wetness left by the tears and remembered how Beethoven had not been ashamed to cry in front of him and how this had disgusted him.

Beethoven had been coming to his tent every night after lights-out. He would stand with his sad, smooth face and with his dark fatigue still on. They were stiff and wrinkled behind the knees. Beethoven always stood with his knees slightly bent and this was what had first drawn the platoon’s attention to him. Every night, while the others slept and dreamt dreams that were not much different from the events that had happened during the day, Beethoven stood in the blue desert moonlight outside the sergeant’s pup-tent with his knees bent, calling “Sir? . . . Sir? . . . Sir? . . .” until the sergeant crawled out of his tent cursing, Beethoven complained that he was being tortured.
"Tortured" was the pathetic, self-pitying word he had used. He said that the others were stealing his equipment and playing malicious pranks on him and making fun of his knees and of the sophisticated words he sometimes used. He said they had begun calling him "Beethoven" because when someone had asked him who his favorite singer was, he had answered that he did not like songs or singers, and his favorite composer was Mozart. So they called him Beethoven.

The sergeant had laughed and had tried to put as much authority as he could behind the line about the army being a melting-pot and everybody having to give a little and make compromises, and about how he should just try to fit in, this was the infantry and he was a foot soldier and he should get used to that, and these men would be his family for the next three years so he had better try to get along with them, etc., etc. Beethoven had cried out, "But why should I pretend to be stupid?" And the sergeant had replied that in his eyes they were all stupid until they finished basic training and even a little after that, and he had felt his ears burning as he said this because he remembered when and where he had heard it before.

"You don't understand me either," said Beethoven, and that was when he began crying.

"I understand you, Bettleman, so stop crying. You're a goddamn soldier now. Beethoven is a lousy name for you, you're much too miserable and self-pitying. If they had any brains in their heads they would have called you Schumann."

And at this Beethoven had smiled his sad smile, and from then on he smiled at the sergeant whenever he saw him. It was a smile of conspiracy, of collusion, and the sergeant was disgusted to think that Beethoven considered him a friend or a saviour. No amount of shouting or punishment or ridicule could erase the sad, knowing smile Beethoven wore whenever he saw him, and that was when he had begun to lose the platoon. They had noticed immediately. God knew what they were thinking. The sergeant cursed Beethoven, he made fun of the rich suburb that Beethoven came from, told him that now he did not have his mommy to help him anymore. Yet whenever Beethoven ran or stood at attention or even when he chewed his food, he wore his sad smile. He was never seen without it until this morning, when he woke up with shit in his boots. At morning inspection he had not smiled. He had stood in his socks, his boots by the opening of his tent where he had found them, and explained what had happened with tears in his eyes.

The sergeant now looked at Beethoven's one boot. It was new, but scratched and dusty and still damp, and had been flattened and widened by a month of running until it looked like a slab of soft, black clay that had fallen on the ground. Beethoven's other boot lay back at the training ground. Part of it had been blown away when Beethoven had quietly walked a few yards away from the others,
placed the muzzle of his M-16 softly on his toes, and pulled the trigger. The rest of it lay in pieces where the sergeant had sliced it in half with the razor blade he kept beneath the wide rubber band on his helmet. He had then pulled off his T-shirt and wrapped it around what was left of Beethoven’s foot. He had also wound a tourniquet around his ankle and he now smiled as he imagined how impressive he must have looked, bare-chested, winding a tourniquet around a wounded soldier’s foot.

“None of you men could help him, eh? You just fuckin’ sat there like calves in nirvana. I had to leave three soldiers in the middle of an exercise, run down the hill and take care of it myself, eh?”

The sergeant cursed in Arabic. The accent was wrong, but nobody laughed. A fly landed on Beethoven’s foot and walked along the bloody T-shirt, and it was then that the sergeant began to worry about the truck.

“Fucking army drivers.”

The soldiers laughed nervously and nodded, also noticing the fly. Beethoven began to whine “Help me, help me, oh god help me. It hurts…” And the sergeant yelled “Shut up!” at him.

“You got what you wanted, you’re out of the infantry. And it’s a good thing too. You were never enough of a man to make it in the infantry.”

The soldiers felt very noble as they pitied Beethoven for not being enough of a man, and they became very anxious when they saw another fly, a big and green and shiny fly, land on Beethoven’s foot. The sergeant noticed it too and cursed army drivers again as he stared up the road. No motor sound broke the silence in the desert and the only sound he could hear was the crunching of rocks and hard, dry earth under his feet as he paced slowly back and forth.

Still looking up the road, he said “We’re going to have to keep his foot from getting infected if they don’t come soon.” The soldiers nodded in agreement, never taking their eyes off his face as he continued to stare down the road. He felt their eyes on his back and knew that now he would conquer these men forever.

“We might have to piss on it, then bandage it again. One thing you should know when you’re in combat and someone is injured and bullets are flying over your heads and no one is there to help you, is that urine is sterile.”

It was one of those army myths that you heard over and over in the course of your service but never knew if they were actually true. Like the one about rubbing a potato on your foot for a few hours. They said potatoes sucked the calcium out of your bones and made them brittle. Then you could tap your foot with a spoon and the bones would crack painlessly and you could go to a doctor and get X-rayed and you would be out of the infantry for life. Except the sergeant knew that the potato myth
wasn't true and that no bones ever broke that way.

This was the first time any of the soldiers had heard the urine myth. They laughed at first until the sergeant barked out, “What are you laughing at?” Then they were immediately silent and the sergeant knew that if he pissed on Beethoven’s foot they would never give him trouble again. He was showing them that he was more of a soldier and a man than they thought they would ever be, and god knew what incredible experiences they were endowing him with right now in their tiny little minds. He would be a god, he thought, a legend, if he pissed on Beethoven’s foot.

The sun was high in the clear sky, and no wind cooled their sweating faces. The desert was still and scorching hot. The sergeant moved slowly and mechanically, as though his mind were on something distant that he was trying to remember. Beethoven screamed as the sergeant peeled the sticky shirt off of his bloody foot, and the soldiers moved to get a better view but did not crouch too close to the sergeant. They shifted their stare from Beethoven’s foot to the sergeant’s face and then to each other. They were not frightened or shocked, just excited and curious. Beethoven was shrieking and flailing his arms, and the sergeant wondered if you really did piss on people’s wounds in combat.

The soldiers, without being told to, moved over to where Beethoven was lying and two of them held fast his arms. Another one held his head and tried to calm him, but Beethoven was hysterical. The fourth soldier sprawled himself out over Beethoven’s thighs and pinned them to the stretcher. The sergeant looked down into Beethoven’s screaming face. His eyes were wide and his nostrils were wide and his mouth was tremendous. He was struggling under the stretcher straps and under the weight of the four soldiers who had been carrying him on their shoulders only a short time before. He was already becoming hoarse and now between his rasping screams, when he took a breath, the sergeant could hear a deeper rumbling coming from beyond the hills.

The four soldiers were looking up at him and at the bloody, toeless foot. As he unbuttoned his soft, baggy fatigues, the sergeant watched the truck appear from between two round hills, raising a trail of dust high behind it. Beethoven stopped screaming. Then the soldiers heard the rumbling and turned their heads and saw the truck bouncing towards them along the white road, but they did not let go of Beethoven. They looked back up to the sergeant, who was also watching the truck with an expressionless face. The truck was getting nearer and they could hear its clanking and bouncing and the sergeant knew that soon they would put Beethoven on it, and he would be gone. Beethoven would not return to the platoon. The sergeant thought about the rest of the platoon, sitting and waiting for him only fifteen minutes into the desert. By now they were probably calm and were making jokes about Beethoven. He thought about how soon, when Beethoven was gone, he would return to the pla-
toon with the four soldiers and how he would be alone with them until the sun went down. He thought about the long days he would spend here in the desert with them before he finally went home for the weekend, and about the long days he would spend with them after that. He looked down at the soldiers as the canvas-covered truck slowed to a stop. They continued watching his face until they saw him sigh with what they thought was relief, and then turned to strengthen their grip on Beethoven who had begun screaming in pain as soon as the sergeant sighed.

Yoav Grunstein
Clayton Merrell
INTAGLIO PRINT, 7 1/4” X 9”
Africanisms

Maize, okra, indigo, maize
and Black Mammy’s descended
from the “Guinea” tribe.

I have travelled many times
upon these livid waters,
bending easily, alone.
Senegal and Gambia
Rivers meet at the parts in
my hair: I decided long ago
that twisting was the
answer so desperately
wanted. Where is my mother,
the breast upheld? Who can feed,
all consuming, this hunger?

They say that boogie woogie
is the way, OK, okra
and go go. All cultural
retentions, language sign posts
to say that someone with hair,
kinky like mine, was years ago
born in Western Africa.

As if Western Africa
were enough for designation,
a delicate disk of water
and flour to be swallowed
whole. As if it were nothing
to enunciate: Wolof
Bambara, Fulani, Susu
peoples, and to whom do I belong?
Bowing to Taxonomy,
that god, I have wished to know
the family names of
"the people of the clearing:"
molders of stone, bronze, and iron.
Drench myself in beads though
I may, there is no piercing
these waters, these words.

Serena Parker
Yoav Grunstein
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

The Yale Literary Magazine ~33
opening, night

Above the crooked list and slide of shallows, stars peel their skins and pitch the thin-pared strips of light. The evening sea is igneous and having risen fast, breaks hard and shelved. Long swells of sand ridge muscles on the slick that marks where waves, now pulled, have traveled towards the bar of stones that cuts the beach in two. Dark swallows slip the cliffs, and no moon shows upon the lower sky's red underlip.

nine-thirty deepening

The scrape of a white, slim vein now scars the shadow waters as it works for shore from the straining fore of a long, and low, woodbarge. Night begins to tighten to the trees: a round, thin husk, then stalls to awkwardly spectate as ocean shelves fast settle into a mask of smoothly carved blue wood.

Rachel Dilworth
While
Richard Slept

The quiet of the night is deep—
Perhaps a cricket sings outside—
And past your sleeping door I creep
Without a sound. Yes, I denied
The mess you found last night. I lied.
I lied! It’s part of my design,
You see, that I should lead you on.
The dirty dishes all were mine,
The dishes and their gnatty spawn!
Had you your way, my art had gone
The way of all my work before.
But now, tonight, I build so you’ll
Remember me forever more,
Remember hence my fetid, cruel
Mixtures in the dismal pool
Of clotted milk and septic paste
Where you would like to have your sink.
I know it rankles to your taste.
I am more clever than you think.
O, let my dirty dishes stink!
Let them glow with ignis fatuus!
Let them trip the smoke alarm!
I sing tonight of filth miraculous,
Of hatching maggot’s writhing charm
In memory sure as in your arm:
I’ll say not how I brought them in,
Nor where I found them. Ponder these
And feel them creeping on your skin
Instead of in this cottage cheese.
The Sonnets From the Portuguese
Your girlfriend gave you Christmas last
With all her love and her best wishes—
Love and wishes both have passed,
You know—It’s here amidst the dishes,
Bruised with grease and smell of fish. Is
Your tender stomach turning, friend?
Have you no taste for mingling pain
With art tonight? If I offend
You thus with something so mundane,
I should suggest that you refrain
From lifting up those nether plates.
I know that you should rather not.
Their mere excrescence indicates
A long-enduring life of rot,
Thick films of mire. Perhaps you thought
You’d lost your journal last month? Well,
Though I know some of its demise,
Far be it from a slob to tell
Who read it, or where it now lies.
Ah, Richard! How filth multiplies!
But there is more beneath that slime
Than simple hatred would require.
I build against the wash of Time.
Your branded memories inspire
The building of my mortal fire!
Through you alone I hope to slake
That thirst for immortality.
I’ve set this spring for when you wake
With spite, and yes, depravity—
But for my filth remember me!

Isaac Cates
Timothy McCormick
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

40 ~ The Yale Literary Magazine
The place is a comfy smoking room, fireplace, british attire, what not; more of a feeling than an actual room; cigars and overstuffed chairs; evening.

Rheinfelt mumbles audibly throughout the scene, an autistic man

Seward:
this is a story of mongolian torture. apparently, i say this from my own second hand point of view, you must understand, but apparently a man was buried up to his neck up, up to his neck in the desert sand. his head was completely shaved in the sand of that desert and they would strap an animal hide tightly over his scalp. and the heat was so intense, in those regions, the desert heat, that with his head covered, his head shaved, the hair would begin to grow—but because of this tight animal hide, it wouldn’t grow out, the hair, the scalp. but instead the hair would grow inward into the brain a reversal of sorts and it happened after that the man would have a loss of memory—because the hair growing into his brain—was growing into his brain.

Jonathan:
yes.

Seward:
fascinating really. i think.

Jonathan:
where did you read that.
seward:
can’t remember.

[they silently sit, long pause]

jonathan:
apparently, i say apparently this
because i was not there, but perhaps my father was
or maybe he was there but not in the particular vicinity
of this happening, so i can’t be sure
i mean of course that i’m not, but this is a story
of world war two, and in england this story takes place
in london
st. paul’s cathedral—the one with the dome, the large dome
and the germans were bombing
and what do you say to that.
nothing.
of course.
they were bombing london
dropping the bombs from the planes and this is the story
the part of the story
that they stood on the roof of the cathedral
st. paul’s
the men, and maybe the women did
and they stood on the cathedral and the germans dropped their
bombs and the men on the roof caught them
they caught the bombs
in their arms, i don’t know
or maybe in a blanket, their own
or likely stolen from some bed
and brought to the dome to catch bombs.
and thus was the roof saved.

[long pause]

seward:
this is a story, some might
would
have called it a
fairy tale
you know about those
or rather myth, myth, urban myth
and it is concerning a young girl
or rather her brother is the character main
as brothers usually tend to be, and he was short
and not good looking, and had zits galore on his zits galore
and wouldn't you know it: he had glasses too and he had glasses
and he was the smartest kid in his class, yes, in his classes
and his social skills were nil, he had none, and
this is a story of passage into manhood.
you know about those
jonathan.
and he was driving, and they were all drunk in the sixty-eight
chevy camaro
i think it was, blue and slick and he was with the guys
big strong sweaty guys and they left a taste in his mouth
of things to come
as he did and the car sped to lookout lane
lover's leap, the hot high spot to park a nineteen
sixty-eight chevy camaro
and find some couple, they had been smoking out now
marijuana i think was the drug of choice
or they choose to smoke it
and park up next to a car
random, random car and pull the girl rashly from the car and pull the paper bag harshly over her features and push the girl roughly onto the hood of the car as they ripped off her clothes and raped her body. and as the boy, the pizza-faced, glass-eyed smartest kid in class plunged his manhood full into her used-limp body, the bag fell off. and low and behold the face was familiar. it was his sister. and this is a story.

[long pause]

jonathan:

the old woman in pale green polyester dress, darkened sunglasses, naugahyde brown purse in excellent condition, she is old and sits motionless, not reading or seeming much to watch for this is a story of the old woman waiting around her on the curb her station wagon at the ready and a long line of small house plants down next to her she waits sits on a metal folding chair on the curb of the street she waits she is selling them and that is all she waits and she says, “adopt a flower, sam needs a home, they have names.”

[pause]
scward:
[sings] wise men say, only fools
rush in, but i can't help
falling in 1-

jonathan:
jack

scward:
this is a story of-

jonathan:
jack

scward:
jon

jonathan:
jack, jack

scward:
my god,
we are full.

jonathan:
yes.

scward:
yes. will you shut up, rheinfelt.
[rheinfelt does; pause; rheinfelt resumes babbling]

jonathan:
yes. well.

seward:
yes. well.

[they have their goodbye, jonathan leaves]

seward:
lonesome we find them.
lonesome, we leave
what’s left
after we’re convinced that
we are done
with what we’ve convinced
ourselves we
ever had.
and awkward at that.
Daniel Hisel

GRAPHITE DRAWING, 8" X 8 1/2"
Heather Marie Vernon
"She"
VIDEO STILL, 1992

Heather Marie Vernon
"The Introverted Penis Within Me"
VIDEO STILL, 1991

48 ~ The Yale Literary Magazine
Heather Marie Vernon
"Spillers and Collectors"
VIDEO STILL, 1994

The Yale Literary Magazine ~ 49
Believe me, when I dreamt of pigeons, birds from Hitchcock flooding in, it was no dream but real the flutter, true the rise of real and rising fierce the feathers, fierce the wings that woke me to a pigeon sky, two grey bird skins, a morning fierce, a dangerous flight.

Believe I see the strange desire for flight:
I too was once a pigeon, limping bird diseased with city, shapeless from the grey concrete; was once a hunter in a dream, diseased and limping man who wanted wings.
No Icarus, I killed the birds. The real heroic man heads toward the sun, to real and melting hunter's death by sudden flight.
No Icarus, no man, I wanted wings to fly, and bodiless I hated birds.
And so I hunted, in a mythless dream and so they hunted back, with poison grey a blur of bodies, sheets the same cold grey two pigeons flew between, and made real and feathery love there, flight we only dream we flew. If birds could melt from passion, flight would kill them too. But do believe me birds are patient devils wearing fire as wings
and birds will drive you wild with wanting wings, 
the way my bed was wild with them one grey 
and rising morning. Once a loving bird, 
I too was huntress once. But birds the real 
pursuit they won and plundered me to flight. 
They quarried me with dark and sobering dreams.

These birds, like men who ask to hear your dreams, 
they know your thoughts are all of growing wings. 
While holding to their paths of feathered flight 
they drive up, drive you to the cold, the grey 
cold sky. No dream of restless hunting’s real. 
For even I was sleeping, even all those birds 

who dreamt they lifted wings and flew through grey 
and rising dreams. Before me they were real, 
and I found flight; I dreamt I was a bird.

Sonya B. Posmentier