

Juliette Reich  
JUVENILIA II

„Nichts gibt's, was würdig wäre  
deiner Bemühungen, und keinen Seufzer verdient  
die Erde. Schmerz und Langeweile  
sind unser Los, und Schmutz die Welt, nichts andres.  
Beruhige dich.“ - R. Hamerling

## Thirst

Being surrounded by dirt  
is worst when you're moving horizontally  
(the only plane you can move in, anyway).

Things can move as well.

I lost my friend in an avalanche.

He wasn't moving so I stayed.

Now he's gone, I could go,

but I won't.

Mud is the dream of a better place.

Nervenfeuer

Zucken des Augenlids bei jeder Erleuchtung;  
ein minimaler Stich bei jedem Blinzeln  
(wegen Trockenheit, nicht wegen Glanz).

Oder auf der anderen Seite:  
die Rinde nach innen,  
von der der Splitter kommt.

Oder wiederum nur:  
ein Stückchen Glas ohne Halt auf der Haut.

smoke pit

held to be eaten later

if I could call out

someone would come

climbing out teeth first -

straps like bandages hold fast

a mouth is an open wound

a body that is gone a ghost

my graveyard selves

expound past pain into

a flat square

a paper plinth

holding higher than the lamps

a mirror

up to the sky

where cotton swallows red

and stays white

like a promise

or a spirit prophecy

that the bellows

may yet stop

## Helen's Lament

O Helen, you plaything of gods and men, born of adultery, fated to adultery, is there nothing you do not have? They say my husbands are but masters of shadows and I rule unseen in Egypt. But am I more than a shadow? a trick of the light, caught in another's eye? A Goddess gave me beauty and in the name of beauty she has given me. Would that she gave herself and let me be! 'Alas, alas, poor one, is there yet an earthly thing that doth withstandeth me?' They see me with a mirror and I see someone. O Helen, daughter of Zeus, who are you? Not Menelaus, Paris, Faust, not Sparta, Troy, Wittenberg, not Beauty—are you nobody?

## Fragments

Yeah, for him there's no diff between a pretty girl and a hot print. He likes what he sees, he takes it. Once, me and my then-current lay were hanging in the usual place. He comes in, all cock of the walk, and I know my luck's run out when my companion excuses herself. Can't compare with the grand boudoir, so I just slink away and spend my eve with the TV instead, y'know what I mean, so that's that - just don't let your girl get in his range.

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I kinda-sorta regret it.

Like, don't get me wrong, it wasn't a big deal or anything - nothing illegal, ha. But still, a twenty-something fooling around with some dude old enough to be her grandfather - of course we raised eyebrows wherever we went. Then again, that was probably the best part of the whole fling, haha. But I should have bailed when he went all melodramatic and sentimental like some cut-rate Byron. Like, it's just an affair, just enjoy it.

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What drew me to him? Men aren't attractive, you know, them's the breaks. And he certainly wasn't. 'Look at me, I'm a university chair!' Whatever. But he had this look where he made you think that you're not just a tool for him to get ahead and then he disposes of you - no, it was like you were what he was doing all this stuff for. No one spends ten hours a day in a lab if they can't come home to either a beloved idol or a sex doll - and with him, it never felt like the latter.

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And I still don't know what to make of the whole affair. Damnation ist not too high a price to know a man's touch. To be taken out of the cloister where the bell never rings, a barren earth awaiting the slightest drops of rain when, with no prior alarm, clouds begin to darken. And I bow down to make my hands level with the ground so that when he treads upon it I feel his touch, the heel crushing my bone like you would some pest. The bone dust fertilizes the fruit tree on which he gorges himself, so that the smallest part of me may enter him and thereby justify the rest.

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LIBRARIAN: Of course he had to be a fucking Protestant. A proper Catholic would have stayed home and counted some rosaries or whatever it is they do when no one's watching. But instead he's hitting the books and I'm providing the targets. Y'know, technically speaking, 'scripture' just means 'a writing', not 'the Book', so he's entirely within traditional hermeneutics here.