

Punctum Books
Peanut Books

Chapter Title: GANYMEDE

Book Title: The Apartment of Tragic Appliances

Book Subtitle: Poems

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Published by: Punctum Books, Peanut Books. (2013)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.2353792.4>

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GANYMEDE

When one decides past certain hours to go to SUBWAY (*eatfresh*) despite a decent earlier serving of asparagus vichyssoise, one thinks, I'll feel a little less abject about the excursion if I travel with a nice accessory, for instance an envelope-sized Louis Vuitton satchel on whose veracity one has insisted on past occasions, although not this particular night. Less junket than one is junk, raccooning down the sidewalk to where one's students might be gorging, shoulder-slung with an object Hawthorne might describe as a citizen of somewhere else. Oh Louis, strung between the Actual and the Imaginary, like something in moonlight, cobwebbed or embroidered with the enthusiasm of an allegorical crazy person shriving for someone else's bungle. And so one embarks, +more or less sober, maybe further sobered by the unfolding event, or as likely, sobriety floundering in the Hawthornian threshold as though this kabuki gravitas could help the other more glaringly deflating elements of a binge-before-sleep pass unnoticed. As though the seriousness emanating from the bag might not, in fact, lead to further pathos, one's seeming by others, employees and otherwise, slightly deranged: Aschenbach bringing a little LV bag down to the Lido. When one arrives at SUBWAY (*eatfresh*), one hopes for neither recognition nor blandishment beyond the sandwich. One is unprepared, entering such an establishment past midnight with the shredding dignity of a heroine at the end of a Wharton novel, for comments about the bag, comments that seem to interpellate the bag as a romantic shibboleth. This isn't the idea. Dear reader, I brought the bag for dignity, underestimating the extent to which such a bag might flag me as more than an appetite on the other side of a hygienic counter. And so: when one of the workers says to one upon arriving at the front of the hygienic sandwich-making counter,

I really like your bag, one is a little thrown off, as one was wishing to seem formidable, not needing to be there, as though meeting a lesser relative at an unfortunate train station, who me, no you must have me confused with one who comes here often. I'm waiting for someone. If one had made the mistake of wearing a large puce hat with plumes, one would readjust the hat, reminding him of the larger Darwinian scaffolding from which one only temporarily had dropped. One would say something minute in acknowledgment of the appreciation, even as one couldn't know the degree to which one's reply missed or matched the flavor of his comments. In the splendid ideas of humanism, Cavafy might say yes, it's a nice bag; or, yes we have found each other like shelter animals on opposite sides of a hygienic counter, and this is just the beginning of an unavoidable Proustian dance only superficially for the sake of a sandwich. Or, yes, it is a nice bag—and how bolstering in the epiphany of one's humiliation to be interested in this boy's unexpected spume of interest, as though interest were the accessory with which, from the outset, one might have traveled, even as proleptic interest in the moment seemed not only implausible but its own problem. To walk into a SUBWAY (*eatfresh*) at so late an hour anticipating that something of interest would occur, because the excursion might be interesting, hence bringing along the bag—no, this was unreasonable. We were naked in his fawning, which added to the prescient sense of disgrace (insofar as one can anticipate disgrace more easily than one can track interest), in the way one seasoning disrupts seasonings from a different region. One is a vichyssoise in need of a little tarragon, and despite his Anglo-Saxon milky countenance, his observation about the bag is a festive sneeze of paprika. One debates whether one spoons it out fast, or stirs it in, or just watches

it like swamp guck settling on the surface before sinking. Maybe even inadvertently signaling more paprika, as though this was what the soup had always wanted. At which point the employee asks *what one wants*, as though this under such circumstances were an unloaded question. My life had stood a loaded gun, but never had Dickinson waded through such a congerie of irrelevant feelings. She wouldn't have brought the bag, rowing in Eden, deliberating turkey over meatball. Does one say *turkey* to be the stronger one, with an ear for the decorous or didactic, Saint Francis and his lewd bird across the hygienic counter, sent by the Lord for this lesson alone? Neither was learning. His hands, in gloves the size of plastic bags, were a reminder that the situation called for prophylactics. And then the further harassment of *what would you like on that*. At this point (to keep from weeping), one says lettuce. One orders something, oh heartbreak for everything, without recalling what it is. One wants this over with. And like a boulder dropped from his pelvis into one's own, or near it, the employee says *you know I have the wallet*. One doesn't know what to say, and like Dickinson on the verge of death one's metaphors crash and burn; as critics suggest, sometimes her metaphors just break off when they least understand themselves. Whatever she says at this point is up to whoever finds me holding you in hand, satchel over shoulder, Aeneas raccooning through the dungeon gates.