

A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Uncle Margaret's

By: Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 9/08/07

I started by accident, says Frances Trudy Paine, proprietress, with a mischievous grin. A pair of apparently nameless strangers, having become so enamored with the tag sales (the nascent Uncle Margaret's) that Trudy held to put her daughter through college made her an offer she couldn't refuse over a cup of clandestine coffee at the Hay Market café. "We will loan you \$5000 indefinitely to open a vintage shop." "And the Catch?" she asked, "Yes, the catch." they said. "You shall name it...Uncle Margaret's!" I am suspicious, "This isn't just a story you have concocted to intrigue your customers?" I demand smiling but with a hand on my hip. "Yes!" she admits laughing over the till. "My daughter, without thinking named it Uncle Margaret's." Its got something "Aunt Margaret's" would never have, I quip, ever more dubious about the origins of the name--for in a shop where a poppy-red satin hat hosting a billowing tulle blossom is credited with simplicity doesn't it follow that truth is less credible than myth? I have at least eleven more questions and so I move on. Thus came into being (in one way or another), on a sweltering August day down a cobbled alley bafflingly lined with woolen coats, a shop one *must* enter without agenda. And if one insists on agenda it must be very vague and based on the discovery of a mood or a gown for a spectacular but imaginary event. You would never enter this store because you "need reasonable jeans that fit," but perhaps because you "need something frothy that will ally you with the sugar plum fairies."

Uncles are possessors of stamp covered steamer trunks, with monkey's and monocles and adventure tales from their days ballooning in the arctic. This is, of course, how I envision Trudy procuring the relics that surround me. She collects through private homes, having shunned the arduousness and disappointment estate and tag sales involve. When it comes to individual pieces, Trudy is enticed by quality. She turns each piece inside out, checks the hem, checks the crotch, she smells it. "I'll take it with a hole or a rip only because it's outstanding!" She shows me a dress with yellowed underarms (you couldn't call them pits on a dress like this). Silk taffeta with tiny stitched diagonal stripes, cut low but in the back and with a pointed collar, the color of the

sky in *The Birth of Venus* and iridescent. “It’s how it’s made. I don’t care if it says Prada on it. If it’s polyester, I don’t care. I don’t want it.” She insists.

Fedora’s hang from the lamps, jodhpurs from the dressing room curtain, but it’s always more the uncle and his stories than the contents of his trunk that keep the nephews wide-eyed at his feet. Uncle Margaret is hardly an exception. I ask her about her personal style and discover that her relationship with vintage is only as old as her vintage shop. “I never wore it before Uncle Margaret’s. One day I tried on a couple of dresses and thought: Wow, do I look good! Now I have about 20 vintage dresses in my wardrobe. 50’s, 40’s and 60’s. Anyone can look good in the right vintage. I see a girl come in and watch her friend try on hats and look good in everything. I’ll ask her to put one on, for me, and she always walks out the door with it.”

It is experiences like the hat-induced metamorphosis that are really for sale here. I witness this firsthand. In donning the aforementioned poppy-red hat and tilting my head downward as I write I am instantly transformed, based on the testimony of Trudy and Nan (*the* most devoted customer), into the spitting image of Princess Di! I admit, albeit reluctantly, that “No, no one has ever told me that before,” while silently half beaming and half crediting my high-waisted jeans, leotard and bobby-pinned up hair. For an Iowan brunette this compliment is practically a miracle.

Trudy describes a hat of her own, a hat thus far without occasion, a black and white number that fits like a cap with a pinwheel structure tacked on the side. Its occasion, I suggest, is the ascot scene of *My Fair Lady*. She wholeheartedly affirms my reference and I silently applaud my mother for having played Eliza in her high school musical. She is also able to settle the matter of the tiny shoe. “Are you an 8.5 or 9? (I am precisely that.) No wonder you can’t find a vintage shoe that fits. The human race was so small. We’ve grown lengthwise through the years.” And as if to guarantee my esteem for her, she remembers having sold me the coat--the camel-colored, knee-length, scallop-edged, white-buttoned, peter pan-collared coat.

But Nan Shipsky, who at nearly six feet (in platforms) and 61 years, is easily the most colorful display in the shop, which she enters with a bag full of *W* clippings, a reverence for Veruschka and Isabella Blow and a red parasol with a rosebud handle. “Darling,” she peers down at me earnestly, “You are talking to a woman who will get dressed in a marabou feathered hat, black tights, black leather opera gloves (which she proceeds to prescribe to me), six inch black Mary Janes, and a skintight red leather dress. And that is how I will go to church.” I, myself,

have dressed on occasion like an Isabella Blow or a Nan Shipsky might (a blue sequined party dress and esprit leggings to biology for example) and more often than not feel less like a woman with the nerve a parasol requires than an imposter disguised as a woman with the nerve a parasol requires. This proves only that I am not yet a Nan Shipsky nor an Isabella Blow, that I have not yet learned to equate simplicity with frivolity and tulle, that I may never move past a poor Princess Di impersonation but...with a little bit of luck and a lamp shade fedora from Uncle Margaret's.

A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Elfish feet in lady shoes

By: Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 2/15/07

There is a lady you should know who makes beautiful things. She is the only person I know who has ever been willing to attend an event that requires dressing up as a KISS band member. It is strange how hard it is to find black and white face paint at five o'clock on a Friday evening. It is even stranger how a face-paint-using performance artist is easier to find in Iowa City than face paint is at Drugtown - Drugtown is to CVS... - and stranger yet, the things paint does to one's skin when it turns out to be of the acrylic persuasion and not the face persuasion. We went as junkies instead. Did you note the italicization of willing? That was foreshadowing. Other times we went disguised as twin Popeyes and once as a shadow and a promiscuous bumblebee. She's a true Fancy Dress Party ally - that is, a friend who is devoted to the truism that girls are way cuter when they wear REAL Halloween costumes. An FDP ally never settles for a cowboy hat and a pushup bra.

When you encounter this lady in the street and she recounts the entire plotline of an episode of Charlie and Lola - a brilliant discovery she made having inadvertently arisen before 10/nine central - from Playhouse Disney, her outfit will inevitably preternaturally communicate the essentiality of a Playhouse Disney personage. Although you may exit the exchange dubious as to the brilliance of Charlie and Lola and you grumble "what a character" and "she sure lays it on thick," you will one day, whether inadvertently or intentionally, arise before 10/nine central and will fall in love with Charlie and Lola and her strawberry milk over a bowl of Wheat Chex with banana slices and a Flintstone vitamin. You don't really mind that the accent is flawed.

She made her own prom dress with drippy silk and tiny bells and encouraged, was emphatic about, the ostrich feathers on mine. She is a lifeguard but does not know CPR. She will share her green apples and Laughing Cow wedges and songs about cowboys riding out to the old sundown. Her dream-hobbies are cobblery - an endangered art - and surfing. She manages to sing Animal Collective a cappella. She's convinced the differences in pronunciation of the word "caramel" represent two different recipes - one that includes milk and one that doesn't - and that MSG is chives. Her boyfriend finds her midnight peanut butter spoons under his bed. She draws notoriously elfish feet.

There is a photograph of this lady you should know about. It was taken on New Year's Eve.

After midnight, but only after midnight, she will wear her mask like a headband but the guests haven't arrived yet. She still has time to apply a third coat of Dirty Girl mascara - her only brand and only shoplifted from a bookstore where they sell it inexplicably. In this photograph she is in her element. In this photograph I spy a bobbin case, suede "Lady Shoes," a water bottle full of port, anklets over ankle socks, the tail of a Where the Wild Things Are tattoo, a tuft of Lost Boy hair and earrings that I'm convinced are really rupees from Zelda. She will apply the mascara in front of a mirror in a bathroom painted the toothpaste green color of the old Vespas that always make you think you want a Vespa. She calls it a Franny and Zooey bathroom but she doesn't explain herself. She turns in paper dolls for term projects, unapologetically. She will insist she got fired for making the cookies too flat. It probably had more to do with the Port.

She is often all flower crowns and knee patches. She is the only place in town you can get a Mimosa and a makeshift brunch on a balcony. The telephone isn't in the suitcase but it might as well be. She lives like an Orlovsky poem: Is there any one saintly thing I can do to my room, paint it pink / maybe or install an elevator from the bed to the floor, / maybe take a bath on the bed / What's the use of living if I can't make paradise in my own / room-land?

Truth is, she isn't quite a lady yet. But when she is she'll make a great Mrs. Piggie Wiggle.

Domestic Proper Makes a Comeback

By: Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 9/13/07

I have always appreciated theoretical etiquette. I aspire to know all that Emily Post knows. There was a time when I swiftly stashed the manifestos of Emily Post and Amy Vanderbilt in the bottom of the wardrobe when company called - not to give an impression of unstudied and effortless etiquette (as my appreciation of etiquette rarely reached across the theoretical for the practical, which would have been rude) but because etiquette was grotesquely passé, even archaic

Today, however, the books may emerge from exile without edit or irony, or perhaps with only a dash of the latter. As I'm sure both Emily and Amy could have envisaged, that which was passé but a moment ago is tout a coup, le dernier mot - domesticity is en vogue.

In the American Apparel era in which hip is easily cloned and commodified overnight, a budding band of perturbed hipsters have turned to something new - or rather, old. The march of hipsters adorning housewifey frocks is perhaps the movement's most manifest symptom, but thick-straps, high-waists, full-skirts and florals are merely the uniform.

There is no better fashion statement than one's choice of arts and crafts medium. There is no better accessory than the jar of Mod Podge or the Gocco-printed invitation set. Etsy.com serves as an oasis and eBay for thousands of June Cleaver dress-alikes with side-swept bangs and dainty tattoos around the world. I, myself, confess to having run an utterly unprofitable but somehow still fulfilling Etsy shop featuring items as utterly useless as they were utterly unprofitable - watercolor memory games and I-Spyish postcard sets. Etsy is the internet Mecca for all seeking plush sushi, portraits of a rabbit dressed in couture, knitted tape-deck throw pillows and hand embroidered pin-up girl baby onesies. Dandie In the Underworld, born this summer in the alley behind Osaka, is Northampton's offline equivalent whose mission is to sell the wares of (and in this respect it outdoes Etsy) local artists and crafters. Dandie offers a similar, smaller, but strangely more creature- and monster-oriented range of creations in its boudoirish - both in mood and size - storefront.

"I'm no historian, but I think women today are really looking back and appreciating both the lifestyle and overall style of women in the past," explains Lindsay Schmidt, owner of the Etsy Shop "poorlostbread," adding that she would never have wanted to live without the rights she enjoys as a woman today. Schmidt whose shop features beret clad felt croissants and a chivalrous

mustachioed croque monsieur understands that " the fact that these items have been touched by another person is important - the personal touch and the effort and time that someone put into making the seams straight or the pie crust flakey."

It is, of course, simple to wax handmade. Don't go out. Dress up to stay in. Watch Food Network socially. Take notes. Catch up on your felting. And should that grow dull, stitch a couple of French seams and boil an egg with the guidance of Elementary Home Economics circa 1926. "Place one egg in a pint of boiling water, remove from fire, cover tightly; set in a warm place 45 minutes to one hour." But no matter how dull the conversation, never, that is NEVER resort to using the word "culture," for, as Emily Post says, it is the "pariah of the language" and "rarely used by those who truly possess it."

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Self-Hypnosis Session Promises Way to Quit Smoking

By: Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 11/29/07

The session was advertised as an opportunity for Smith faculty and staff to learn how "to use self-hypnosis to quit smoking." Self-hypnosis," the announcement read, "is a powerful form of self-talk that helps people develop a more positive attitude towards quitting smoking and the stresses associated with it." Despite all the advertisement promised, the session drew only three attendees. All three attendees wore red. Kathryn McGlynn, a certified hypnotist and motivational coach, asked that they lend her their imaginations. McGlynn wore a burgundy suit and at least one of the three in red was skeptical - of the burgundy suit, of the podium, of the at-home hypnosis CDs reduced to \$15 from \$20 because her talk falls within the dates of the Great American Smoke Out.

"Imagination, metaphor, story, feeling [and] emotion," McGlynn explains, "are the language of the subconscious. "We do not appeal to the subconscious with logic." At least one of the three in red was hesitant to surrender to her logic and allow such an invasion, however mollifying McGlynn's voice may be. In fact, McGlynn had two voices: her "hypnosis voice" and the pre-trance voice she used to reiterate what most of us learned in a seventh grade health class - according to an interminable number of scientists and percentages, smoking kills.

Smoking kills, and that is why the attendees were attendees. They had come, as McGlynn said, not to "try to quit smoking," but to begin "the process of becoming a non-smoker." According to McGlynn, you have to be careful how you talk to the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind does not recognize the word try; we are either doing something, or we are not. We must speak to our subconscious minds in a more direct way. "Its like the Wisdom of Yoda," Lynn Cocco, human resource specialist, and the faculty and staff hypnosis program's coordinator, interjected, "Do or do not. There is no 'try'."

McGlynn approached the podium, turned on the microphone and her hypnosis voice and the attendees begin to "do" with their imaginations as McGlynn says. She began with a countdown from 10 and choreographed eye movements. With each roll of the eye, Cocco and the three in

red delve deeper-into what, however, they cannot be sure. Later, one described it as deep relaxation, one as sleep and one as hypnosis through and through. We could not recognize our own transitions from each brain state-beta, alpha, delta and theta-but sitting motionless, eyes closed, in the dim library light for 35 minutes had induced something in each of the attendees.

In the course of her speech, McGlynn served as guide to two imagined worlds-one healthful, full of happiness and family, and the other world that will ensue if we do not "refuse to smoke": full of stench and crumpled cigarette cartons. McGlynn is a professional, not a performer-there were no pendulous pocket watches and no coerced chicken dances, just three women in red, full of free will, finding their wiser selves.

Hypnosis, however, is not a "magic bullet." Although Cocco has been told she "goes under like a rag doll," she admits that she witnessed behavioral changes that lasted from two weeks to several months following weight-loss related hypnosis sessions she attended in the past. "It doesn't do the whole thing," Cocco said, "but it can make it easier."

As McGlynn crooned toward the end of the 35-minute session, she made a post-hypnotic session-a sort of psychological string around the finger. "In the coming days," she said, "you will see red everywhere you go. You will start noticing it in everything, and each time you see it, you will say to yourself, 'I used to smoke, now I refuse to smoke. I used to smoke, now I refuse to smoke.'"

Two sessions of a stress management self-hypnosis program will be held in Campus Center 003 on Nov. 27 from 1 to 2 p.m. and from 3 to 4 p.m. but are offered exclusively to faculty and staff. Students and faculty are never invited to the same health and wellness sessions to avoid what Cocco says might be a "funky dynamic."

"Hypnosis has always intrigued me, and I would be willing to try it if they had a session for students here at Smith, as long as there were witnesses," said Jenna Zelenetz '09. "It would be strange, like if someone else wrote your dreams, but maybe I'd be better off if someone else did write my dreams."

Vintage: How Do You Know It's Not Just Ugly?

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 2/16/06

"Fashion as a dictatorship of the elite is dead," proclaimed "Cheap Chic," a book on vintage fashion published in 1975, a time in which shopping at the Salvation Army was punishable by scorn from PTA members and block parents alike. Now that the fashion "elite" (designers, editors and models) fully condone rummaging through bins, it is hard to know what exactly they are dictating, what to leave on the 95 cents table and what styles really are "growing heavy for the vintage" in the hearts and minds of the people. The word vintage itself is defined both as "characterized by excellence, maturity and enduring appeal; classic" and as "old or outmoded." Nowadays the gossamer line between ugly and en vogue pales as we appropriate pieces from decades we have little or no experience with.

"I come across a lot of little old lady going to church clothes which wouldn't work in my store," said Timothy Saldo, co-owner of Roz's Place, which features both new and more excitingly old clothing. But then there are the treasures. "Some of the old flapper dresses we would get in were pretty breathtaking," Saldo said. More recently he has encountered a one of a kind hand painted Rock Steady Crew vest and has assembled a collection of local bar t-shirts including one from the late Sheehan's, which for Saldo, a self proclaimed "nostalgic person from the get go," conjures up memories of the Victorian bar, built by the Carpenter's Guild, that once served as a Northampton punk dive.

"Not every woman can look like Grace Jones and pull it off. Anything can look great on the right person," said Kai Johnston, manager of Sid Vintage and vintage clothes connoisseur. Jones, as a prominent singer/model/actress of the '70s and '80s and muse to Andy Warhol, was famous for her confrontational get-ups like gorilla suits, spiked skirts and body painting. While few of us are attempting to

collect and wear things quite as dubious as Jones, the concept of dressing to suit one's body type and attitude still applies. A vague injunction, I know, but ugly is just as much in the eye of the beholder as beauty is and fashion ought to be more about instinct and experiment than knowing you've "got it right" dressed in J.Crew from your merino crew sweater on down to your wedge flip flops. As the enfant terrible of the fashion world Jean Paul Gaultier - think Madonna's cone bra - said, "People who make mistakes or dress badly are the real stylists." He describes one of his collections as being inspired by "those moments when you are mistaken or embarrassed" (from "Adorned in Dreams" by Elizabeth Wilson).

The late James Laver, keeper in the Departments of Engraving, Illustration and Design, and of Paintings in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London and renowned fashion expert, developed a timeline describing the attitudes of the population towards a style at different points in its "life" (called Laver's Law of Fashion). While a garment is labeled "indecent" 10 years before its time, "dowdy" one year after its time and hideous after 10, by age 30 a garment has risen to "amusing" and on its one hundredth birthday that same garment may be considered "beautiful." Will Ugg boots and bedazzled halter-tops one day line the shelves of Roz's Place and Sid Vintage? In the words of Jimmy Buffett, "only time will tell."

So, Oscar Wilde, if, as you say, "Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months," we are content to revel in not only our contemporary ugliness but the collected ugliness of 20, 30, 40 and 50 years gone by.

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'Room Raiders': What's in Your Closet?

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 2/24/06

Everybody whose ever been to the CDO knows the mumbo-jumbo about the relationship-defining three-second first impression, and how the content of the following conversation - should the relationship outlive those first three seconds - can't do anything to change it. In a "stuff" based society, it is no surprise to find a reality TV show that embraces this brutal fact and cuts out the conversation altogether: "Room Raiders"-- "...raiding closets and breaking hearts. Watch as contestants decide who to date, based solely on the contents of their bedroom." MTV's message seems to say: "Go ahead American youth! Judge a book by its cover!"

I always found it a bit ridiculous that a box of crayons "really shows Room #2's artistic side" and that a pair of black panties is proof of a "girl who really loves to have fun in the bedroom." There are certainly those with boxes of crayons in their rooms because they were the easiest thing to shoplift from CVS, and black panties that are black arbitrarily. But I guess level-minded people saying, "You know, I can't really make a character judgment on this person based on the zebra print overalls they have been hiding on the top shelf of their closet. That just wouldn't be fair," wouldn't do much for the ratings.

The problem with all of this is that the outgoing fashion message is not always identical to the incoming one on the other side, and sometimes they don't even remotely resemble one another. One man's "soulful artist" may be another man's "sloppy good for nothing." One woman's "stodgy snob" is another woman's "determined, potential employee." Even those who make a point of not participating in the mania are ensnared and forced to communicate through their clothing. Yep, the sound of silence.

In the name of research, I decided to play a little game of "I have a hypothetical

question for you." Based on a flawlessly executed poll in response to my closet - were she unaware it were mine - my roommate said, "This closet's girl is Alternative-ish and slightly hippie. She probably looks a little like an old cat lady. She must layer." She kindly added, "I guess I would be friends with her." Unfortunately for me, this is mostly all true, especially the part about the cat lady; although I have also been labeled "orphan child-esque" and "undeniably Smith College," whatever that means, by a UMasser. Despite the accuracy, I still feel that my clothes without me in them are like a PowerPoint presentation without its presenter: colorful, but incomprehensible and utterly useless.

Inversely, as Henry David Thoreau pondered in Walden: "It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes." There are plenty of reality shows concerned with just that - divesting contestants of their clothing both literally and figuratively, although I can hardly argue that either "The Real World" or "Temptation Island" is more illuminating than "Room Raiders." However, on the two former ones you may be spared the cowboy boot-related puns - "Will Amber saddle-up with Room Number Three or will she find that bronco too much to handle?"

Be wary, for no one is exempt from the discourse our clothes, or lack thereof, incite behind our backs. We all fall victim to the social, economic, spiritual, sexual etc. connotations of our chosen garments, both in the closet and out. The rub is that these connotations differ from mother, to friend, to boss, to lover. On the other hand, in the words of Michael Kors: "Lighten up, it's just fashion!"

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A Return to Childhood Fashion

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 3/9/06

I have the culinary discernment of a five year old. Mac and cheese, Juicy Juice, bananas with peanut butter-that's about all that is in my repertoire. When interrogated about this discernment-- otherwise known as pickiness-- I am known to say, "I basically only want to eat things I would have eaten in kindergarten." I am beginning to notice that my sartorial discernment is much the same. I basically only want to wear things I would have worn in kindergarten. Nowadays, tots are often force fed shrunken versions of their slutty and pedestrian grownup counterparts (shame on you, Abercrombie Kids or abercrombie or whatever it is you call yourselves). But in my day, hampers and diaper bags were brimming with train conductor overalls, violet tutus with satin flower appliqués, red velvet party dresses, sailor outfits with embroidered alligators and best of all: black patent leather round toed Mary Janes! Not all children's lines have turned to the dark side, however, and sometimes, if I'm lucky, I can still fit-- or cram myself into-- the extra large sizes at GAP Kids or Old Navy. Unfortunately, that luck runs out at places like Gymboree and Tutti Bella. Even at Goodwill and Salvation Army all the T-shirts with the good puns and slogans (for example, "Book it to the public library!") are five sizes too small.

Until people designing outside the children's department learn to utilize the to date untapped whimsical design faculty of the brain, I'll continue to work around my limited access to tulle, sequins and fruit-themed accessories. One brilliant seamstress friend of mine has crafted for me a warrior helmet shaped hat quilted from old sweaters with soft Stegosaurus plates protruding from the top and a Chagall-inspired multicolored tutu with gold ribbon running haphazardly along the waistband. My senior year of high school, some of us filled the void with little boy's pajama tops and undershirts; you couldn't walk the hallway without encountering 50 trucks, 80 airplanes, 90 caterpillars and a myriad of other bugs, forms of transportation and sports equipment. Plenty of clothing companies make some surprisingly frolicy garden party-esque dresses, and although the necklines are less demure than ideal, there is nothing quite as inspiring and uplifting as twirling in a circle skirt with a three-foot radius. If all else fails, take the advice of eternally youthful, fictional fashionista Eloise-- famous for her poof-sleeved blouses and flouncy black pleated skirts held up by suspenders, not to mention the giant hot pink hair bow-- and know that not only do "toe shoes make very good ears" but also that "Kleenex makes a very good hat."

In the real world a hundred years ago, Parisian couture designer Jeanne Lanvin got her start designing clothes for her daughter Marguerite, and when she branched out to women's wear, she made little or no distinction between the two age groups. Lanvin saw the beauty in delicate embroidery, tons of tiny buttons, sailor hats and a giant red satin bow. Her brilliant use of velvet, organza, lace, taffeta, tulle and chiffon made the youthful silhouettes of Lanvin's pieces some of the most fanciful, unusual, breathtaking and sought-after of her era. As Charles Baudelaire, poet and countryman of Lanvin, who died the year she was born, said, "Genius is nothing more than childhood recaptured at will." Until the fashion industry makes this capture, I continue my quest for a pink tankini with a ruffle on the butt and a purse shaped like a turtle.

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Elizabeth Pusack's closet, home of many more than just the essential garments.

Repercussions of Taking Inventory: Self-Induced Shopping Fasts

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 4/13/06

I suppose Lent ought to have been the season of taking stock and reflection. I tried and failed miserably. Apparently dairy is not an easy thing to give up, even when it makes you sick. If I had been utterly honest with myself about what would really challenge me and inspire said reflection, dairy would have been second at best and, perhaps not surprisingly, shopping would have been first. When I really took stock in a literal sense, it was startling how far beyond my wardrobe needs I really live. According to my calculations, I could technically survive comfortably with one pair of pants, seven shirts, maybe one skirt, one nice dress and a little time to do laundry, and I could certainly survive uncomfortably with much, much less. Needless to say, my closet is the home to more than 10 garments, and my appreciation for, and utilization of, each garment is spread rather thin.

Here is my morsel of profundity: there is absolutely no reason to have a dresser full of things you don't love-especially if those things are cockroaches or mean

people, but that's another article. Unfortunately, it is in the application of this apparently common knowledge that the difficulty lies. In their coy manipulative little way, most purchases are infinitely more loveable on the rack or at the cash register than they ever are in the dresser, or in my case, on the floor. Thus, I have begun a "Things I Already Own Outreach Program" in an attempt to give my existing possessions the attention they deserve in lieu of accumulating new ones. I'm hoping the result will be something like the gas station food challenge on "Top Chef." It's when resources are limited to spam and Krispy Kremes that real creativity emerges. In a shameless hyper-dramatization of the situation, I stoop to say that resourcefulness in the face of meager fashion supplies is what separates the men from the boys. Sure you can make a scrumptious ginger plantain risotto with all of Whole Foods at your disposal, but if you can concoct anything that the head chef of the Neiman Marcus Rotunda doesn't gag on with what is available at Stop and Shop, therein lies your true merit. Sure Kirsten Dunst is on every best-dressed list with all of Chloe and Marc Jacobs at her beck and call, but I'd like to see how she fared if limited to the shopping oasis that is Holyoke Mall.

My mother, after a 20-year stationery and book addiction-which has proven to be hereditary - has become a prime example of consumer moderation and the proud owner of a very reasonable definition of "necessity." As a middle school student, each time I "needed" a new pair of retrospectively ugly Steve Madden slip-ons or another Gap zip-up hoodie she would insist that I "take inventory" of what was already available to me and elaborate on my somewhat strange interpretation of the word "need." Unfortunately, she could only do so much and there are probably still a lot of ugly shoes and unnecessary hoodies lurking in dollar bins at Salvation Army with my name on the labels. As is often the case, only years later am I beginning to recognize the wisdom in my mother's advice-I haven't shopped since March 29 and so far so good. Baby steps.

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Protestors demonstrate in downtown Los Angeles on March 25 in opposition to H. R. 4437, a bill that would make all illegal immigrants felons. Protests of the bill have occurred all across the nation, including at Amherst College on Monday, April 10.



Mount Holyoke Student Marches Against Immigration Legislation

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 4/13/06

At about 10:30 a.m. on the morning of March 25, in the blaring sun, Verónica Ochoa and her brother Alvaro joined the vivaciously resolute mass of protesters marching down Broadway to the L.A. City Hall. "We immersed ourselves into the cheering crowd chanting 'Aquí estamos y no nos vamos!' ('We are here, and we're not leaving!') There was drumming, chanting and cheering. It was intense. Women, men, children, teenagers were all there. I saw a man on a wheelchair at the protest, a reflection of how powerful the human spirit really is! Mothers were there pushing strollers with their babies inside," Ochoa said.

Ochoa, a first semester sophomore at Mt. Holyoke, is a double major in Latin American Studies and Economics and self proclaimed "proud So-Cal native"- specifically from the notorious city of Inglewood in Los Angeles dubbed by Tupac Shakur as "the city always up to no good" - recently took part in the highly publicized L.A. protests against proposed legislation to crackdown on illegal immigration. Although the reported number of participants in the L.A. protests was not consistent from source to source-the L.A. Times reported 500,000 while Univision reported over 2,000,000-an indisputably impressive number of people, arguably the largest gathering for an L.A. protest, filled the streets in opposition to H.R. 4437. This bill calls for three main procedures: the first, the implementation of harsh penalties on employers who attempt to provide employment to illegal immigrants; the second, the classification of all illegal immigrants as felons; and the third, the construction of a 700-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexican border.

Although more than 90 percent of the protesters were Latino, Ochoa is bothered by the media's characterization of H.R. 4437 as a Latino issue. "Yes, we are the largest minority in the United States, so of course it affects many people in my community including myself. Can you help me for cringing, though? One way or another, every single person living in this country has had family members who immigrated to here. I think this is an issue that pertains to everyone living in the United States," Ochoa said. She illustrated her sentiments by referencing the world-famous poem by Pastor Martin Niemöller, "First They Came for the Jews," which concludes, "then they came for me/and there was no one left/to speak out for me".

Ochoa is a firm believer in the power of protest as an effective means of communicating with and voicing our discontentment towards our federal government. For many, including many non-Latino activists in Northampton, H.R.

4437 is not detrimental specifically to immigrant rights but to human rights as a whole. "I was at the protest because as a strong woman, I have made the decision to no longer remain quiet. I am working hard every single day to become a woman who is informed about the injustices occurring in this world every single day," Ochoa said.

Ochoa was encouraged by the tangible change she witnessed in Los Angeles in the days following the protests. Members of her community walked down the street proudly waving flags of their countries of origin. There were cars honking and people cheering in support. She saw one boy climb to the roof of his house and stand there yelling "Viva Mexico!" while vigorously waving the Mexican flag. "It was absolutely amazing. All in all I am very optimistic and believe we can do something about this," Ochoa said.

Ochoa also plans to participate in the nationwide boycott planned for May 1 calling on both legal and illegal Latino immigrants to refrain from purchasing products and attending school and work. The goal of the boycott is to demonstrate the immense contribution of Latino immigrants to the prospering U.S. economy and emphasize the real, perhaps as of yet untapped power of Latino immigrants to affect national politics. "We are needed. I mean, how come there is AOL Latino? How come when I was home during winter break, I watched "MTV en Espanol" 24/7? How come Dish Network actually accommodated my needs and put Reggaeton videos at the tip of my fingers? We have huge buying power! To cater to us means profitable results. After all, if money equals power then oh boy do we have it. You can bet I am going to partake in this event," Ochoa said.

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It's Almost Earth Day: Do You Know Where Your Recycling Bin Is?

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 4/20/06

Of all the weird holidays we are expected to toot horns and don hats for in April -- Anti-Circumcision Day on April 1, National D.A.R.E. day on April 13, and World Tai Chi and Qigong day on the 29 -- Earth Day of late has sunk to the bottom of our celebratory agenda. This is not to say that we should not do whatever it is we ought to do to appreciate un-circumcised people, drug education officers and slow meditative physical exercises, but April 22, the day on which we celebrate the Earth -- home to everyone with or without foreskin, on or off drugs and Qigong -- should not be a day off.

According to earthday.gov "Earth Day is a time to celebrate gains we have made and create new visions to accelerate environmental progress. Earth Day is a time to unite around new actions. Earth Day and every day is a time to act to protect our planet." If you have too much orgo homework to be creating new visions on a Saturday afternoon, the least you can do is wear green and not litter.

For those of us not in orgo. there are myriad Earth Day events around campus with our name on them including an Earth Day Festival on Chapin Lawn from 11:00 a. m to 3 p.m. on April 22, a Sustainability at Smith panel discussion from 12:00 to 1:00 in CC 103-104, a poetry reading at 4:00 on Friday hosted by Clean Energy for Smith and last but most certainly not least a showing of "Fern Gully" on Tuesday in Seelye 109. Who among us cannot spare a few hours to cheer on Crysta in her quest to save the world from evil Hexxus? Not only a prime specimen of cinematic excellence, this movie also has the power to effect change and is single-handedly responsible for several milk jugs full of hard-earned pennies shipped off to the Audubon Society and the like by one little girl who knew nothing about environmentalism but just really wished she were a sexy

fairy.

Undoubtedly, many of you own "Fern Gully" and the sequel, are coordinating the panel discussion on sustainability, gasp at even the thought of putting a cigarette out on the sidewalk and habitually bellow, "Everyday is Earth Day!" Although John McConnell, founder of Earth Day believes his Holiday should take place on March 21 as opposed to April 22, he is right in saying that a singular earth day is needed to increase the benefits of Earth Day and its influence. In other words, just because you do nice things for your mom every day doesn't mean you can ignore her birthday. After all, we do not call our planet Roommate Earth or Ex-Boyfriend Earth, whose birthdays may be understandably forgotten, but Mother Earth. You get the point. If you can't come to Mother Earth's birthday party, you aren't invited to mine!

Alas, if you are just a curmudgeon and celebration in any form irks you to no end, at least pick up a worm off the sidewalk and return it to the relative safety of Chapin Lawn. Who knows, someday you may be in need of a giant, seemingly omnipotent hand to come to your rescue. As the Magi Lune sagely and famously states in "Fern Gully," "There are worlds within worlds, Crysta. Everything in our world is connected by the delicate strands of the web of life, which is a balance between the forces of destruction and the magical forces of creation." Happy Earth Day one and all!

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Prospective students learn about the various organizations at Smith during the Org Fair on Friday, April 21.

What Do Prospectives Really Think of Smith?

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 4/27/06

I try to avoid patronizing prospies at all costs, seeing as I myself was one in the not so distant past. But they just look so cute with their little bags that match the daffodils and cups of Herrell's with their dirty little taster spoons in hand. Initially, the somewhat ambitious goal of this article was to rummage for and subsequently expose the true-life real story prospie perceptions of Smith. Unfortunately, most of the little rascals were incredibly hesitant to shed their admissions interview attitudes even long enough to say, "You think you know but you have no idea." These forthcoming Smithies weren't so forthcoming, despite my reassurances that their admission would not be revoked were they to cast any aspect of Smith in a negative light. One art history class was diplomatically described as "a bit dry" and another delightful prospie in a tie-dye shirt and pigtails worried that some extracurriculars might be "kind of competitive" and that there wasn't much social interaction between houses. I'll leave you readers to attribute deeper meaning to these rather vague musings.

One candid future comp-liter did explain that she loved the fact that Smith would

allow her to compartmentalize to some extent her academic and social lives- admitting that coming from "cow town" she was fed up with "who's dating who?" and "who broke up with whom?" infiltrating the classroom. I neglected to explain to her that most of this is left behind in the transition between high school and college whether or not there are Y chromosomes around as result of not having all of your classes with people whose birth weights and pets' names you have known for 10 years. Yes, I also come from "cow town."

Smith's campus becomes a bit of a circus in catering to eventual tuition-payers. Enter to see the amazing Italian students conjugate the subjunctive blindfolded! One of my dear friends, as a Gold Key, dustbusts her room and puts on an Oxford before every tour she gives, as eager to impress as if she were meeting a boyfriend's parents or a potential investor. I also recently heard of bio students donning lab coats and pretending to enthusiastically analyze data-which I am sure they do authentically on a regular basis-to muster scholastic zeal in the soon-to-be Smithies. Smith is heady, nervy and intellectually exciting and you bet your safety whistle we will give that impression at least one prescheduled weekend a year!

But enough of the cynicism. One thing that emerged in all the conversations I had was that having visited Smith, the majority of prospies were impressed by the energy they witnessed and felt around campus. Whether we were bullshitting, whether we have the weather to thank for our energy, whether we tend to put on a show on Discovery Weekend or whether this tangible energy really is a part of Smith, I can't venture to guess. Whatever the case may be, I was quite flattered. I also loved to hear over and over again "I could really see myself here," often followed by "You can dress however you want and nobody cares." It's true, I have worn some pretty ridiculous stuff-dino hats and tutus abound!-and no one has ever batted an eye, or at least they have had the courtesy to do it behind my back. Their optimism about horses of every color being able to find a niche both fashion-wise, academically and socially, is, based on my personal experience, not unfounded and I am proud that this doesn't go unnoticed even to visitors who have spent only a day or two on campus.

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Facebook Mini-Feed disturbs avid users

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 9/14/06

Klaatu barada nikto! Do not destroy the earth! Thus spoke Klaatu to Gort in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, and these were the otherwise articulated sentiments of many avid Facebookers the day of the arrival of the fleetingly infamous Facebook Mini-Feed.

For many students, what the Mini-Feed essentially enabled was efficient stalking. While mysterious letters, twisted candles and false notes were all elements of Nancy Drew's amateur sleuthing process, the same hush-hush information could now be accessed without so much as having to click on "My Friends." Facebooking quickly went from hands-on to fingertip-on.

"Before you could uncover these details if you were carefully monitoring your friends profiles but here it's ALL spelled out. It's invasive!" said Emily Cordes '09, a daily Facebook user.

It is difficult to deduce the precise nature of the threat aliens-like Gort-pose for humanity. Likewise, it is hard to pinpoint what exactly it was about the Mini-Feed that so disturbed the masses. Is it that Big Brother is watching? What if there was a Mini-Feed not only for our virtual lives but also for our real lives? (At 9:33 p.m. Jane Smith went to the bathroom and used 15 sheets of toilet paper. Jane Smith said "See you at Stir Fry Night!" to her lab partner at 10:45 a.m.). Or is it that we are embarrassed to be publicized spending more time living virtually than living literally? We all like to be techno-savvy, but perhaps not this techno-savvy.

For a few days, we lived in tumultuous times. The Mini-Feed had spawned a virtual rebellion and the founding of myriad Facebook-loathing Facebook groups

from "FACEBOOK REDESIGN SUCKS-PASS IT ON" to the charmingly terse "The New Facebook Blows." Following in the footsteps of our French counterparts, American students took a stand speaking out on the issues that most affect us. Only instead of education reform or job security, they chose Facebook. As a result of our unification under a common cause, Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg and his colleagues relented, returning us to the good old days of joining groups like "That Tree is Far Away," free from the prying eyes of friends, acquaintances and people we hooked up with.

Via an open letter, privacy settings were clarified by Mark, the now-repentant founder of Facebook, allowing users to carefully select which of their behaviors they would prefer to hide from their friends. For example, one might decide that snorkeling was no longer one of her favorite activities after an alarming experience involving flippers and a very large bruise. Thanks to the new privacy settings, she may now uncheck the box that says, "Publish stories when I remove profile info" and avoid reliving that trauma. Facebook has promised to NEVER publish stories about pokes, messages, profile views, notes and events and friends you reject or remove. This may disappoint self-defined addicts like Julia Kiefer '09 for whom the Mini-Feed came as a blessing in disguise: "Not only do I hate the new Facebook so much that I go on less, but when I do go on, the Mini-Feed cuts my stalker time in half," Kiefer said.

Others, like Jen Clark '09, have elegantly adjusted to the change. "It's actually growing on me. If I can see everyone's dating status, I'll be aware that they might be hurt and be more sensitive." While Clark is using her new-found power for good, there are those with more mischievous intentions. One boyfriend of an anonymous '08 Smithie, an American University student, suggested that they break off their Facebook relationship because "it would immediately show up on everyone's Mini-Feed and get them all riled up." When she declined his invitation to play "Let's manipulate the not-so-mini-feed and nice people like Jen Clark," her boyfriend urged, "Come on. Live a little," to which her friends responded that he should enroll in a rock climbing class if he was looking for adventure.

Despite widespread antagonism toward mini-feed, the updates have driven few to delete their accounts entirely. "For better or for worse, Facebook is like a global community," (note the decidedly Smith argot), "and cutting yourself off from Facebook would be like cutting yourself off from the world," Cordes said. Perhaps the token admonition for the post-Mini-Feed era is not "Don't do anything I wouldn't do," but "Don't do anything you don't want in the Mini-Feed." That or

Klaatu Barada Nikto.

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A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Reflections on a summer wasted

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 9/28/06

This summer I wasn't an intern:

This summer I wasn't an intern; I did several productive things. For example, I momentarily did grunt work at Iowa City's premier boutique hotel. It was no Soho House London, but I did learn never to eat crab cakes, never to have a wedding reception and how to artfully scatter rose petals on Egyptian cotton. The aforementioned premier boutique hotel is situated on Iowa City's premier people watching venue. The Pedestrian Mall, or "ped mall," is a place where one may sit and sip her cherry-almond Italian soda free from the screeches and honks of cars, semis, tractors and horse-drawn carriages alike. Lacking adventure or activity it is possible to spend hours whittling away one's time observing (anthropologically of course) the belle-de-peds. They come in one of two varieties: the politely spoiled girls who wander around the centre-ville all day smoking filched cigarettes, drinking coffee, doing the crossword and reading library books (Simone de Beauvoir), and the beau-de-peds riding vintage bikes, sporting newsboy caps and perching on ledges reading Kerouac and his cronies with rolled smokes tucked behind their ears. They mostly come out at night to make shadows under the streetlamps. If I wasn't doing that, I did this:

I went for drives:

One day my ring got run over by a car. I was hanging my arm out the window - like Pete and Pete's dad, a man whose confidence is directly related to how far his elbow protrudes when he's in the driver's seat - and it just slipped right off my finger. I immediately careened to the edge of the road and bounded out to the median to search for it. Some bland compact whizzed by. It was flattened. The

"gem" laying ten yards away was covered in tire treads. I had been listening to Fiona Apple: "If there was a better way to go then it would find me/I can't help but the road just rolls out behiiiiind me/Be kind to me, or treat me mean/I'll make the most of it/I'm an extraordinary machine." I salvaged the pieces and reassembled it with some 15-year-old 3M super glue I found in my dad's "adhesives drawer," not to be confused with the junk drawer where I found the paper clip with which to clamp it, or the twisty tie drawer that has become obsolete in the age of Ziploc. Now my ring has magical powers like the pack of Marlboro reds Flory resuscitated after it was run over by a semi, or like David's grandfather who lost his arm to a truck by sticking it too far out the window. But we'll make the most of it; we are extraordinary machines.

I rented movies:

When Meera and I go to "That's Rentertainment" we always end up renting the one movie that no one is interested in whatsoever. We always go in planning to rent sexy movies about Japanese seductresses/murderesses and then get sidetracked by things like "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody" on DVD or David flashing "Playmates 2006" in our faces until one of us shoves him into the Ms. Pac Man game. It stands where you once could score an egg salad sandwich dirt cheap at Pearson's Pharmacy back when the counter was manned by Mr. Pearson himself and not some slimy kid who claims to have invented the industrial bar and refuses to play anything except Sealab on the hanging TV screens. Half of the store's inventory is Troma films that everyone just pretends to have in order to seem cinematographically well rounded or some nonsense like that, so it is inevitable that we end up renting something like "Compozer Schmitz bekommt der Blues." It's about a depressed German pianist living in Brazil which we will invariably not watch because Meer will have a life guard staff meeting about stools in the pool, or I'll prioritize my dad's spaghetti over subtitles. But at least it was one of Meer's parents' 20 free rentals that haven't been ill spent on the entire season of "24." This will continue until they realize that the black sheep of the family has been sponging their Rentertainment Rewards and cut her off.

In Iowa City, I love the Hamburg Inn, a place where they just know you want double peanut butter cups in your malt, the public library where, at age 18, you can read aloud in the Children's Room to a homemade teddy bear and no one will bat an eye; and the gazebo in College Green park, with or without tornado damage.

There are things I do and love here in Northampton just as well. Here, Julia, Anny and I will talk a lot about watching "Valley of the Dolls" that Netflix sent but instead choose to prioritize Tyler's nightly pasta and stealing teabags; I will hold my breath and my ring crossing the bridge to Amherst; and someday the diner on Route 9 will just know that I want carrot cake and a black coffee.

P.S. If anybody has time, it would be lovely if you could send me a flash photograph of inside your purse and a list of the items inside for a future article - not the stuff that's usually in there but the stuff that's in there at any arbitrarily chosen moment.

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A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Black is the new smart, or how I quit smoking

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 9/21/06

Watching both Manhattan and Ciao Manhattan, we think it might be true that boys only like perfection or a beautiful mess. I'm neither. Based on what you've gleaned from girls with quirky haircuts in American Apparel ads, you might think that awkward has outgrown its awkward stage. But acknowledging one's own awkwardness has become a convenient way of asserting one's own beautiful messiness. Statistically, only very skinny girls with loads of mascara who have self-identified as "quirky" say things like "I'm terrible at parties because I'm insufferably socially awkward." No. You are overly thin and know that (statistically) 50 percent of the male race (the ones who aren't chasing the perfection on the dance floor) will find what you said endearing - but only if it isn't true (and only if you have a cigarette in your mouth).

As for me, I may be a mess, but it isn't glamorous. It would be lovely to have the power to transform surliness into a fashion statement, but I just end up ashing on myself or having the wrong runs in my black tights. And those of us who aren't perfect are at our absolute worst when we contemplate perfection, so that isn't an option, either. Perfection is roughly defined here as a pulled-together, ducks-in-a-row, nouveau-renaissance woman with shiny hair.

I once wrote a really terrible little passage about the rationalization of a teen smoker for an equally terrible gothic short story that I got a bad grade on. It went something like this:

"I smoke cigarettes when my hands are idle, when I feel jaded, when I want to feel jaded so that I can pretend to think that whatever the world has done to me is old hat; when sullen so that the sullen is by design and not me suffering, when f---ing

consequences is appropriate, to feel picturesque, when wearing black tights and black eyeliner, when it's icy on the catwalk and the fag is the prize for the courageous trek, when feeling ordinary.

"I have a certain pride, a wholly-misplaced pride in being a teen smoker. Here is an exchange. Him: You think I could bum one of those? Me: I suppose. They're Marlboro Red Hundreds. I hope you don't mind. I stick two in my mouth, light them both and hand one over. Him: Wow, real cigarettes. He takes a long drag. What's a girl like you doing smoking cowboy-killers? Me: I don't believe in lights, or menthols for that matter - it's like smoking toothpaste. And besides, every teenage girl is supposed to smoke Marlboro Red Hundreds. They're classic. Anything else is like sucking through a straw. Him: Yeah, I guess if you're gonna smoke. Me: Exactly."

Now, this is admittedly melodramatic and absurd, but I believe a little bit of it. I think people who wear all black do it to make themselves feel evil. Ursula would surely serve you tea and crumpets in her sea cave instead of stealing your voice if she would just explore periwinkle and coral. Color, like fettuccini alfredo, is a risky dish. If you wear too much of it, people will expect you to be cheerful, and that cheer to be justified. And if they sniff out insincere cheer, they judge you for it. This is not a science, but black may be the new smart.

When I left for Smith before my first year, and thought about the me that I would be upon return for winter break, it only half involved having learned things; the rest of the plan was to lose lots of weight because I want to become a skinny East Coast music-wizened, book-wormy, dark trendy-clothed beauty. Then I want to have black peacoats and become more sophisticated and enviable than everyone else, and smoke cigarettes and read and drink hot chocolate and ahh. I know I am delusional. Me become all skinny-legged with navy blue DKNY tights and flat boots and boat shoes and everything natural, boarding-school-worn-in and irresistible and tweedy and smart and mysterious. An Italian-German-French-Russian doll, with dark hair, white teeth, perfect skin, rosy cheeks, perfect white underwear and red toes...Needless to say, nope.

I eventually came to recognize resolutions that I could never before resolve and that I am still baby-stepping: cigarettes give you cancer, and eating too little is wretched. There are people who are smarter than you, more interesting than you, better artists than you, better dressed, wittier and prettier and can write better than you, and what a huge misplaced energy it is to live like Mary Karr in Cherry,

always trying to be smarter than the ones who are prettier than you and prettier than the ones who are smarter. Feeling sorry for oneself is not a noble or productive way to go about daily life. Inaction breeds inaction whether it's out of laziness or fear. Fulfillment is a matter of will. It's ok, I guess, if I'm not vengeful enough to be in vogue. And, I started flossing.

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A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Chronicles of an eBay addict

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 10/5/06

7:30 a.m.: Wakes up, brushes teeth.

8:00 a.m.: Negotiates - via e-mail - the payment and shipment of a '90s Russian Treasury Swatch with a very batty woman in Bristol. Although she can't yet identify the historical figures depicted on said Swatch she knows at least one of them was a czar, sees it as a learning opportunity and if nothing else has become adroit at converting GBPs to U.S. dollars.

9:00 a.m.: Sympathizes - over yogurt and honey - with a fellow addict's trials and tribulations in the search for a vintage Smith T-Shirt which is not optional because she really can't be bothered to wear things in herself anymore.

10:00 a.m.: Is unfazed by "that girl," having already engaged in ruthlessly competitive bidding five times since breakfast.

11:00 a.m.: Sitting in her Philosophical Novel class, she contemplates selling her soul on Ebay to finance the purchase of a cat-shaped art deco letter holder. Wonders how high the bidding will go and if that will be enough to cover the cat thing. Rabelais would have wanted her to have it.

1:00 p.m.: Forces a classmate to reassure her that there ARE things she likes besides clothes and that Italian is one of them.

5:00 p.m.: Receives e-mail from the CDO. Investigates the possibility of a job opening available for people qualified to spend other people's money on themselves. Perks include business cards with rosebuds on them, an office with

mahogany desks, overstuffed velvet chairs, chandeliers and lots and lots of yogurt-covered almonds. There would also need to be an enormous bulletin board covered in magazine clippings to legitimize the mission of the company.

6:00 p.m.: Hears tell of a gypsie-like leathery-faced eccentric selling cheetah fur coats for \$40 at a flea market in a city to which she has never been. Has premonition of becoming said eccentric later in life and not only remains undisturbed but feels strangely content. To be fair, as a blossoming heliophobe and technophile she need not fret much about becoming leathery-faced, especially if she wins the la mer auction ending at 8.

9:00 p.m.: Becomes discouraged by the Iliad but is slightly cheered by the knowledge that a miniature vase shaped like a Harrods delivery boy will probably solve everything.

10 p.m.: Becomes enraged upon discovering that Ebay's search criteria do not differentiate between red and burgundy shoes, runs screaming through the halls, "If I want red shoes, I want red shoes! Not red slaaaaashhhhh burgundy shoes!"

11 p.m.: Says her prayers and goes to bed.

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A Pocket Full of Mumbles

Present dos and don'ts

Elizabeth Pusack

Posted: 10/26/06

And now for some extremely frivolous and Eloise-ish things I always love to give as a present:

Flowers, except carnations or anything cheesy or dyed from Stop and Shop; Crabtree and Evelyn soap; fashion magazines; fancy mascara; jazz CDs; used books, especially books by people like Collette and Anais Nin that allow the recipient to romanticize a while, hopefully while gazing at a weeping willow; non-gimmicky art and fashion books for being cut up and used as wallpaper; anything homemade; a letter in the real live mail that says something significant and has stickers inside or Carebear Band-Aids!

Anything one of a kind; a story or mix tape-sometimes what you know is wrong is just right-or a drawing that can be found or drawn yourself. Any little strange thing you found in the street; books on tape, because they are absurd and irreverent; preserves, cheese, wine, or bubble bath; anything Burts Bees or Clinique-it's their advertising team-or most anything from Sephora. When you really get right down to it nobody can turn down Sephora, although it's really the sights and sounds of Sephora that seal the deal. Current maps, which I don't know if anybody but me wants, but everybody needs; luxury laundry soap.

Things I wouldn't give for a present-besides things that no one would ever want for a present-doom and heartache, for example:

Journals. Those who use journals are always very picky about them; lined, unlined? Spiral, leather-bound, little bookmark ribbons? Too many factors to regulate and every time they write secret wicked hush-hush things they will be forced to think of you. Novelty items, like personalized gel candles or grains of rice on lanyards. Almost anything with seashells on it can be safely bypassed. Calendars: they are too ominous-the whole time thing-and border on being novelty items. Giving a calendar as a present is like saying, "Pencil me in! Pencil me in goddammit," over and over again.

People usually haven't got a chance when it comes to clothes and jewelry. If I meet someone who gets it right, they will be a part of my life forever. I typically don't have enough gumption to attempt it in the reverse, except with dreadfully soft and old T-shirts because if a person can't appreciate those then you probably shouldn't have found them a present in the first place-and by "dreadfully" I mean "fantastically."

New hardcover books: I don't know why, but they terrify me to no end. They were invented to make people feel guilty and when you finally get a chance to read them they are heavy and grimace when you underline things. The shiny covers make you feel like they are already passé-like reading a Newsweek from 2004.

Posters-you can't force a person to like Bob Marley as much as you do.

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