

book review.

(the Creature's first ever!)



Tales of a Punk Rock Nothing

By Abram Shalom Himmelstein and Jamie Schweser

(Fiction, 159 pages)

Let's get one thing straight right off the bat—*Tales of a Punk Rock Nothing* is not about punk rock music. Please read this as a book review, because the last thing I want to discuss is the scenery of the book. Yes, there are five Riot Grrrls, a host of political hardcore bands, and one big Food Not Bombs gang, but they are just scenery. We could stick in Grinnell feminists, hippie bands, and DIVCO and still have the same story. What am I trying to say? This book should hit home, folks.

**“It’s all hollow.
Hollow. Hello, I’m,
hollow. Hello hollow.
Hollow. How low.”**

It all begins in Wilson, Tennessee. Elliot Rosenberg, fresh out of high school and pissed off, decides to smash the front window at the local hardware after hearing the manager make a racist comment. His rash action is the consequence of being inarticulate and spineless. Elliot knows that, so he backs his bags and moves to Washington D.C. in hopes of finding an environment that accepts him and helps him find out who he really is.

Very similar to many of us, I'd say. Some of us were cool in high school, some of us weren't, but I can bet money that most students wanted to come to Grinnell because they liked the atmosphere here more than at home. What was your first reaction to Grinnell? I loved it. Couldn't get enough of the nice people, activist groups, and celebrity upper classmen. The same goes for Elliot when he gets to D.C. and begins living in the Positive Change house, a militant-vegan-straightedge-feminist-punk collective; his senses are excited and he's ecstatic.

Just like our experiences at Grinnell, the grandeur fades for Elliot. He writes in his journal, "it's all hollow. Hollow. Hello, I'm Hollow. Hello Hollow. Hollow. How low." It's the story of being 20. Finding out you are, finding out who is fake, and finding out that people will make fun of you regardless. Elliot discovers the D.C. punk revolution and eventually sees right through it. Yet for all his accusations and complaints about his surroundings, he finds that they all wind up pointing at himself too.

Don't get the impression that *Tales* is terribly reflective and brooding. It's not. *Tales* is energetically told through letters, journal entries, and Elliot's own 'zine, *minDCleaner*. Roughly pieced together, the story reads just as Elliot is. It's a hodge-podge collection of fragmented thoughts, daily epiphanies, and occasional rants that explain Elliot perfectly. Stepping back from all the little scraps, the reader can see a mosaic of who Elliot becomes in the end.

So, go read this book! It's a great story that will force you to look at your experiences here at Grinnell all over again. Better to read it now, in the midst of it all, than in five years when you find yourself old and filled with nostalgia. -Matt Ryan

Tales of a Punk Rock Nothing is available through
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