

Janie Goodmansen's Reply*

Jim Richards

Jim asked me, encouraged me, even begged me
 not to do it. *You're surrounded by seedy lies,*
 he said, *don't sew them into your breasts.* Did he worry
 it would reflect badly on him? I don't know,
 I couldn't ask, and he couldn't understand. His breasts
 were bigger than mine. (He hates it when I say that.)
 People think it's D-cup ambition: "Boobs or Bust!"
 But that's not it. As a teacher, I know how close D is to F.
 And I knew what it would cost. I had nothing.
You're not flat, he said, *just small, and small is cute.*
 After all the nursing—my offerings seemed so sad—
 I couldn't even fill an A. I only wanted to redeem the goods
 God gave me, with a little interest, "mine own with usury."
 I bought swimsuit after swimsuit every spring
 and sent them back. I took a knife and cut the foam cups
 from one and doubled them in what I wore.
 But that's not it. I was missing the virtues that soften,
 that warm. I know, it could've been worse. *Look around you,*
 he said, often. *Which body would you trade for yours?*
 That's not it. I wanted to trade what my teen feels when I hug him
 for comfort. I wanted half the generosity my sister had
 surgery to reduce. I wanted a lower grade, B instead of A.
 Nothing that stood out because it was absent
 or because it was present. I wanted love to pillow the cares
 of those I love. Not a sternum. Not a heart of stone.

*A response to Darlene Young's "Angels of Mercy," first published in *Segullah*, May 2007, and reprinted in *Fire in the Pasture: 21st Century Mormon Poets*.