



"I was told
I was free (after
Stephen Burt)"
by Janaina
Tschäpe, 2015.

A Picture and a Poem

In a cacophony of crisscrossing lines,
the artist Janaina Tschäpe finds expression
for Stephen Burt's reflection on the
wonderful, terrible weirdness of being a kid.

MY 1979

I was Mr. Spock being raised by Dr. Spock.
I was told I was free,
but only free to be me.
I knew I loved my digital clock.

I would have trusted my instincts if I had any,
or if I could have given them a name.
I was deceived by the body that I mistook for a bad penny,
by the shimmery beauty of my immediate peers,
which I mistook for fame.

By wearing them over and over without socks
I let my one pair of gold tennis shoes fall apart.
I regarded the temporary reassembly of the Styrofoam packing parts
that came with small household appliances as a fine art.
Inhabited by C-3POs, they became
starbases, or soft-focus all-white homes of the future.
I wanted to think that they had nothing to fear.
I ate peanut butter and pimento sandwiches every day for at least a week,
at most, for half a year.

I had become convinced
that character was fate.
Almost anything could result in tears.
I wanted to stay at Alison's house overnight
and wake up as a new girl, or a new mutant,
or a new kind of humanity, engineered
to travel at more than half the speed of light,
but I wasn't allowed. My bedtime and I were both eight.

STEPHEN BURT