

ALEXANDRA CHASIN. *KISSED BY*. FC2, 2007. 174 PP. PAPER: \$17.95.

Some readers will agree with a blurb on the back of *Kissed By* that labels Alexandra's Chasin's debut work of fiction "experimental." It's not as if experimental writers can be easily profiled, separated from the main stream of writers into a straggly line leading to a holding area where authoritarian Contract novelists inspect the baggage of shadowy literary figures who require detention. Gabriel Josipovici stated in an essay that reviewers view experimental writing as "a sub-branch of fiction, rather like teenage romances or science fiction perhaps..." and Gilbert Sorrentino regarded the word as a "euphemism for that work which cannot be called 'serious.'" Chasin is an exploratory writer. The eighteen pieces in *Kissed By* roughly divide into those which plunge into the cerebral, the composition of the work being the narrative, and those replete with deep, mature emotions. "Toward a Grammar of Guilt" and "Composer and I" are examples of the first category, where we can enjoy Chasin's political engagement and inventiveness; "B. & G. & I" and "Lynette, Your Uniqueness" exhibit bitterness, wit, and a delighted enjoyment found in listening to sounds and converting them into language. This is not simple play with language because one can--the flaw marring "They Come From Mars" (each word four letters long) and "Kant Get Enough" (filled with puns)--but because it's fun to let the imagination go its merry way. This collection is most serious for being at times humorous, allowing for contrasts and juxtapositions of mood. In Chasin's world, her lovelorn or lovesick creations can hear birds say "Cheater. Cheater. Cheater. Cheater... Read. Weepweep. Read. Weepweep" and make one feel a tug of recognition as well as an appreciation of a truly fine ear.