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THE GALLERY

Spring 1986



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THE GALLERY, SPRING 1986

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ELLEN'S IMAGINARY GLOBE

Last pins of light pierce
precise, elusive glance
pins my place on the map.
Assembled names rise
to darkness hiding
no heads in no clouds,
no body in no sand.
The rowboat nothing
but blue fading,
nothing but turning,
a great eye closing.
We file out,
having seen different films.

“So...what'd you think?”
The night air kisses —
your lips should be
in another place
counting revolutions
of imaginary globes,
whispering, “One, two,
three, look at me.”
Dark bows, lets us pass,
the dream sustained
in automotive acceleration.
If you watched me
while you drove,
lights crossing the face
with a gentle slap,
an approving rouge,
the photograph speaks:
I've been here before.

In the first room,
women in black
spin and spin the yarn.
One measures it so,
the unseen hand cuts
a breath's length,
then shape begins.
She might be knitting a shawl
or nothing, nothing at all.
Each moment the one pulls
through and holds, pulls
and colors and warms
grateful hands, cold feet.
She might be making a scarf
or just escape inside a stitch —
her magic no witch,
no chart of far-away stars,
no body in no sand.

The pattern becomes clear
held in the circle of light
at the edge of her chair —
a stage or meetingplace.
Shadows cross and re-cross,
forming hundreds of pins
marking points on her face,
each a body in the desert,
water on tip of tongue,
a ride into the sunset,
the rowboat fading.

And the Great Eye closes...

George B. Pratt

TRAVEL

A careful ripping of fabric
attends the takeoff,
followed by the sure ebbing of colors,
closing my eyes, deeper violet black —
the end of my reach.

There are the palms pushed forth
in praise, the faint odor of garages
and heat like hellmouths yawning,
whispering a miracle.

Len is breathless, fixed on a point
like a star, becoming a speck
in a greater Blue circumference,
a bit of dust tears the eye
and the gray humming of morning.
His foot toes the edges
where water cools, threatening,
inviting the inevitable thoughtless
look across: "What's over there?"
"Portugal," I return,
the electrical circuit completed.
"Oh yeah...the western side of Spain."

Spain looms in the imagination
violent, brutish, burning,
coily insisting its wink of tourism,
its vaulting language, and finally,
upon closer inspection, its mystery.
What will happen to the best of us
in that unpronounceable abstract —
"What'll happen to me, tomorrow?"
selfish, narrow, and completely true.
It's never simply a matter of walking to Spain
(the problems of underwater breathing aside) —
the chessplayer's face, the measured step —
there's the urge to turn the head,
to see Hades or the burning city
punished by some obscure Wrath.

There's countless Pillars of Salt
stringing the Earth to the Moon,
the Moon to the Stars,
the Stars to the Black,
like Athena's bright pearl necklace.
Len and I both know
where pearls come from.

George B. Pratt

“FRANK’S ESTABLISHMENT”

The first time we went to Frank’s he was waiting for us underneath the canopy out front. He was imposing, bald, and wore an enormous navy blue suit with a red rose embroidered on the breast pocket: Frank’s emblem. “We always welcome such fine looking ladies as yourselves in this establishment,” he said without smiling, “please take a seat at the table of your choice.”

“This is very odd,” I said to Lucy as we squeezed past the enormous bouncer who was staring at Lucy in her day-glo muumuu. She stared right back. Once safely through the door we tried to appraise the scene while our eyes adjusted: mirrored walls and ceiling, ruby red carpeting, a small linoleum dance floor lit up in ultraviolet — it was the Polyester Passion Pit. “I’m so glad I accessorized with plastic,” Lucy whispered to me as we made our way to a table.

Later Frank stopped by to introduce himself. “Pleased to know you,” he said without asking our names. He shook our hands with a practiced, pudgy palm and looked into our eyes: “Joyce! Bring these ladies another round on the house.”

Under these slightly menacing but intriguing circumstances, Lucy and I became Happy Hour regulars. When we brought friends along (“You have to *see* this place to believe it”), Frank would shake everyone’s hand. “I like your gang,” he’d say, patting a shoulder, “I’m pleased that you continue to patronize our establishment.” Oh boy, did we patronize Frank. We’d giggle and say “Can yuh buh-*leeve* it?” in imitation of Frank’s blue-collar manner of speech. But he was big, and we could tell that nobody wanted to piss him off. That first afternoon we’d met him he’d had a stitch in his lower lip. Lucy, sensing scandal, asked him how it happened. “Domestic difficulties,” he said. “Now, I’d never punch a lady. . . but it weren’t no lady that gave me this.” It had been his ex-wife. Frank had a habit of lowering his head while he talked to you, looking you straight in the eye; it gave me the impression that if he’d been a bull and she a toreador he would have found great satisfaction in goring her to death. We sympathized and he gave us another round on the house. We had to stop sympathizing or we wouldn’t have made it out the door. Frank was generous, as well as a rich source of cruel and curious speculation: Why did he like us? We drank too much, talked too loudly, ate all of the free hot Happy Hour food and then left lousy tips. Most townies hated the college kids — evidently Frank felt an affinity for us students of human nature.

Halloween-time, Frank’s went through some changes. Cardboard ghosts with crepe-paper fringe bodies spun on the colored disco lights and the waitresses had to dress in costume. I met Cat Woman in the ladies’ one evening. “Did you do your own make-up?” I asked, “It looks really good, for grease paint.” She put her tray down on the sink and tugged at her fishnet stockings, saying, “Yeah, but I don’t know how I’m gonna get this black shit off my nose.” I sympathized — later she brought us extra cheese-flavored popcorn on the sly.

Frank joined us that night, his very presence ensuring as much alcohol as we cared to pour into our bodies. “Say! Are those leather?” he asked, feeling Lucy’s pants leg under the table. “Oh, yes,” she answered, looking across at me, all innocence: “One hundred per cent Italian *bull*.” He kept his hand on her knee while ordering black coffee, and Lucy just blinked her wide blue eyes with a look for me that said, “I can’t believe this man is for real.”

But I couldn’t help admiring him. His place was tacky but he was sincere and had obviously worked hard to get where he was; I had the feeling that he hadn’t started with much. When he discovered that we were philosophy majors he said, “Philosophy? I *love* philosophy. Nietzsche, Hobbes, Hegel, Aristotle. . . I know ‘em all.” Lucy and I hated to talk philosophy, so she asked him, “So who’s ya’ Alma Mater, Frank? Where’d ya’ matriculate?” in a voice that mimicked his.

“All over,” he answered with a hint of pride, “mostly to night classes. I never graduated *per se*, but I did all the studying! History, philosophy, economics, everything.” Lucy and I exchanged another look that said, ‘This is *not* a philosopher we’re talking to.’ He caught it and shook his head, “You girls.” He ran his hand over his bald head, then replaced it on Lucy’s knee with a fatherly expression. “You girls need a philosophy of life. Did I ever tell you my philosophy of life? Let me tell you a little about myself, just a little or you’d be here all night, I got so much to tell. Also, I’m busy.” The chair creaked as he settled back and folded his hands.

“Let me tell you about the four worst things that can happen to a person, then maybe you’ll understand where I’m coming from.” He held up his forefinger. “First is for a child to be abandoned at birth, as I was. As an orphan I had nothing, no one, nowhere to call home. Abandoned children grow up to be extremely loyal individuals, for good or bad — they’ll stick with you like glue ‘cause psychologically they’re still looking for to create a stable world for themselves.”

"This brings me to the second worst thing that can happen to a person, which is this: to have to kill an enemy, justify it as having been in defense of your country, and then be considered a murderer upon your return for having done your duty. I was in Vietnam, I was one of the Black Berets, the most highly trained commando unit over there. The Berets look to recruit people who were abandoned children, such as myself, because they know they'll be intensely loyal to their fellow Berets in life and death situations. Yeah — I spent my time in hell. I'm one of the most decorated vets in Southeastern Connecticut. Look at this —" he took a card from his wallet to show us. It said 'Bangs-Wilkie, Frank' and entitled him to priority treatment at any hospital in the country. What kind of a name is *that*, I wondered; those orphanages must get pretty creative. He's probably named after the night nurse.

"The third worst thing is to lose a loved one, not through death — though death is bad — but because of separation or divorce. To place all your trust in someone and then have her throw it back in your face — seventeen years of marriage and now she and her son-of-a-bitch lawyer, excuse my French, are *still* dragging me through a hedge ass-backwards."

"But what about rape?" I asked him.

"Rape," he said to me, "can be fought. You can take steps to prevent it, you can carry mace or a whistle or train yourself to fight. Whereas you can't do anything about the three things I've been talking about: an abandoned baby is left to his fate, and if he's a trusting individual he's screwed again."

"How is the divorce?" smiled Lucy, getting him off the subject of one kind of sexual assault and on to another.

"Getting through, getting through the courts. What I'm thankful for is that my daughter is too old to be affected by it."

"You have a daughter?" we asked in unison. I wondered if she was as big as Frank, a sobering thought.

"She's about your age, you girls; just out of college. I set her up real nice in a New York apartment and she's got a job in a modelling agency."

"She's a model?" Lucy was interested, being an avid reader of fashion magazines.

"She's an assistant to one of the scouts. She's gonna work her way up. I says to her, 'April, a model's looks last five years if she's lucky and then boom! She's waiting tables. Use your *brains* to get on top and stay there.' She's good-looking enough to model, though. I'm real proud of her, she's had everything I never did."

"Does she ever come up to visit you?" asked Lucy, wanting a look at her too.

"I expect she will soon," replied Frank with his hand back on Lucy's knee. "You two should meet her, she's a lot of fun."

Our wish came true the next week — we were sitting at the bar the day the prodigal returned. Lucy spotted her immediately. "You can't get a haircut like that on Bank Street," she said, "That's Sahag, he does all the models." I was about to say that I could have done as well with a Swiss army knife when April settled down two seats away and ordered a scotch "so stiff you could iron a shirt on it." That shut us up — we stared at her from behind our Toasted Almonds. She was thin, of medium height, and had wild red hair teased into frightening positions. She wore a dress too sexy for New London and definitely too sexy to ask her father for money. Lucy knew right off that she had to be broke. "Look at her stockings," she whispered to me — they had runs in them, and her shoes looked pretty bad too. "Maybe she's going Bohemian," I whispered back. Lucy shrugged and looked around for Frank. We weren't used to paying for our own drinks and Frank hadn't been in all afternoon.

April downed her scotch and ordered another. Finally I asked the barmaid, "Has Frank been in today?" April turned to look at me, then at the barmaid. "No, not yet." I shrugged at Lucy, and she glanced over my shoulder; I turned to find April beside me.

"You know Frank?"

"Uh-huh."

Well?"

"Pretty well," I answered, "You're April, aren't you?"

She smirked and said, "Uh-huh. You two together? Hey Joyce, two more for my friends here." Lucy, thrilled, jumped to introduce herself, and soon we were all old pals. We told her how we got to know Frank (said Lucy, "He's got *some grip*") and she gave us the lowdowns on the life and loves of April Bangs (she dropped the Wilkie when she left home, "for effect"). She wasn't above dumping on her father: "One of the ninety most decorated vets in Southern Connecticut hasn't paid my American Express bill yet." We sympathized and got another round. We found out that she lived on St. Mark's Place and had had a succession of unsuccessful love affairs with persons of either sex. "At least the women still talk to me. Men are shits." After another round I was beginning to lose focus and Lucy put her hand on my arm to stand up. "I haveta go pee," she slurred, weaving across the empty dance floor towards the men's room.

"Being a Beret's brat sucked," April continued, pouring herself another shot. "You know, I'm practically an artist, not a fucking jar-head like Frank. Military life drove my mother up a tree and me right after her. That's why Frank's is here, it's his new platoon. Which makes him the Supreme Commander of the Southern Connecticut Night-club Circuit, huh?"

I couldn't get it straight. "So how'd he get to be so hot if he started with nothing, no one and no place to call home?" I asked. Shit, was I looped.

"New London's own Don Corleone, that's Frank," April laughed grimly. "Marlon Brando he's not — but don't get him mad, he'll have your brains blown out, I've seen it happen." The expression on my face must have conveyed unheard of dumbfoundedness because she nearly choked on her scotch with amusement.

"Why don't you two girls talk a little *louder*, huh?" Frank put his hand heavily on April's shoulder and rotated her slowly to face him. She was wiping the tears from her eyes, then said, "Oh, hi!" Frank looked like an antagonized bull again, and April now a little like a toreador without a cape. I said a silent prayer to keep Lucy in the men's room a little longer. Across the room I heard her crash into the hors d'oeuvres table.

"I see you've already met April," Frank said to me, looking into April's eyes, and it occurred to me that I'd never seen him smile.

April didn't miss a beat. "Hey pops," she managed to laugh, "Where'd you pick these two up? You might have to carry them back."

Lucy returned with a plateful of fish sticks. "These are *wonderful*," she insisted, spilling a few on the bar. "You must try one." It tasted like potting soil. "Silly," she said, "that one fell in the *australopithecus*. Have a clean one."

"April," said Frank, gently taking her arm, "why don't we have our little reunion back in my office?" April stood up, trying to pull her arm away, but Frank held tight.

"Hey, wait — *no*," she struggled, "What fucking office? Hey, I just — Dad, let *go*!" She jerked her arm from his grip and tripped over her stool. The bouncer appeared, looking prepared to escort her into the parking lot, but Frank shook his head. April righted herself by pulling up to the bar. She glared at Frank. "Who in hell do you think you are?" she yelled, flinging her glass to the floor — it didn't break but bounced quietly on the carpeting and rolled up against Frank's foot. He bent to pick it up, then replaced it on the bar.

"My daughter here," he said to her, "lacks discipline. She doesn't know when the fun and games are over. Oh, her mother set a *fine* example —"

"Ha!" April reached for her bottle but Frank pinned her arm to the bar. She turned her face away and pretended not to hear.

"You know, I can cause just as much of a scene as you, my darling daughter, I feel no embarrassment whatever in telling you where I stand right here and now. I seen your mother lie, cheat and steal me blind and don't think I haven't seen you do the same, going down the same ugly path in life. 'When the going gets tough, the tough CHEAT' that's your motto, isn't it? ISN'T IT, APRIL, MY DEAR? Then you waltz in here like you *own* the place! And what kills me is that you got nobody in the world to cheat but me, and I let you do it."

He removed his hand from her arm, leaving white marks where his fingers had been. April was drooping and I couldn't see any expression on her face. Her hand was around the bottle of scotch but she made no move to pour it. Then she looked up.

"Nobody to cheat. Cheat? Nobody to cheat? Whaddaya talking about, I got *plenty* of people to cheat, I got you, me, ma, my boss, Bloomingdale's, American Express... Money, money, money like shit coming out of your ass, just *begging* me to wipe it all over New York. I don't know what to do with myself I got so much shit." Now she poured herself a drink, slopping the rest of the bottle on to the bar. Frank didn't stop her. "You gave it to me, you did indeed. A lesson well learned." She toasted herself. "To me: A-plus," and tossed back a good three shots-worth.

Frank didn't let her hit the floor, but caught her under the arms before she fell too far. I jumped up too, but Frank already had her close in his arms. She was dwarfed next to him, limp and barely conscious; she tried to drape her thin arms around his shoulders. "Daddy?" He kissed the top of her head and smoothed her hair, rocking her back and forth saying, "It's okay, baby, it's okay."

Lucy and I never heard about the fourth worst thing that could happen to a person. Lucy said it would be to have someone skip out on his tab and then have to go break his thumbs. I thought that maybe being blind, deaf and dumb would be worse, since Frank was already without taste. Actually since April's been around they've taken the mirrors off of the ceiling, but now they make us buy our own drinks. And when Lucy comes in wearing some wild outfit and punches Frank on the arm, saying "Yo Frank! How 'bout dem Yankees?" he even smiles, and says "You girls — you making fun of me?"

CAMELION

In New York I am Burgandy,
Burgandy and beautiful and blameless.
I sway with your glance,
And follow your eyes
Around and around as they
Trace my visage.

Getting ice cream I'm bosenberry sherbet.
Getting dinner I'm barbequed ribs.
Whatever you want I will give you,
And whatever you give I will take.

First I'm blue, then I'm brown, finally black.
When you're bored with my shade I transform.
But just when you think I'm the right shade of biege,
I dissolve and you're left with my glow.

In Connecticut I turn into jade,
Jade and jumbled and juicy.
I capture his breath,
And run by his side
Through the woods,
Where he shows me his path.

When we dance I'm a jingling gypsy.
When we laugh I am jello that shakes.
Whatever he wants I will give him,
And whatever he gives I will take.

Call me Jasper or Joanie or James,
When I'm jade I do nothing but smile.
And just when he thinks that my shade is divine,
I surprise him and turn into gold.

Ondine Appel

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The ragged grey foulard
Tied in a pristine knot, the only
Spot of color on the bench.
Dominion of the second city where
The academicians' pages are eviscerate
In the poverty of casting off
Leading to the apostolic.

An old man upon his lectern
The gold-flected eyes edging out
Of layered cashmere in the sun
Watching a stark sanctuary
Remembering the well-worn breviaries
Of his analyses, almost sanctified.
But the power of such relics
Some martyr's finger, dissolved
Through an age of pilgrimage to this spot.

And yet, in a forgotten corner
The muttered words are Holy
Admonitions of forgiveness
For a dove cooing softly, fed
With crumbs from his gentle hands
At rest in the lap of a chesterfield coat.

Jonathan Bragdon Leff

THE DEATH OF IMAGES

I suppose to construct lovely things
Around me as in glassy waters
I see my self. Perhaps the shape
Of my hands could hope to capture
The globe and set it spinning
That makes the waters move.

In a lover's tide, the sand
Only hopes to move within waves
And is mixed into some shore.
A gentle pounding I could wish
Into some shape and yet breaks down.
But of all primal things I refine
Into a sugary moon, again
Dropping down to the sea, dissolve
Into mixtures these hands would hold.
And all that is left is the web
Which tries to capture wind.

Jonathan Bragdon Leff

COUPLE

They sit underneath
An oak tree with
Not much difference
Between them except
The way the wind
Whispers in the leaves
Of his hair she notices
And the acorns
She has piled in her lap.

Not much difference
Except for a tree
Branching over
A receptive earth.
The only difference.

Jonathan Bragdon Leff

WATER-LILIES

In the forest of a brook the light
Shines through wind-swept shadows
Brinded with the leaves' prediction
In the water, the rich dash drawn
of your hair.

You kneeling over stone and cool moss
Caress your small feet beneath the dress
Of a white daydream, the only wholeness
Of a gaze to sky you sail as I catch
a photograph.

Grainy in a dull hand, with a timed veneer
The grasp of fingers pressing through
The moment of that water, some finite fill
Then rushing past its mark to that strewn pond
you gazed over.

The sun leaps up from under that afternoon
Your look, a scene I hold in black and white
your color.

Jonathan Bragdon Leff

“ABOVE IT ALL”

‘I hate Chicago’ I thought as the cab moved through traffic on the straight, painfully flat, drab and shabby street, on the way to my sister’s house for Thanksgiving.

“Felix, why don’t you ever wear any of the clothes I buy for you?” My mom asked, she always asks me that. I think she just doesn’t remember what she ever gets me. “Chicago sure has changed since your father and I used to live here. Oh, that’s it 1928 North Sheffield — over there.” It wasn’t much from the outside, a far cry from our Fifth Avenue apartment my sister left not too many years before. The lights on the street weren’t on — it was dark.

“That must be George’s touch,” my mother said as she wiped her feet on the orange astro turf mat with “welcome” written in white letters. George is my sister’s husband.

The door opened into their livingroom/diningroom, the small kitchen was off to one side and a bathroom off to the other. An unsafe looking wooden circular staircase hung down from a hole in the ceiling over in the far corner. Luraine, my sister, described the furnishings as sparse “George likes it that way,” she said softly. George was in the kitchen cooking something that smelled like cabbage. Luraine was tall and big, thick eyebrows and glasses made her look a little like Groucho Marx, but that’s not nice, besides she doesn’t smoke. My mom is also tall, but since she has gotten older she isn’t as tall as she used to be. I, however, am not tall.

They were playing jazz on their expensive looking stereo — I hate jazz. “How was your flight?” Luraine asked.

“Do you mind if I put the bags down here.” I said and put them by the door.

“Terrible,” mom answered. “Rear seat of your pants-white knuckles, Midway Airport is absolutely the pits.” The flight was fine. “What is George cooking — it smells wonderful?”

“Oh,” Luraine smiled, “no, the ah, sink is backed up and he is . . .” I laughed. “It’s been a while since I’ve seen you, Felix, how’s college?” She looked very serious.

George walked in and turned to Luraine, “I think I fixed it, and I set the traps.” He turned to my mother, “we have mice. Hello, Mrs. Winter, Felix, how do?” He shook our hands and smiled. He got some slimy stuff on mine which I tried to discretely wipe off on my pants. George was from the Mid West, and he was balding.

“Travelling on Thanksgiving day was really a good idea though,” I said, “there wasn’t much of a crowd at all.”

“Well, Felix, I don’t know. It was still a real zoo, and you know what kind of zoo La Guardia can be this time of year.” My mom said, cut off by Luraine motioning us to sit down; except there really wasn’t much to sit on. In one corner of the livingroom part, there was a yellow folding director’s chair, and there was a pile of pillows in the middle of the floor. Mom got the chair and George and I got a pillow — I hate sitting on the floor.

“Now did you want anything to drink? I have some goat cheese dip I made. I’ll go get that,” Luraine said.

“I’ll have a Perrier,” I said.

“Make that two, with a twist of lime,” said my mother, but Luraine was already in the kitchen.

The dinner was cold and dark, not the colorful array mother usually makes. There was a smoked turkey, without stuffing, cold wild rice, dark cranberry sauce, and peas that smelled like cabbage, with onions — I can’t eat onions.

Just as some of the Christmas spirit is lost in warm climates, like Los Angeles and Miami, Thanksgiving outside New England just isn’t the same. We usually went out to our house on the Vineyard.

“To Thanksgiving,” my sister said raising her glass of Andre.

“To the cowboys and Indians,” George said, and smirked. I just looked over at my mother who was taking several very deep breaths. We all raised our glasses and clinked them.

My sister had gone for a rather unusual center piece. A large glass bowl, “a wedding present,” she had said, filled with water, with three hideous phallic looking flowers floating in it. “I tried to get gardenias,” she had said, “but they didn’t have any.” But that’s my sister, she tries hard at everything, but gets nothing right. The round flat wax candles she also had floating in there, fizzed and all went out.

“So, how’s the lumber business?” My mother asked George.

“Do you think we should turn the lights on, it’s awful dark in here, I can’t hardly see my fork in front of my face.” he said. “Oh, not bad, Mrs. Winter, you know how it is.”

“What about you Luraine, are you going to get a job?” My mother turned to her.

“Mom,” my sister answered.

“I think I’ll turn on the lights,” I said and got up to find the switch.

“And let there be light,” George said before I could turn it on. A five hundred thousand watt bulb flashed on suspended from the ceiling. The paper oriental shade did absolutely no good. We all squinted, and Luraine’s make-

up hidden bad skin became more evident.

"Mom, are you having trouble breathing?" I asked as I sat down.

"Well, yes. But I'll be all right." She breathed heavily.

The turkey was not very good, but I ate a lot of it, trying to keep even with George maybe. The wine was even worse, but my sister drank an awful lot of it, to keep up with mom maybe.

"Is there anymore of that apple juice left?" George asked. He got up from the table and walked towards the kitchen. "You know if you drink enough of the stuff your piss smells like apples." He disappeared into the kitchen. My mother took some more deep breaths.

"So, Felix," my sister started, "How's college going; do you have a girlfriend?"

"Oh, tell her about your girlfriend," my mother said, "she knit him a sweater."

"Mom," I said and took a bite of smoked turkey skin.

"He doesn't like to talk about it," mother answered for me.

"Did she really knit him a sweater?" Asked George as he walked back into the room.

"Yes and forget it," I said. "George did you watch the Bears game last Sunday?"

"No, our TV is broke; it only works on the VCR."

"Too bad," I said.

"Mom are you feeling ok?" Luraine asked, "You don't look so good."

"Well actually," mom started, S-N-A-P!

"Oh good," George said, "I think we got one," and he got up and went to the far corner of the room. "Yes indeedy, and he's a beaut."

"George caught a mouse," Luraine said. He unsprung the trap from the animal's crushed skull, picked it up and walked back towards the table with it.

"Maybe I should throw it away," George said and turned to the kitchen. S-N-A-P! "Oh God," he said from the kitchen, two in one night — amazing."

"I think I need a shot," my mother said. "I really can't breathe."

"Mom, do you have your inhaler?" I asked.

She wheezed. "No — damn it — no."

"Isn't that hospital near here, Northwestern something or other?" I asked.

"Yes," said Luraine, "not too far."

"Well, lets go," I said.

"Ok, our doctor is away so . . ."

"Come on," my mother said. The three of us got up and went to get our coats.

"Where are you guys going?" George asked, emerging from the kitchen — "what about the pumpkin pie?"

"We're going to the hospital," Luraine said, "Mom can't breathe — maybe you should wait here." And the three of us left.

"I can't believe she dropped us off at the wrong door." My mother said.

"Mom, just give the man your Blue Cross card," I said, then they shuffled her past the swinging doors out of sight. A little later Luraine walked into the waiting room, which smelled like a bus station, and told me what a pain in the ass it was trying to find a parking space. The place was surprisingly busy for Thanksgiving — mostly drunk people. One very tall black woman came up to me and slammed the first two fingers of her hand against her lips a few times and asked me if I had any. She asked my sister then said loudly.

"One of your mother fuckers gots to have one. Waz za matta yous."

We waited. 'Jeopardy' was playing on wall mounted television. "Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt."

"What are the presidents on Mt. Rushmore," Jill — a contestant answered.

"Anybody knows that" Luraine said. There were a lot of big people around. One very drunk looking woman came in with a towel wrapped around her hand and screamed that she had stuck her arm down the garbage disposal.

"Just trying to get my ring," she said.

Finally they let the two of us back to see mom. She was in a curtain partitioned off section of a large clean looking room. She had a tube running out of her nose and another coming out of her arm. Some wires were attached to her chest, emerging from the neck of her gown and connected to a heart monitor thing. She was a scary sight.

"I think I'm having an anxiety attack," said Luraine.

"How are you, mom?" I asked.

"Better, Felix," she took a deep breath, "better."

Luraine sat down on the floor. "I don't feel so good — I hate hospitals."

"Happy Thanksgiving Mom," I said.

"Thanks."

Taxiing down the runway the next afternoon, all I could see out the window was rain. My stomach was upset and I thought about the snack they were supposed to serve us soon. The young man on the other side of my mother, wearing a Motley Crue concert tee shirt, a leather jacket, reading a 'Swamp Thing' comic and listening to his walkman looked stoned. He was completely oblivious to Wendy, our Cabin Attendant, telling us what to do if the oxygen masks came down. My mother watched intently, and I looked to see if there was a barf bag in the seatback in front of me.

The rain started to streak across my window as we took off. I thought about the little tan boy I saw while we were waiting to board the plane, and his wonder as he looked at the jet through the glass. I thought about the ditzzy looking people that pushed their way to the front of the check in line saying that they were first class. My mother said that people like that shouldn't travel more comfortably than us. She was right.

Two old women behind us were talking very loudly to each other. They should pop their ears. "Are you allowed to use the toilet while this thing is on the ground?" We weren't on the ground.

"Where does it all go?" the other one asked. My mother had her eyes closed and her hands firmly grasping the arm rests. I thought about going to the bathroom on airplanes — I had this overwhelming fear that right when I got my pants off the plane would start to go down. Cruising 600 miles an hour, backwards, with my pants down, to a certain death, was not the way I wanted to go. I hoped the snack wasn't too bad.

Going through the clouds was bumpy it always was. The captain kept the fasten seatbelt sign illuminated. I hated going through clouds and I hated Thanksgiving — always seeing people I didn't want to see, going places I didn't want to go.

My mom was taking deep breaths and I couldn't hear any weasing, I guess that's a good sign. The guy on the aisle took out a can of chewing tobacco, put a pinch between his cheek and gum and started spitting into a styrofoam cup.

When we broke through the clouds it was such a relief. The bumping stopped, my mom opened her eyes, the sun was out. The clouds below us were thick white, like a snow storm guaranteed to close school for a week. The sun, beginning to set, glinted off the tip of the wing. The guy on the aisle put down 'Swamp Thing' and looked around. I wanted to open the door and go out, I wanted to stay out there forever.

The guy on the aisle took off his headphones, leaned over my mother and turned to me, he spit. "Hey man, we almost there."

"We are there," I said and looked back out the window.

Thorn Pozen

UNTITLED

She looked at the girls with the swinging hips
and wondered where they'd gotten such rhythm.
Their dancing was so free and unchoreographed.
So natural. She would practice in her room
at night and alone. She needed the freedom
that swinging hips provided, and then realized
that hers were meant only to

be straight
be stilted
be firm
be uninviting
be uncompromising
but
most of all
they serve
to encase
her virtue.

Anonymous

AN EMOTIONAL FALL

I.

Yes,

there was something about her which some people
labeled as being beautiful / some labeled as being
interesting / and some labeled as being distant /
she was profoundly sad / it was in her nature to be
upset with life / it was in her character to be mad /
at the world for settling / it was in her character to be
interested in the unanswerable / too interested / to be
troubled by reality / she was more complicated than they
would ever guess / or should ever understand / but she smiled
occasionally / at times / she wanted to be taken away on a
horse / that was too unreal / at times / she wanted to be
displayed before the world / that was too compromising /
at times / she just wanted to be loved / it was too uncertain /
she decided to be herself / it was all so draining.

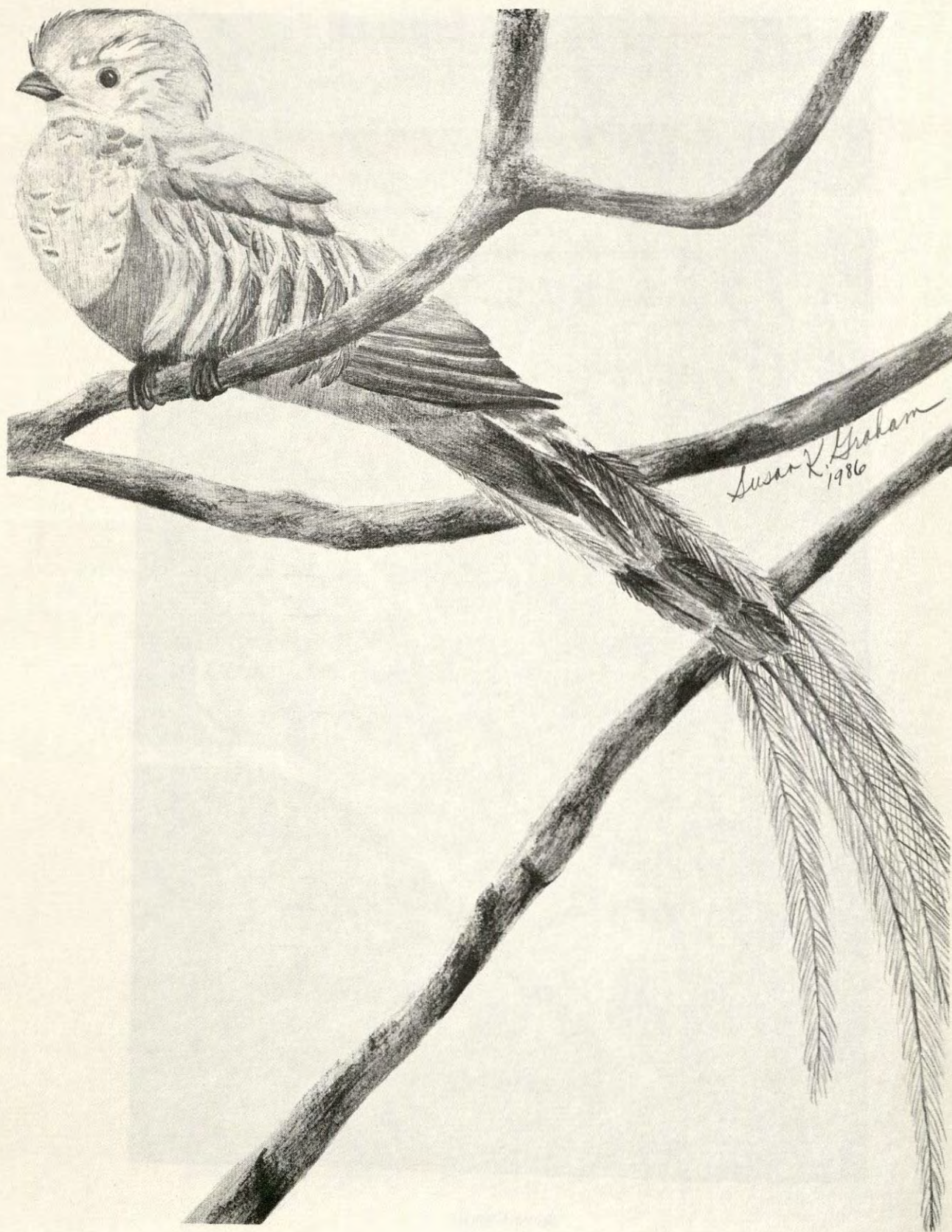
II.

Yes,

there was something disturbing about her / perhaps it was
her eyes and the smile / a space that no body could touch /
few people knew / even fewer had heard the sobs and felt
the trembling / it was only occasional / only when fatigue
descended / she was supposed to be strong / it was always a
constant dilemma for her / life was / a constant dilemma from
a number of different perspectives / fanatasy / position
reality / she decided not to be escapist / but did in her
work / it was more socially acceptable / she wanted to be in
control / not in power / but in control / self-determination /
she tried to think on new things / to develop old things /
to integrate and apply it all / life was not easy / nor meant
to be / she tried to remember / most important things she did /
she never forgot a lesson / or pain / she tried often in the
latter / it was sometimes easier / there was a part which
always remembered / most times she could not actually
articulate this / then it overflowed.



Steve Kupritz



Yes, it makes it hard
To sneeze, I
Said, removing the funny nose
And glasses,
A blank triangle
Left
On my face.
You seem uneasy.
Did I forget, come to dinner in slippers,
Wear underwear
On my head?

Come,
Sit next to me.
The typhoid isn't contagious.
But,
If I stuff silverware
Down my shirt
Ignore it —
I'm almost normal.
I've learned to let the
Meatloaf touch the peas
And okay,
So I talk to dead plants.
At least they listen.

Karen E. Moran

WYOMIN'

Wide snow-filled prairies
Steep inclines that become rocky mounts
prairie five O'clock shadow
short
stubby-ribbed pine
growing at odd angles
or
ninety degrees

p
u
t
h
g
i
a
r
t
s

cloud-packed skies
with a few

open
doors
so the sun
can claim
come land.

Antelope and cows

munch snow

in aimless directions.
Trains miles long

crossin' right across it all

don't count the last

one;
bad luck'

I count

but I lose track
was that eighty or

ninety?

sigh

Then

brown dust dirt

scrubby

land growths

wire fence

clumpt together houses

huddled in protection

'gainst ferocious winds

with a gas station and

a church added as

allies.

Hey, a factory

stuck in the center
of no where

surrounded by a spread out town
mountains,

And The Tetons looming
over younder in the perspective
distance.

Wyoming,

From an Eastern eye is
too big.

And I refuse to acknowledge

my smallness.

Sahara Wernick

UNTITLED

Cracked pavement bumps into
itself. Becomes powder — rots, crumbles
as ants quickstep to dropped sweets.

Nearby a young child nibbles an
unpackaged treat. (She fingers the dying pavement)
under the disapproving stare of Mother. Small grub
fingers place the morsel down. Does the gray-white dust
taste as good?

Mother slaps the hand. No
the tall guardian warns
No. Too late. Pavement crumbs soak in a different rain.
strange. the ants have stopped
their

Sahara Wernick

THE VISIT

The seeping cold circles, circles
casual
insistant.
Old house, old bones,
sweater draped;
a cup of tea shakes in cardboard fingers,
eyes strain, pulling
from across the table,
my yet-to-be eroded features
into focus.
“Lannie?” he inquires
“Annette, Papa.” I say sweating in a cold circle
“Lannie, your a good girl, Lannie”
His smile, so sweet.

Sahara Wernick



Tarah Mazmanlan
"HAGHBAT"



Steve Kupritz



"MOMMY FIX IT"
Rachel Peirce



Christopher J. Coyne

“THE WAKING DREAM”

The earthworms are out tonight. After the storm passes, they ease themselves up from the warm mud and crawl out onto the sidewalk. I leave my apartment on 8th Street to search for them with a flashlight in Washington Square. In pairs, these blind, fleshy creatures inch their way along the concrete of the city. The hemoglobin in their blood gives them a cheery pink glow as their rudimentary hearts pump merrily away. They travel with a determination and purpose that gives one the belief that they have a destination in mind. Weaving along in a drunken line of rhythmic contractions, they leave a thick trail of pale mucus that shimmers in the moonlight.

When the morning arrives, they are exposed. The hot sun dries up their slippery trails of snot and brings their march to a halt. There is no way they can get back to their warm, moist homes in the earth. And so, they wait to die on the street.

August in New York City transforms me into an acrid, evil smelling creature. Sweat oozes, forms little rivulets, collects into streams and merges into great torrents, which I leave behind like a trail. I stick to everything — my clothes, the vinyl chairs in my kitchen, the toilet seat. When I ride to work on the uptown IRT number 6 local train, I leave a wide swatch of sweat on the plastic seat where my ass was. People eye the spot suspiciously for a few seconds and then quickly look away.

Recently, I discovered a new performer named Awiel Longar. She takes her name from the mythical first human being and master spearman of the Atout, a small group of cattle herders living in the southern Sudan. Awiel Longar was the first man born after the god of a mystical river and a woman fell in love. This was at a time when the earth and sky were connected by a rope and the divinities could travel between them. Soon after he was born, his human mother died and his father, the river god, took care of him. The river god was jealous of his son's powerful spear throwing abilities and ignored him. His father's neglect caused Awiel to grow up to be self-centered and cruel. When Awiel was twenty-one years old, he killed a fellow villager when he discovered that like his father, he was also envious of his spearsmanship. This angered the divinities and they sent a woman to kill him so that other human beings would not have to suffer from his cruelty. The woman devised a plan and tricked Awiel into giving up his spear. Then she flung the weapon towards Awiel's heart so hard that it passed through his body and pinned him to the ground. At the same time the divinities cut the rope that joined the two worlds and no longer interfered with human affairs.

The modern day performance artist Awiel Longar is twenty-six years old, short, slight, has wide green eyes, thin lips stretched like a red rubber band around her sharp mouth and greasy chestnut hair that is cropped jaddedly as though it has been cut with garden shears. When pictured on her record album covers, she always wears a white satin dinner jacket with rolled up sleeves, a grey t-shirt and black Chinese silk pants.

She plays a type of synthesizer called a Synclavier. It can be programed to make almost any sound in the world, from a dog barking to ocean waves breaking on a beach. She uses it on the songs that appear on her first album. *The Waking Dream*. Synchronized to the beat of the bark of the Synclavier dog, she sings in the title song:

We have all emerged from the river
And together we live on the land
Our hearts tremble and shiver
When we reveal what's on our minds
But there's nothing left to do
And nothing left to see
Except this waking dream.

And so on.

Awiel Longar's performances are spectacular. Not because she uses lots of lights or make-up, but because she dances as she sings. They are unusual jerky dances with their own rhythms. As she plays the Synclavier, her feet move backwards in short arcs while her hands bounce along the keyboard. Sometimes she moves to the center of the stage and dances without music. "I am dancing to the music of your heartbeats," she says to the audience from center stage. She raises her hands up and brings them down again in a quick chop. Then she sways her shoulders up and down and to the front and back and paws at the floor angrily. "I do not like this place. I want to go home now," she says louder and louder until it becomes an agonizing scream that gradually subsides into silence.

I work as an editor for a small publishing company that specializes in mysteries, horror and family adventure novels. Most of what I read will never be published for one reason or another. Last week I finished reading a manuscript called *The Trouble with Rabbits*. It's about a twelve year old boy who wants to become a surgeon and his father who has suddenly begun to collect good luck charms. One Saturday afternoon the boy is pretending to dig for oil in his backyard, but instead, uncovers a mass grave of rabbits in various states of decay. He examines them with a closeness and curiosity which only one who is considering a profession in medicine could do. After a thorough dissection and evaluation in which he inspects the animals' putrid innards, he concludes that they are all missing their right front paws. His father then comes into the backyard and sees him standing with the dead rabbits. He starts to cry and explains that he has spent all the money he was saving for his son's college education to buy thousands of tickets in a multimillion dollar state lottery. Being a great believer in luck, he slaughtered the rabbits and removed their paws when he decided that store-bought rabbit's feet just didn't do the job. Despite his elaborate efforts, the father loses the lottery and the boy becomes a truck driver for a nuclear waste disposal transport company.

Last week, I met a slim, dark haired woman who spoke with a faint British accent. A tiny gold nose ring hung from her left nostril and gently quivered when she breathed. She wore a bright yellow t-shirt on which was written in heavy black print, the phrase, "THIS IS NOT HERE." She works as a salesperson at the "World's Largest Record Store" on Broadway and West 4th Street. I was looking for a new Awiel Longar album and she said they didn't have it in yet. Then, against company policy, she told me I would be able to find it in a rare record store on Bleecker Street. I thanked her and asked if she would like to go to an Awiel Longar concert with me that next evening.

"Sorry, but I'm already going with some friends," she said.

"Well, maybe I'll see you there," I said.

"Maybe. Awiel is brilliant. Isn't she?" I tried to answer, but she continued, "Sometimes when I listen to her music I cry and get this bizarre feeling that parts of my body aren't really there. But then I wonder where they've gone to? You know, I mean if they're not attached to me any more. It's just like that old movie, *The Fly* with Vincent Price. You know, where this scientist is testing a matter transporting machine that he built in his basement and he gets his head and arm caught in it. The machine has been switched on and its counting down until it starts transporting. Well, he doesn't know it, but there's a fly in the receiving box of the machine. And when it starts, his head and arm are transported onto the fly and the fly's head and arm are attached to him. Anyway, the fly escapes into the garden where it buzzes around Vincent Price and screams 'help me' in his ear. Poor Vince thinks he's gone crackers. Meanwhile the half man half fly scientist can not find a way to get his head and arm back and commits suicide by throwing himself under a giant metal press."

"What a way to go," I said.

"I've got to get back to work now. I didn't get your name?"

"Oh, sorry. It's Edward."

"Edward, hmm. I once had a cat named Edward. He had brown eyes and hair, the same as you do," she said.

"Wait! What's your name? Maybe we could talk again some other time."

"Ananda Browne, look me up in the phone book."

As I left the store and walked towards Bleecker Street I stopped to write her name on my palm of my hand.

On her latest album, Awiel Longar sets one of her poems to the music of the Shakahachi or Japanese flute. When the wooden Shakahachi is played, the sound of breathing between each note becomes as important as the note itself. The Shakahachi has a full and airy sound like the wind blowing through a bamboo grove. In the song called "Sliced Love Apples" Awiel Longar sings mournfully:

I saw your flickering fire

For an instant

I saw it burning higher and higher

Then it leapt up and burned my corneas out

Now I can only see through my nose

When the sun gets too bright

I close one nostril.

And so on.

A few days later, I called Ananda and she invited me over the next evening for dinner. She lived in a loft on Canal Street in a building she shared with The Bangkok-Delhi Spice Import Company. The whole block was permeated with an infusion of turmeric, fennel, cumin, coriander and other pungent spices. After a large Indian dinner of coconut soup and a thick vegetable curry, we sat on heavy mahogany chairs around the fragile glass kitchen table sipping steaming ginseng tea. In the center of the table, a single fat candle burned with a high flame. Ananda cooked more than we could eat and the rest of the soup and curry sat in big cast iron pots on the stove. A small marble mortar and pestle stained with a mustard colored powder sat on the counter near the sink. A freshly baked loaf of bread cooled on a wire rack near an open window in the corner by the stove. On the table a vase decorated with a painting of ducks flying over a group of hunters with their guns raised and ready to shoot held a large bunch of dead flowers. I took another sip of tea, it tasted sweet, spicy and bitter all at the same time. The heat, the heavy dinner and the tea made me feel the pounding of blood through my head. The pressure seemed to build and I imagined it would soon reach such a critical point that my brain would be launched across the room and splatter against the opposite wall. It would take Ananda days to clean up the blood and bits of scalp that would be left clinging there. My blood was surging furiously and I felt weak. I leaned my head in my hands.

"Are you feeling okay?" Ananda asked.

"I'm just a little tired. This is very unusual tea," I said.

"Yes, it is. Just relax." She pressed her forefinger against my palm. "Take a deep breath and relax."

The pounding in my head subsided instantly. "What did you do?" I asked.

"It's a pressure point. Just some pressure on certain nerve meridians can cure you of all kinds of things."

"I feel better now, thanks. You have a very unusual name. It doesn't sound very British, is it?"

"No, it's not. My father grew up in India while his father was stationed there as an officer in the British Army. After India became independent his family moved back to London, but my father returned there several times with his father before I was born. He loved the place and to remind him of it, he gave me an Indian name. Ananda is a Sanskrit word from the Hindu scriptures, it refers to that which causes bliss."

"You could cause me a little bliss," I said.

She started to say something, but then glanced away coldly.

We paused for a minute. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything by that." I cleared my throat and began again. "My family hasn't left New York since my grandparents came here in 1915 from a small town outside Budapest. They hated Hungary and burned all their belongings that reminded them of it. My grandmother finally left New York when she died. We buried her in New Jersey. I only traveled away from New York when I went to college in Connecticut and I graduated from that nearly three years ago. I guess you've done a lot of traveling yourself. You know, with the Hindu name and all that."

"When I was growing up in London we used to take trips to the countryside or go down to Brighton in the summertime. My father absolutely hated traveling in England, it just wasn't exotic enough for him. He just wanted to be left alone with his hobbies. He was an avid philatelist," she said.

"I'm sorry. Was it caused by a combat injury?" I said, lowering my eyes solemnly.

"Are you daft? He collected stamps. He had huge book fulls of them and spent hundreds of pounds at stamp auctions. He never had enough money to travel and he was always starring a magnifying glass at his stupid stamps."

"Awiel Longar wrote about traveling in Europe in her book of poems and stories, *From Under a Rock*. She wrote, 'In America everyone looks stupid, but in Europe only the Americans look stupid.' That's why I never travel. I'd rather not stand-out."

Ananda picked at a ball of melted wax that had collected at the base of the candle. Then she moved closer and put her arm around my shoulder and whispered something in my left ear. It went like this:

Waiting on the ancient shore,
this quiet evening,
for you who do not come.
I burn with a longing
as fierce as the fire of the salt pans.

Then she gently bit my earlobe.

"That was nice. What was it?" I asked.

"A Japanese love poem. If you whisper it three times on three nights when the moon is full, then whomever you are thinking about at that moment will fall in love with you."

"That sounds weird, but I like it," I said. Then I kissed her lightly and she moved her arms around my waist and held me tightly pressed against her body. As she continued to kiss me, she moved over and sat on my lap. She gave me long, deep kisses and I felt as though her mouth was a huge hole that I would be sucked into and never be able to get out of. Her tongue darted furiously into my mouth and I felt it shoot towards the back of my throat. "How can anyone's tongue be that long?" I thought as I gagged. She stopped. We moved to the floor and she crawled on top of me and pinned me down. Again she jammed her tongue into my mouth and with one hand she pinched my nose shut. I struggled and she pressed my palm again with her finger. My body immediately relaxed and I fell back powerless. Ananda's tongue was wedged firmly in my mouth and I couldn't breathe. Her finger dug into my palm and I felt my head begin to spin. The hardwood floor of the kitchen felt as though it was becoming soft like gelatin and would soon trap me in it like a slice of fruit suspended in a Jello desert. My eyes focused on the flame of the candle on the table as it leapt up once like a torch and went out.

When I woke up, it was raining. It was still dark and it felt very early in the morning. I was alone, lying face up on the kitchen floor. I sat up quickly and bumped my head on the glass table and the vase with the ducks painted on it rolled off and crashed to the floor. The noise brought me around to my full senses and I stood up. In the darkness of Ananda's loft I fumbled to find the front door, banging into furniture and knocking over things like a blind drunk. When I finally made my way out of the building and onto the lighted street, the rain had stopped. As I staggered past Washington Square towards my apartment I realized a note was pinned to my shirt. I stopped under a street light and read it.

Dear Edward,

If there were no rebirth, how could there be birth? You and I have always existed and we will continue to exist forever. Are you free next week?

With Fond Regards,

Ananda Browne

The sun was struggling to free itself from the grip of the darkness and the first rays of light cracked across the horizon. As the moon drifted low over the trees like a giant hot air balloon, I spotted the shimmering trails of a pair of earthworms and I followed.

Andrew Rosenstein

those eyes

i watched
you
today
and your eyes
were aqua blue and
you
were
happy
i was uneasy
you
turned
and the light went out
of your eyes and
they
were
slate grey
my stomach
turned over
twice

Robin Ahern

I DIG CHER

The superstars of greatest fame
Are those we know by just one name.

Names like Charo, Plato, Cher,
Are names of fame beyond compare.

Jello's last name is Biafra,
And Franz the first name of good-ol Kafka.

If only they had stopped right there,
Like Laurel, Hardy, and like Cher;

The named would be Jello no Biafra
Skip the Franz and keep the Kafka.

And Oh he would have been so peachy,
If he'd trashed the Fred and kept the Nietzsche.

They might have reached the fame of Ziggy,
Of Zoro, Colette, Cher, or Twiggy.

One namer worshippers aren't that odd,
Think of Buddha, Zeus, and God.

Maddonna fans are everywhere.
But personally, I just dig Cher.

Gini Vancil

AT HOME AWAY FROM HOME

She moves her head reverently
passing under the boughs;
Gentle pine fingers brushing her hair
while morning air kisses her brow.

Kathryn Humphrey

ANACHRONISM

An autumn leaf
encased in a world of ice
frozen in a time not its own.

Sylvia Lynn Plumb

NO TRESPASSING

The toddler began to climb onto the bench and I shot him. Dave shot him too, but from a different angle. The child continued to smile happily as we took pictures of him exploring the park bench. His mother chattered about what a ham the baby was and I couldn't help but smile at the baby's glee at being the center of attention.

I stopped snapping and looked through the rungs of the bench to see Dave. His long hair fascinated the baby as it blew in the wind and caught the last of the afternoon's light. He lowered the camera from his eye and sat laughing with the baby. I couldn't decide which one looked more beautiful. My college ID was jabbing me from my back pocket so I stood up.

"Thank you for letting us take his picture," I said to the baby's mother.

"Oh, not at all! He loves the attention," she said.

"Hopefully my pictures of him will draw some attention to me in my photography class critique," I said.

"If yours turn out better than mine, I'm going to steal them," Dave said.

"I hope you both do well," the mother said as she chased after her son who had begun to run across the park.

We got back into Dave's car to search for another site to shoot. I relaxed against the velour seats, yawned, and rubbed my eyes. Without my make-up I felt deceptively young and I had even pulled my hair back in a pony tail with a ribbon for our outing. I hoped I looked charming to him. He told me to keep an eye out for inspirational places as we drove.

We passed an old house with a large porch that went all the way around it. The paint had been worn off leaving a color like driftwood on the siding and several shades lighter on the exposed porch railing. The windows were boarded up with fresh plywood, suppressing the old farm house's openness and accessibility.

"Do you want to stop?" Dave asked as I stared out the back window at the house.

"No, it was interesting looking but it had 'NO TRESPASSING' signs posted on it," I said.

We came to a boat yard and Dave pulled in. Many of the boats were out of the water in preparation for winter. They looked dead, as though the water had poisoned them and they were hauled out to their trailer graves. Dave walked off to the left and I to the right of the yard.

I was about to walk out onto one of the docks when I heard someone yell. I turned around to see a fat man lumbering towards me. His face was dirty with diesel fuel and oil from the boats and his hands had a similar but denser coating on them. He was motioning left and right like a disabled windmill when I finally made out the word "police" from his toothless vocabulary.

"This is private property! What the hell do you think you're doin'! I'm gonna call the cops on you! Wanna see me? I'll call the police!"

I had moved off of the dock and was about 100 yards from Dave's car. He was nowhere to be seen.

"Gimme the film out of that machine! I'll take that goddamn thing from you and call the police unless you give me that film! Get over here!" he said and started moving closer to me.

As he got a little closer I became aware of four other filthy, obese men behind him. They formed a grotesque gallery for our uneven confrontation.

"Sir, I haven't taken any pictures. I'm sorry to have disturbed you. I'll be happy to leave you alone." My words must have sounded foreign to the fat man without teeth. He was standing over me now and I could see the grime jammed underneath his nails. He stretched his palm out for my film.

"Go call the police," he said to one of the workers.

"I haven't taken any pictures," I said.

His look flowed down his arm to study my face. There was no softening of his expression, only ignorance and determination.

"Excuse me sir," Dave said from behind me. "I don't think it's necessary to take her film. She's told you she hasn't taken any pictures."

"Yeah? Who the hell are you, kid?" The fat man moved his glare from me to Dave.

"She's a friend of mind and I have an interest in her well. . ."

"I don't care what you're got kid, shut up. Gimme that film, girly. Go call the police," he ordered again and this time one of the men began running towards the office.

"I'll give you the film — there's no need to call," I said as I unwound my film. I popped the camera open and took the canister containing the day into my hand.

"Gimme that," and without touching his inflated, grease stained hand I gave it to him. He threw my memories into the water.

I walked by Dave to the car, I couldn't relax, even on the comfort of the velour seats. I just kept shaking.

"Are you OK?" Dave said. He hadn't started the car.

"No. Get me out of here," I said.

It seemed to me that he started the car slowly. I I walked by Dave to the car, I couldn't relax, even on the comfort of the velour seats. I just kept shaking.

"Are you OK?" Dave said. He hadn't started the car.

"No. Get me out of here," I said.

It seemed to me that he started the car slowly. I put my camera on the floor and secured my hands between my knees.

"That was too bad," he said.

"Where the hell were you," I said.

"I was in the car. You can fight your own battles." He turned his brown eyes to see me. There was no compassion in his eyes either. "You could have given him your extra roll of film, you know."

I sat rigid in the seat next to him. After some silence, he patted my knee. "These things happen," he said.

Damn you, I thought. *You don't love me*. He lightly patted my knee again, trespassing where he thought he did no harm.

Kirstie C. Rice

“LILACS”

Your head in my lap, you are sleeping.
I weave the rhythm of you breathing
into memories

Grandma teaching me to put leaves
in with the lilacs
the warm morning sun
the dewy smells

Wrapped together, your lavender sweater
and my green
and a lilac on the bookshelf

Christina Fraser

UNTITLED

We are passing an evening
in each other's arms
having past conversation

You are tracing the outline of my ring
with the edge of your finger

Near sleep, I remember the gesture —
mine

Christina Fraser

WITH A LITTLE LONGING

The red streaks of light
hiss away
from where I stand in the rain,
you leaving.

I was smiling
when we said goodbye.

Christina Fraser

“VISITING EDEN”

In the years of miracle drugs
when a wave of white swept into hospitals
in an antiseptic cloud of nurse's footsteps,
my great-grandfather was a nature-healer
in a little town called Eden.

I remember his funeral.
I was five, I think,
and wore white tights that bunched in my new shoes.
He was the first dead body I had ever seen.
My Dad lifted me up to see,
the way he did when I wanted a drink at a fountain.

We would visit great-grandma Bea sometimes.
It was always summer and the kids had to play outside.
My brothers and I rolled up our pant legs on the bank of the creek,
but they always got wet anyway.
Our feet shone glistening white, changing shape
as the water spun off the top
of our frantically built dams of shale.

When I was four, I came in, dripping from play in the stony creek,
to say goodbye to great-grandpa.
He leaned on his walker and his face was doughy and soft.
His hands, spotted with brown, were broad
and clasped around the aluminum cage that meant he was old.
I didn't know what an old hand would feel like.
I was only four.
I twisted myself around my mother's legs
and blushed shy in tangled curls
which scratched of bits of sticks, and dirt.

I am eight. The homemade wooden bridge,
pine trunks with the bark still on,
stretches from bank to faraway bank
and my brothers have gone recklessly on ahead.
The wood creaks under my hesitant eight year old feet,
and where a plank is missing
the water hisses over pointed rocks.

My grandfather tells us later, as we shuck the corn,
that he used to buy five dozen for a quarter,
and ate it all summer with tomatoes still warm from the vine,
and cream skimmed from the top of the bottle.
While the grown-ups talk,
my cousins and I play in Bea's rock garden
until the mosquitos come out
and we have to go home.

When grandpa was young,
he helped to carry rocks and mortar
to build a dam against the hill
to make a swimming hole in the creek.
The day we came up for the estate sale,
the pond was empty, drained for winter,
and we played electrically
waiting for rushing water to trap us
on the stony bottom.
The air was filled with silent echoes.
We could hear the flood behind us,
straining just up the hill.
We ran quickly when Mom called us for lunch
and didn't talk about the stony chill
that clung to our skin in a shale-grey glow.

I was only four, and afraid,
when his stiff white hand encircled mine,
his dry and cold, mind just small.
He was stronger than he seemed.
I stood frozen polite
waiting for Mom to call me away
to play out by the rock garden that my teen-aged grandpa built
shirtless and maybe stopping work for a moment
to wave to his father as he crossed over the bridge
to take lunch after his patients were gone.

In the salty heat of an Eden summer,
I was a child in bare feet
discovering in a clearing of pines,
a once painted platform
where his patients used to lie healing in the sun.
I did not wonder if it is the same sun
that burns the backs of my arms that aching pink,
as I lie stomach down on the grey planks
and braided long grasses.

His office was a story book house
with a path of flagstones that led from the field
and a flowerbed contained by picturesque broken pickets.
I didn't know how his patients found it,
so far from the road,
when I found it, an adventure,
with a crow feather in my braids.
It was trespassing to peer into the window.
The door was locked and the chimney sealed.
I was far from the house and eager;
my heart beat wildly as I studied the inside
as if it was in a museum:

the abandoned desk, and shelves of unread books.
On the walls hung diplomas:
Joseph P. Mols, and a lot of Latin.
I was seven and couldn't read it.

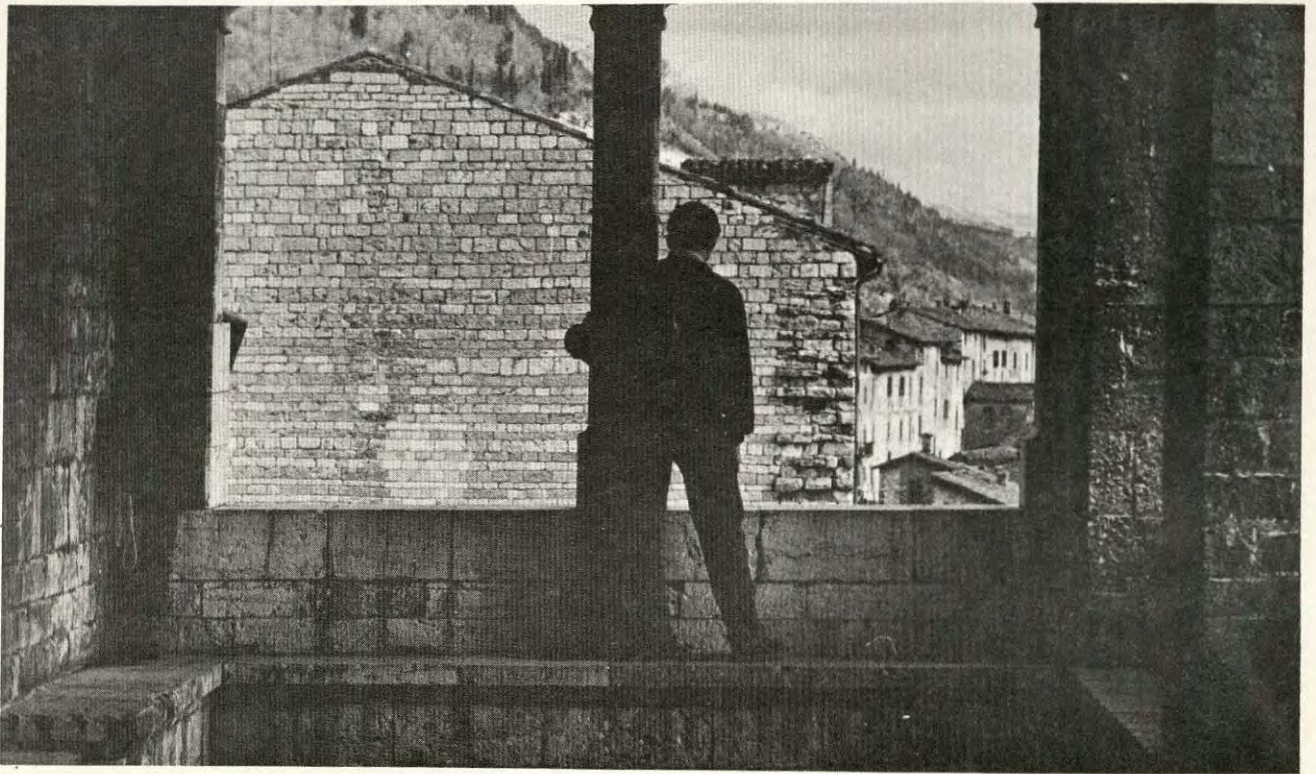
Laughing in lookalike shirts, my brothers and I
clambered to the top of the hill
just above the white clapboard house
we weren't allowed to track mud into.
Here was the mail order log cabin
my grandfather and his brother had built.
On the edge of the steep hill facing the house
lay a low stone wall to keep you from falling down
into the rock garden.
It was just the right height to lean on knowingly
as you surveyed the countryside for invading knights
or sour-faced calvary generals
who looked a lot like Dad.

We gathered one cool September day
at my grandfather's house in Buffalo.
I was thirteen and wore ribbons in my hair.
We took pictures at dinner:
smiling faces in a halo of candle light
around a stranger's birthday cake —
Joseph P. Mols — 1879 - 1979.
The pictures are stacked in a shoebox with the ones
my mother took the day of the estate sale,
standing on the log cabin hill
turning slowly to make a circle of pictures, one by one.
I piece them together like a puzzle.

To keep it in the family,
my mother's artist cousin and his foreign wife
live at Eden now.
The fanciful blue watercolor of the moon and a nude
that hands over my desk,
was signed by a different Eden Mols
than the man who carved a bread tray
from a solid piece of oak:
"Give us this day our daily bread" in raised letters.
It came to us with the kitchen things;
we gave it to his namesake, David Joseph,
my doctor uncle who works under fluorescent lights
in an air conditioner cold office,
curing the aches that Joseph P. had cured
on a painted platform in the sun.

I wonder if there are pines by his grave,
or if rock flowers fill the bare spot's around Bea's.
I can't remember what the cemetery looked like,
only the pre-fab funeral home by the highway
and my bunched white tights,
and people I didn't know saying my name.

Christina Fraser



Hillary Ellison



