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Spring 1985

### The Gallery, Vol. 4, No. 2

Connecticut College

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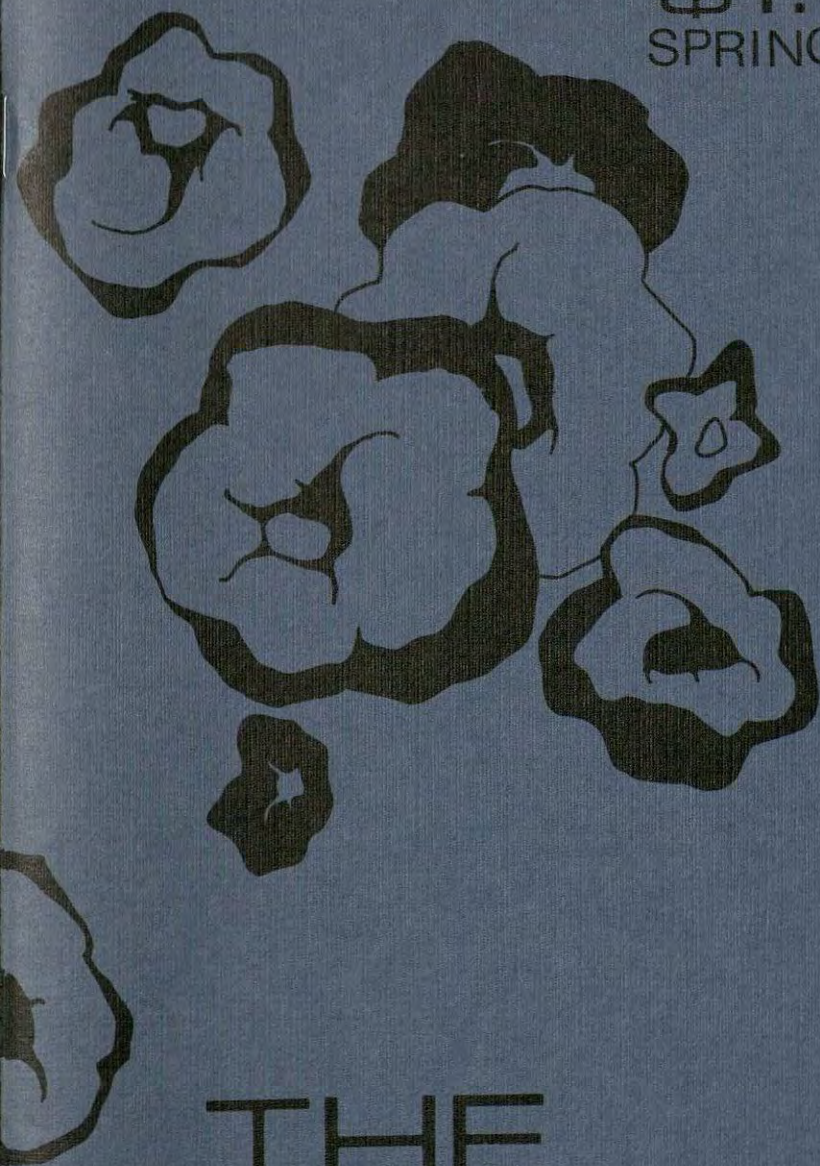
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\$1.00  
SPRING 1985



# THE GALLERY



## THE GALLERY

Connecticut College Art and Literary Journal

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# The Gallery

Connecticut College Art and Literary Journal

Spring 1985

Volume 4 Number 2



Cover Design by Judith Burger

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## Letter to Mom

and Now  
I understand

howmuch you hurt  
to see me  
go

though you never said anything.

You bought me that  
pretty blue skirt

(so of course you had to  
give me the  
wonderful blouse that  
went with it)—

I never said anything, either.

At times along the way  
I've cursed  
at all the silly  
extras  
I've made myself carry

but I do find occasion  
to wear it, Mom,

Though mostly  
I just straighten it  
on the hanger  
as I tuck my things away  
in the evening,

pause  
to touch the soft blue  
of your  
sky

## Untitled

hands in  
pocket—

stars  
poured the tide  
up  
the land

long sound of  
surf—

stride  
for stride in  
sand

## Untitled

Walking last night you asked if  
I could write a poem to  
snow in the city—I'd have  
to think on it—I was still  
surprised how the snow had made  
the place seem almost, well, nice

A handwritten sign in the elevator that morning  
had said "2 inches between  
7 and 9 AM—Thank  
you, Les"—Do doormen like snow?

I think so—but the taxis  
would never admit defeat  
to the stronger hand, and looked  
uncomfortable and quite  
foolish sliding by in the  
mess they'd helped make—late day slush

I walked home—Turning into  
my street (smiling nod from a  
doorway)—a hand came quietly  
down at the back of my  
mind, the contours of the day  
softened, hushed, by caps of white

## Untitled

Dancing in the kitchen  
nights  
to the same songs  
over and  
over—  
In

the daytime I  
worked for  
you, mothered your  
son, but after supper and  
sunset we three  
might dance—From

across the lake it is  
quiet—our light  
a bright spot against  
the dark  
curve of hill against  
the sky



## Untitled

I

to Begin is to  
find a pencil and  
sit down and

Draw  
that line of trees  
that march along the  
horizon  
of the field—

Divide (the)  
space find  
the  
Line to page  
from  
sky

II

That vacation when I went  
home with you  
one of the cats had  
kittens—she'd walked around,  
cow-shaped though still  
silent, light on  
feet for the first few  
days of our stay  
till she (decided to)  
lay  
down  
one afternoon—

when we returned there were  
3 black kittens,  
on your sister's bed,  
which hadn't been there when  
we left

III

skiing  
back in your  
woods—so many

hawthorns—all  
those right  
angles

**IV**

out the kitchen window it  
snowed, covering  
(Rail by Rail, Emily!)

we made brown bread  
kneaded ("so much depends  
on"...) kneading I  
Needed it  
more  
than was wise

**V**

it's  
how much pressure  
you put  
on the bow—the draw of—  
and

just

where  
you touch the  
string

**VI**

inner posture  
stiff like  
cordwood  
too cold to  
hug hurts  
my arms as  
I carry to  
the  
fire

**VII**

(someone once told me)  
if it's jagged  
it's smooth  
on one side—

**VIII**

Balance a tree  
on the  
curve of the hill  
now

peg it to  
the  
sky

Sarah M. Babbitt



RIVERS UNDERGROUND Kim Pouliot



## Mirage

You were asleep, curled into yourself,  
a soft smooth smile suggested by your mouth.  
Once again I cried silently  
as a precious vase, balanced on a table edge,  
swayed in the wind, and I watched  
from behind that thin indestructible glass wall  
separating us.

You were awake, stretched beyond yourself,  
the suggested smile dissolving in a montage of  
ever-shifting expressions.  
I dried my tears  
as a gust of wind carried the vase  
to a safe haven, and I smashed the wall  
with all my strength to hear it shatter but  
you shattered instead.

## Tell Me A Story

Once,  
we walked  
through the gentle unreality  
of a Sunday morning,  
watching the sun  
leap playfully between the brownstones  
and  
once,  
you laughed  
with the frightened eyes  
of a mischievous child,  
trying to preserve  
your precious sense of humor,  
and  
once,  
I tried to free you.

Jamie Schack



## Deke

For my thirteenth birthday I got my own room. My parents told me their oldest son deserved a space he could call his own, so we cleared out the attic and moved my bed, stereo, and Marilyn Monroe posters upstairs. Actually, the moving process took twice as long as it should have because for every box my parents carried downstairs I carried something of mine upstairs, until no one knew what was originally in the attic.

My mother, once she figured out what was happening, pushed a wandering hair off her wide forehead, and let out one of her maternal sighs that make me feel guilty and make my father disappear.

"I give up on this ridiculous process," she said. "You two finish it."

Then she turned and started down the steep attic stairs. My mother, for the most part, looks like other mothers; her face never seems to completely relax, and she forgets to put on lipstick unless she's going to meet with one of my teachers. Actually, most mothers don't stand the way she does, with her feet completely turned out. She looks funny when she runs, but she's a pro when it comes to going down narrow stairs.

My younger brother Randolph stands the same way. He is eight and allergic to everything. People say we look alike, but my eyes are not nearly as wet and runny-looking as his. My father would much rather have me help him in the orchard than Randolph, probably because my father and I have the same hands. They're long fingered and rough; good hands for apple picking. Randolph's hands are pretty useless.

When my mother sighed, my father and I looked at each other. He had been resting his arm on a rafter above his head, and when my mother started to speak, he leaned his forehead against his arm, burying his eyes in the plaid of his shirt. He rolled his head along his arm in order to look over at me and put a hand on his hip. His expression didn't change. The crow's feet around his dark eyes didn't flinch. He shrugged, shoved a box in a corner, and went downstairs.

I could hear my mother comforting Randolph. He was upset not because he thought he was losing a roommate but because he thought he was gaining all the junk that had been in the attic.

"No, honey, you won't have to sleep with Daddy's old notebooks," she said. "Deke is going to store them for us."

Deke is my grandfather, and he lives on top of the hill. We usually hear him before we see him because he has one of those voices that bellows unintentionally. He goes to all the town meetings and high school football games, and I've heard he is equally loud at both events.

I've never had much trouble finding Deke, even if he isn't singing Cole Porter songs to himself. His blue eyes, white crew cut, and big ears make him easy to recognize in Price Chopper on a crowded Saturday.

His house is the same size as ours, but we call it the Big House. My father never



calls his father "Dad" or even "Deke." If he wants to talk about Deke, he says "the Big House" and looks at the ceiling. The rest of the town calls my grandfather Deke.

I'm named after him, but people rarely confuse us because I'm called Ned, which is short for Edward. I don't know how the name Deke is derived from the name Edward, or why either of us has the name, since no one seems to like it much.

Deke has a 300 acre dairy farm and apple orchard typical of the Berkshire town we live in. Dad takes care of both with the help of some hired guys and me, when I'm not in school. On cold winter mornings before school, I like to rest the side of my face against the side of the cow I'm milking. My hair ends up looking kind of funny, but the warmth from the cow makes me feel like I'm milking in my sleep.

I don't think my father likes cows too much, because he always chooses pruning over milking. Deke is the opposite; he once said to me, "Boy, there's just nothing like the feel of cow teats. They beat the hell out of apple bark."

I think Deke is part of the reason for my having my own room. My parents told me it would be a "maturing experience" for me to have to look after my own things, but I think they were trying to keep me and my impending puberty out of the way of my grandfather.

During the six months before my birthday, Deke had been stopping by Randolph's and my first floor window to give me his latest issue of "Playboy" magazine. One day, as I watched from the door of our room, my mother caught Deke gingerly opening my window to make his February literary deposit. My mother dove at the magazine.

"Is this appropriate reading for the underdeveloped mind of a twelve year old?" she asked.

"It's ok for me," Deke said.

"Exactly," she answered, and slammed the window shut, barely missing Deke's hand. I managed to disappear before my mother turned around, but I did catch a glimpse of Deke's grin.

Mom had been holding a grudge against Deke even before the window incident. She had a hangup about his latest team of horses. Even though we have perfectly good farm equipment, Deke insists on using horses to haul hay. He got a great deal on a team which had not been completely trained. The previous owner named them Maggie and Joe. My mother's name also happens to be Maggie, and when she asked Deke to change the horse's name, he refused, telling her that "a horse just won't listen to more than one name."

On fall days when there wasn't much wind, we could hear Deke train his team from our house. Maggie seemed to be a slower learner than Joe because we'd hear Deke scream, "Maggie, you lazy bitch! Get a move on."

My mother seemed to scream every time we heard him, and she would drop her head in her hands and mumble something about the neighbors.

So, on the day I moved into my room I wasn't at all surprised when Mom told me to bring the attic boxes up to the Big House. I filled an old wheelbarrow with the



first load and, as I was leaving, said to my mother, "Deke did say it was ok to put all this stuff in his house, didn't he?"

She didn't answer me.

Fortunately, Deke wasn't home. He never locks his door, so I went in and started for the basement. His house always looks as though he just ran out for an emergency. The local newspaper was lying on the kitchen table. It was open to an article on the Town Hall secretary turnover rate. There were several Pepperidge Farm goldfish scattered around the table. The ceilings in his house are high and the walls are bare. My voice never seems to bounce off the pine floor and around the room the way his does.

I moved past the table and headed for the basement. His stairs are worn down in the middle of each step and get narrower toward the bottom. His basement has always given me the creeps because I can't see anything until I'm at the bottom where the light switch is. Even when the single bulb is on, the light never seems to reach the wet corners of the room.

I had almost finished piling the fifth load of attic boxes under the stairs and was on my final trip through the kitchen when I heard a baritone chorus of "Anything Goes." The kitchen door flew open.

"Yo, Ned — what the hell are you doing there?"

"Hi, Deke," I said, turning around.

"Hi yourself. What's this?" He reached into the box I was holding and pulled out one of my father's notebooks.

"Just some junk from the attic. Mom and Dad decided to clean it out and make it into a room for me. Pretty cool, huh? So is it ok if we store these boxes in your basement?"

Deke didn't answer me. He was busy with Dad's notebook. His head was tilted back so he could see through his bifocals, and his stomach stuck out. He held the notebook with his fingers spread out wide, sort of the way Randolph does.

I watched the wrinkles in his forehead get deeper and the scalp under his white hair become redder.

He snapped his head up to look at me, straightened his back and threw the book into the box without taking his eyes off me. I started to back up.

"Get this half-assed fag writing of your father's the hell out of my house," he said, shaking a finger at me. "I told him a long time ago that I can't stand any of his poetry shit, and I'm not about to start now. It was that fuckin' college that did this to him. Ruined a perfectly good dairy mind."

I couldn't move.

"Go on, get it out of here before I set a match to it."

I tightened my grip on the box. All I could see was a ridiculous image of Deke trying to light a match with that shaky finger.

I put the box in the wheelbarrow and went down the hill. I parked it next to the woodshed and took out my father's notebook. I almost didn't recognize the handwriting. It was clear and black, not like the thick, hurried words my father uses to sign my school permission slips. Some of the pages had paragraphs describing woods or people he must've known, but most were covered with poetry. I hadn't read much poetry in school, but I liked reading my father's words. I read page after page. He talked about apples a lot, and in one poem I could almost smell the blossoms he described.

I looked up toward the orchard. Then I put the notebook back and started toward the trees. I knew my father was planning to spray by the North Wall.

I saw him before he saw me. He was getting down from the tractor and was reaching to take out his handkerchief from inside his orange suit. He wore that suit to protect his skin from the spray. He must've seen me out of the corner of his eye. He nodded and wiped his forehead.

"Hi Dad."

"Something wrong at home?" he said.

"No. I just thought I'd say hello." There was a pause. I leaned my back against the rear wheel of the tractor. I was beginning to wish I hadn't come out to see him.

"Oh," he said.

I crossed my arms and sighed.

"Almost finished?" I asked him.

"Do you need money or something? Is there something wrong with your room?"

"No, no," I said, too loudly. "Everything's great."

He reached for the steering wheel to pull himself up. He settled easily into the seat and looked down at me.

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Don't you think apple trees look like a hand's pressing them down from above?"

He stared at me for a minute, then turned his head to look at an apple tree. He looked back at me. I noticed his sideburns were getting grey. His eyebrows moved toward each other a little, and the corners of his mouth turned up.

"Yeah. I guess they do," he said.

He continued to look at me as he started the engine. Neither of us could talk over the noise.

The next morning I headed to the milking barn. I had thought about those



notebooks a lot the night before and had put them and their box under my bed. I figured Deke wouldn't look under his basement stairs and would never know the rest of our attic was there.

Some of the summer help were already milking those cows not hooked up to the machine. I grabbed my bucket and stool and headed for the furthest tail. I started to milk, but stopped. The teat felt rubbery and uncomfortable in my hand. All of a sudden I thought of "Playboy's" Miss June. The cow turned to see what was holding me up. I watched her lower jaw go round and round and saliva dribble down her chin. Her ears twitched. I jumped when I heard a voice behind me.

"Got a problem, Ned?" Deke asked me. I looked at him as he stood there with his hands on his hips. His ears were twitching, too.

I looked over his shoulder at the opposite row of cows. No one was talking, and the only sound in the barn was a ceaseless hiss of milk on milk. I was suddenly aware of the barn's intense animal smell and looked back at my cow. She glanced at me with one dark, disinterested eye and continued kneading her lower jaw.

"No. No problem. Don't feel like milking today, that's all."

I stood up and started past him.

"Well, that's no reason to walk off on me, is it?" He jerkingly swatted at a fly around his head. "Look, if you're mad about that attic thing, I didn't mean to yell at you."

"Forget it."

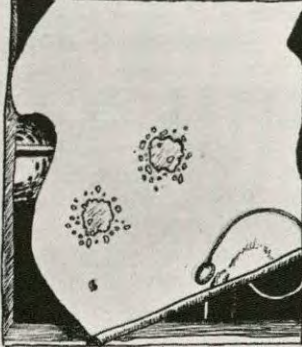
"What?" he said. I could hear the flow of milk slow down. I was almost at the opposite end of the barn.

"Nothing," I said. I don't think he heard me.

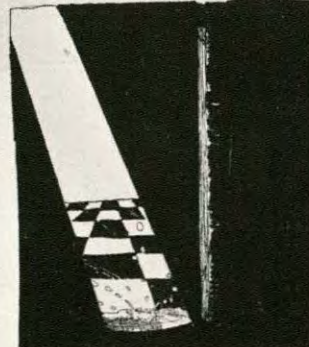
Meg McClellan



BETWEEN THE IDEA AND THE REALITY



BETWEEN THE MOTION AND THE ACT



FALLS THE SHADOW -

Y.S. ELIOT  
RIP LAMONT CRANSTON

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS? Eric Davies



## **Murder**

Bats stab  
at heads that tumble from mouths mysterious  
and turn, as the seeing eye, on pedestals  
to reflect.

Look at the hand,  
will its desperate grasp  
on the dagger gleaming  
in Caesar's arched back.  
Hold it up to the light  
and remember:

'Red is a primary sexual color.'

Hold it high  
on this blackened altar,  
like Abraham with his son,  
the sacrifice in a ravaged city  
to prove . . .

Wash yourself in the mirror,  
hold it up to the light  
and remember:

splinter, divide, disappear.

Cleanse yourself in the mirror  
then return to shadow

Bats stab,  
or seem to,  
drawing no blood  
from the veins of darkness.

## **Straight Lines Written In Early Spring (To A Turning Wheel)**

Hey drunk uneasy,  
drunk stupid  
air of Spring nights!  
Echoes far music,  
watercolored ends of  
luminous days,  
convertibles poking noses  
out of dark garage,  
shining and winking,  
irritated eye and  
passionless tear.

Close to shore  
beach vendors  
tired straw hats,  
tropic birds  
wheel hot dog carts,  
sun chariots  
await heat  
with sand in shoes  
claws for feet.  
Smiles as we sit  
on great green lawns  
dreaming television  
and singing, singing.  
In the dark call  
a forgotten name  
(Lovel),  
a soft touch,  
warm, icy kiss-kiss.  
Spit out  
the sleeping night,  
through empty houses  
burning bright.  
Trees move in a framed  
time, an eyeblink,  
look! blur into telephone  
poles, take voices  
to every end,  
out of touch.  
Finished with words,  
we turn and turn,  
feeding pale dreams,  
darker promises  
and the peace,  
the sleep of Winter's  
still, still.  
Wind fills me,  
fills me like a luffing sail,  
tongues of sun wash,  
an exacting chaos,  
and Ford  
carries us sleeping  
in dreamless backseats  
to a burned-out house—  
cigarette butts  
crushed under foot,  
like wingless angels  
to fantastic Heaven!

George B. Pratt





TO A TURNING WHEEL Laurel MacDuffie

## **Arrival Of Someone New** **(From A Long Term Patient's Journal)**

The king of birds plays dreamily today  
The sun is falling brightly on his brow  
As pigeons flock the square this afternoon  
While flicking breadcrumbs with his novel hands

The cynic watching, wishing flight with wings  
He sings in praise of seeing shapes in clouds  
And rolling up into a ball he feels  
His spirit drift on doses given blue

And yellow pills are also quick to do  
What job is grand this therapy involves  
Just talking dreaming sleeping everyday!  
The king of beds thinks Freudain of thoughts

So dreams of flight mean sex when night time calls  
Perhaps the marks that slash his wrist do too  
The master slicer reads his veins like clocks  
That flow this crooked time oblivious

For turning stars know not of wounds that mark  
The clouds of souls that bleed through bloody holes  
Our king of rain and leaving bathroom stains  
Heroic lover pounds his grief with knives!

And I am almost cured they say to me  
My room though reeks of pungent new disease  
For I did think my world would end in pills  
Perhaps I'm wrong and it will end in blood.

## **Revelation**

The doctor in glasses so thick  
Foggy from the incense of ether  
Swarming feverish surgery  
The incision a hole gaping  
Revealing the ganglia grey  
The blood and bone that's malignant  
In the bulge of evil cells  
Filling the eyes of the interns,  
The doctor sighs from this tiding  
A twinge of remorseful respect  
Spreads from the patient's lit altar,  
His body dead to the finding  
Except in an etherized dream  
Where perhaps he'll feel the vague quake  
Of the sharp knife on his burning  
Nerves that are sleeping peaceful.



## Epistle To Corky

The fading grass leaves me sleeping,  
How harsh grass springs and bright buds bulge  
Swelling thorns, each vein tells the story  
Of the drops of life that run quickly to its rood,  
I am old and bent as this dark hemlock  
Rising its hardy bones before wind,  
I have not grown as strong and fulfilled  
As to see the birds, plentiful birds  
Who wander farther than I have ever,  
To the sea as rivers bound their mighty arteries  
Pumped from the crags of heavy rocks,  
Not I, Lord, surely my flesh has not known  
The meat of soil, the grace of earth  
That bears its everlasting palms,  
Yet I have not strength to keep awake  
And I certainly hear the cock's crow  
In garden's deep temple near the hour,  
I know not if it sends me to  
The bended tree, the Potter's field.  
O pray for the sinner dear friend  
For now I believe I hear the song  
Of valiant fishermen who toiled  
In catastrophe of miracles  
Dragging me to boisterous deep waters.  
I shall see the raised hand and drown.

## Epiphany

Divested on her horse she  
Rides on calm yellow green  
Meadow grass slowly  
Till feathers of blue  
Wisp into  
A purple horizon

A single star  
Rises she feels  
The intake of her breath  
Release  
As the sea  
Appears gently  
Magenta water  
Open and serene

A silent bird  
Feels the sky  
Bends and drops  
Into a burst of many  
Quiet birds  
Gliding upward.

She only feels  
This secret ocean  
Where she needs  
Nothing only given  
By the ocean,  
She sings  
And if the crescent  
Of sun  
Responds  
It is by a multitude  
Of tiny deaf  
Jewels of red  
Whispering in her hair.

At the precipice  
Of hung shore  
She releases her horse  
And turning the meadow  
Is dark and flapping  
With silent birds,

Into the ocean  
She steps  
Suddenly  
One far stellar ocean light  
Sweeps the water  
And breaks  
Over small waves,  
She shakes  
And though she feels  
As the ocean feels  
As the birds feel  
As only they can be  
She feels now  
Terribly  
Naked.

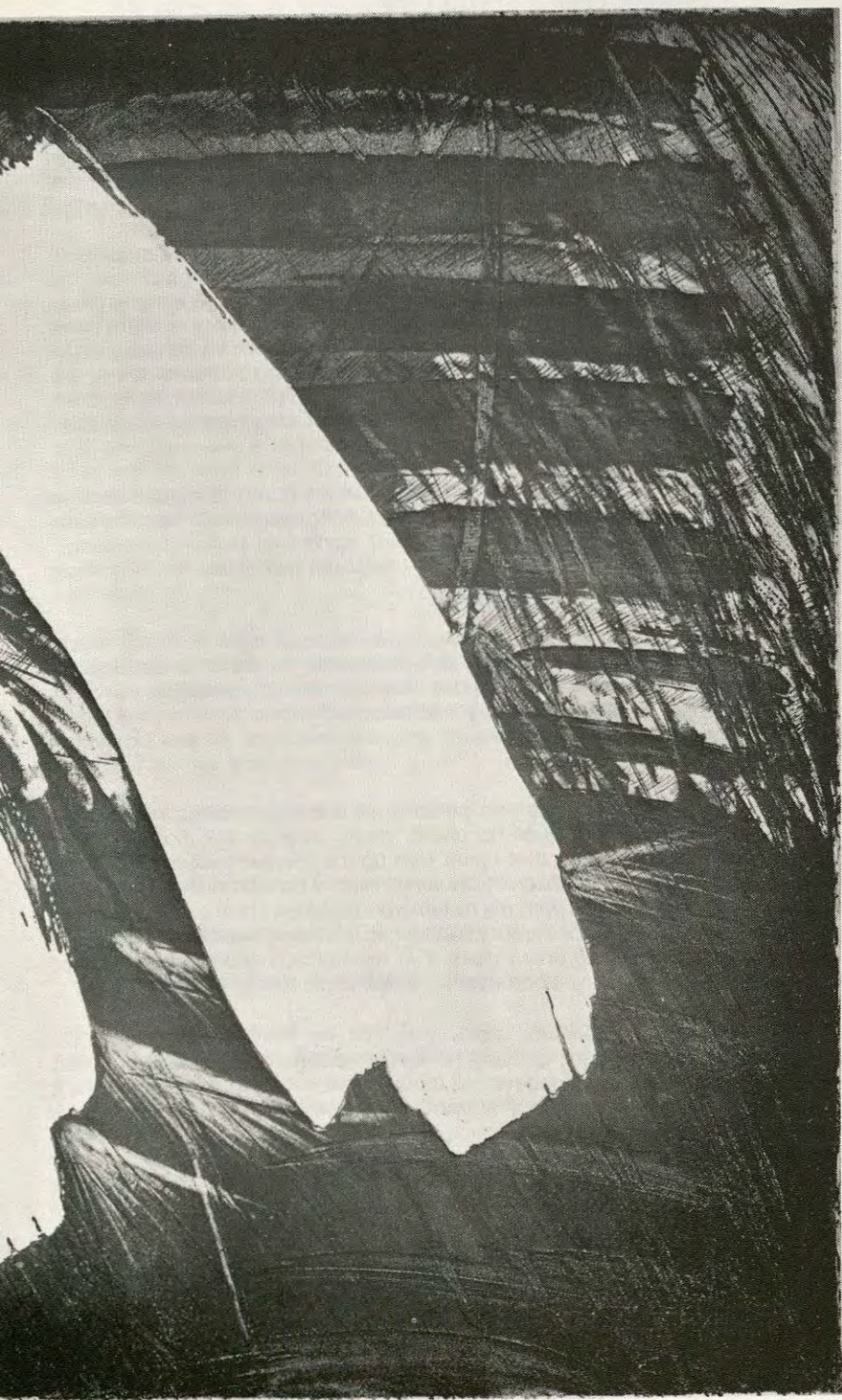
Peter Sinclair





ETCHING Marc Manser







## Still Life

My grandfather, an artist by hobby, has painted over two hundred water colors — all of bowls of fruit — in the last year. He has used the bright paintings to paper the bathroom walls and line the inside of the china cabinet. He keeps the plastic subjects of his still lifes in a canvas duffle bag which says "Hawaii" in rainbow colored script on its side. He bought it at a church rummage sale that my grandmother and the other Medical Mission Sisters organized.

I am spending the last month of summer vacation with my grandparents. Grandma is so pleased that she cannot stop interrupting conversations to reach out and grab my sun freckled arm and say, "Madeline, I'm so glad you're here. I'm so glad you're my granddaughter." I am an artist, not only by hobby, and I have come here to paint. They live here in an early 1800's farmhouse which sits between a dark wood and a decaying apple orchard. I sleep in the birthing bedroom, where my grandmother was born seventy years ago. At night, if I step back from the heirloom bed and stare at the flowered pillow rolls long enough, I can see my dead ancestors as infants.

Each morning, before the hot wet August air sets in, I try to capture the light which glows and claims meaning from behind the dying apple trees. I have my easel set on the front porch. With tubes of carmine red, scarlet lake, pink and vermillion, I try to duplicate the intensity of color. So far, I have not succeeded. All my sunrises look like greeting cards.

My grandfather paints his fruit bowls while I paint the light. He is very attached to his art. When he finishes a work, he'll disassemble the still life and stick those very pieces of fruit down his shirt. Grandpa likes his art to rub against the skin of his stomach; he enjoys its perfect tangibility. I tell him that he looks like he's got a bunch of tumors above his belt buckle. He always grins and then says, "At least I know my art. You can't touch that light."

It is late at night. Grandpa and grandma are asleep. I am sitting in grandpa's lumpy green recliner. It smells of his sweat, cherry tobacco and mothballs. The crickets are chirping so loudly that I must turn up the television volume. I can see myself looking blue and shrunken in the long mirror which faces the chair. I look curiously old. I am engrossed with my metamorphosis when I hear a little noise from the liquor cabinet. I know this noise; it haunts me. It is barely audible, but I know its voice will not be discerned until I digest it in my stomach and send its decoded message to my brain via my bloodstream. I take a drink. It is my mother.

I am nine years old. Mama is calling me from her bedroom. "Madelina? Do you love me?" she calls. She is sitting on top of her light blue nubby bedspread smashing cigarettes into the rising red half moon on the bottom of the ashtray. She is drinking whiskey. "Please, I need to know. Do you love me Madelina?" Her voice is calling me, but I am running out the back door like a naughty dog. My stride is long savage leaps over rocks and big fat roots. I am fast like a racehorse, but her voice is still in my ear as if I were wearing it as an earring. "Come back. Kiss me if you love me." It is calling to my organs, flesh and enzymes. "Do you love me or not?"

I shake my head. I am no longer nine years old, but twenty. I still run fast, however.

My father calls me from Toronto where he is selling software.

"Well, are you painting anything happy yet?" he asks.

"Never." I think about the sunrise light.

"If I were you, I'd paint the barn and some bright flowers — like poppies or irises — around it. That would be really beautiful."

"Ugghh," I say.

Before the end of the phone call, he asks, "How are your grandparents?"

After a second, I reply, "Grandpa's mind is a little dusty these days."

It is actually very dusty. Last Sunday, we watched a television segment on the starving children of India. Grandpa was so saddened by their gaunt faces with the large distinct brown eyes, he wept. Then he boiled five dozen eggs and carefully wrapped them up in a big box with lots of tissue, after he had drawn a smiley face on each one. He drove down to the Almacs parking lot and dropped the package into the Salvation Army hut. Grandma said to me, "Do you think those eggs will ever arrive in India? I think they'll spoil first."

"Water under the bridge," says my grandma as she scrapes the charred pancakes into the sink.

Early that morning while I still slept, Grandpa had cut up his plastic fruit into tiny pieces with scissors. Then he sprinkled them all over the lawn, causing it to look as if a giant Mexican confetti egg had been dropped from the sky. From my seat at the breakfast table, I had a clear view of the colored lawn.

"Your fruit looks very festive," I say.

"Jane Anne," grandpa says to me, "I am finished with fruit and I want to paint you."

"That's not her name. That's you daughter's name. She's dead," says grandma.

"Oh? Then who are you?" Grandpa looks at me, puzzled.

"Your granddaughter Madeline," says grandma.

"Now I remember. Do you have a pear-shaped head or an apple-shaped head?" he asks while pulling out his sketchbook.

"Oh no," grandma wails, "I've burnt them again."

That night, I have the dream again: I am eleven years old. Mama is crying, but I am running from her. She is calling from the bathtub, "Madelina, do you love me?" I am running faster and faster until I cannot hear her, but only my heart which beats inside of me. Much later, I return home. There are police cars and an ambulance. I am scared to go upstairs because I hear my father sobbing. Short and ugly gasps. A neighbor sees me and takes me to her house. Now I am crying.



I sit and wait on a strange bed. I trace the sixty-four plastic poppies on the vinyl headboard with my toe. All the time, I am saying, "I love you mommie. I love you mommie."

It is early evening. Grandpa and I play Scrabble on the front porch while we sip bloody Marys and slap mosquitoes. I am winning when he puts down five letters and forms "godsuck".

"That's not a word and besides it's a little sacrilegious," I say to him.

"It is too a word. Well, it should be. Godawful. Godsend. Godknows. Godforsaken. Godsuck. Yes, it should be."

"Well, you can't use should-be words in Scrabble."

He is stubborn and decides not to play. "I have to paint you anyway," he says.

Godsuck. The last time I talked seriously about God, I was a gawky bodied thirteen year old. It was in Father Cornelison's office. He was explaining Paul and the Corinthians to me in a slow and methodic voice that had made me sleepy. Suddenly, I was awake and struck with new life.

"Look! The light!" I interrupted Father Cornelison. The sun was shining through the red stained glass window. It cast its warmth all throughout the oak paneled room.

"Excuse me?" His eyes were opened wide.

All at once, I wanted the assurance of human touch. I wanted love, but his hands — waxy and wrinkled — could not offer me any solace.

"Excuse me?" he repeated.

I shook my hand at him. "Nothing." I closed my eyes and remained motionless, until I heard the Bible shut. When I opened my eyes, the sun had passed and the brilliant light was no longer there. Father handed me a pamphlet — More Modern Words — which I later put with the other pamphlets that cluttered my desk and my mind, as well.

I did not rise today to paint the light. It is late in the morning and I am eating a powdered sugar donut while lying in the old bed in the birthing room. Grandpa has pulled the rocking chair next to me. He is smiling while patting the sheet covered canvas that he has perched on his knee.

"I've finished you," he says.

"Let's see myself."

He starts to chuckle and lifts off the sheet. I see myself in my pale blue dress looking out from behind the glass door onto the front porch. The focus is not on me however, but on what is in front of me: a big oversized bowl of waxy gleaming fruit that is sitting on the front porch.

"It's you Jane Anne," he says.

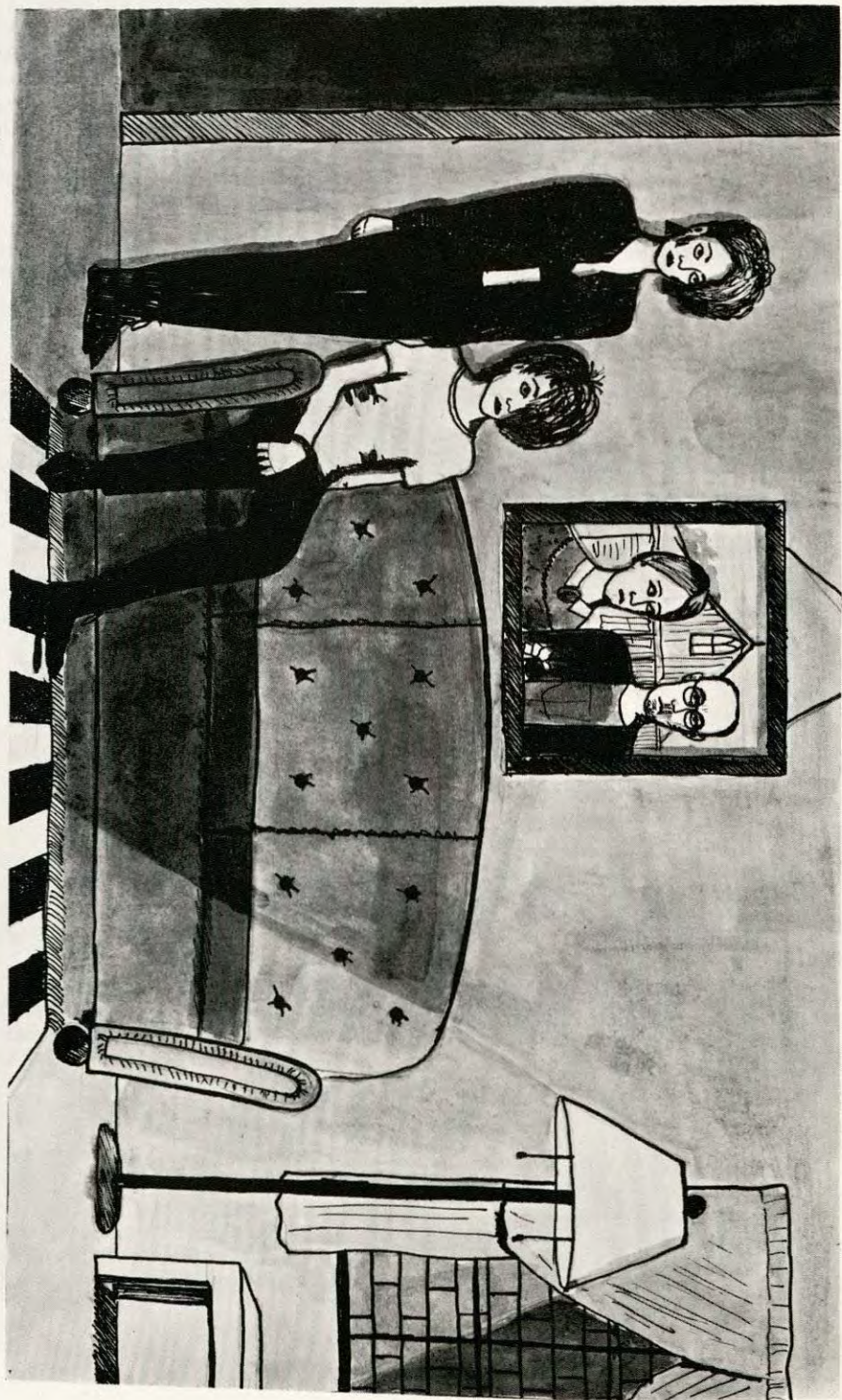
Suddenly, I see that it is not me. The eyes are green like my mother's were, but the dress is mine — it is hanging in the closet right this second. The mouth is mine too. I see my prominent cleft, but no other physical features are mine. It is both of us. It is my mother and me in one.

"Do you like it?" Grandpa leans forward and with his wrinkled forefinger, he jabs the bowl of fruit and says, "That's the best damn still life I ever painted."

I stare at the mouth and I swear I can see the lips mouthing, "Do you love me? Do you love me?"

Tracy Wallace





## Reflections on a Mass Pike Moonrise

Driving down the pike one evening  
the moon rose (full)  
like a pregnant elephant  
belly-up  
yellow and sweating

Looking carefully  
I noticed there's a  
woman in the moon  
She's lying curled  
on her side  
arms under her head  
upside-down

Zeus jumped over her  
legs hurdler-split  
beard streaming  
then  
fell to pieces

the radio said  
you can take any Emily Dickinson poem  
and sing it  
to the Yellow Rose of Texas

which it proceeded to do  
with number 332  
(it was pretty awful)

I hoped you were listening  
as the moon floated  
in islands  
of a dark sea

Dave Tyler



## Chordal Composure

Aside the gentle beast he knelt  
bowing his curled crown slightly toward her black mammoth grace.  
Looming above her dark curves was the ghost:  
a faithful, nourishing, foul cloud of calm.  
Fingers kissing tenderly her smile,  
ivory smooth in the light, smoked by the ghost.  
Beneath them lay an onyx shadow of polyphony  
beyond them quiet heavens,  
and within her, whirling Euclidian echoes.

In the fierce cathedral night he tamed her  
until they sang the tormenting solo:  
will's deep song of sheer-pure heart  
in black and white.  
His bleating, mortal, awkward soul  
shone clear the human ache of the trap,  
alive in anguish,  
suffocating in flesh this side of music,  
weeping tears falling only as shadows of tone.

His tactual translation of mind's silent symphony  
sounded a contrapuntal hush  
gently waking the deaf quiet  
of simpler  
and sleeping souls.

## The Rage

Looking at you  
my eyes breathe  
warm tears.  
From a twisted heart is borne heat  
writhing and searching  
for shape.  
The form of feeling or pure truth?  
Without form, order or point,  
a misconstrued logic streams tears—  
a painful effort  
to expose what is smothered  
by an autistic fury of circles.  
My skin burns.  
A salted path of pain  
staining my quivering cheeks  
burns.  
Mind, in her silent shriek,  
begs with a fisted grip  
for reason.  
Reason a heart cannot touch.  
A misplaced predicate  
dangling,  
provoking the rage  
of love.

## Untitled

I  
used to think that  
no one  
was as forgiving as a  
child . . .

Lisa Mintz

## Rain

Whisper rain, wet rain, water, silver rain  
The sound of many tears, many voices  
A loud quieting,  
The drops wind their slow, awkward way down  
The pebbled window.  
This is the time of reflection.  
Faces become stark against the gray, cotton sheet sky.  
And the memories drift in  
Like the sweeping from a broom  
Memories of a soaked day brimming  
With the laughter of a child  
A wet rain slicker and red umbrella.  
The satin road winds on the trees  
Paint their pencil lines on the  
Cloudless canvas and the houses  
Dissolve into one another.  
This is the time to reach for someone.  
The affectionate cold holds our  
Thoughts and we cling to memories  
In this time of rain.

Martha Hawley





WHAT IS BEHIND THAT CURTAIN Kim Pouliot

## **The Garden After Midnight**

Into my kept garden come  
Lured by pale, cool strands of light;  
Clasp the silk about your knees  
And wait by the shining pool.

You wander near the soft wood  
Of Rose-trees, wondering where  
I am, or if I have come  
To brave the quick chill of night.

It grows late and you pass by  
The Morning Glory wrapped tight  
And a hedge of sweet lilac  
I am lying dead behind.

You know the stars comforting,  
Swirling above in the skies.

## **Poem**

### **To P.D.**

Her dancing is the motion of the moon  
Before the water's static pull  
Between expression and the one  
Full spirit of the dark.

Her light is fixed to waves  
Brief burst of crested harmonies  
And breaking, through her rippled dance  
In silhouette, reflected on  
The water and compassless  
Put to this shore.

The tide so gently stirs  
Away the sands yet draws me near  
Her eyes entranced, the stars dance through  
Storm and clouds, though she is in control.  
And look, rocking gently on that horizon  
Her dancing is the sun, from sleep  
Of hearts is trembling, gently shook.



## **The Coming Third**

The eagle's arc across the sky  
Has met its limit, the bear  
Wandered off the Steppes  
Of Eastern Europe. Truth  
And the different Times no longer  
Carry birth announcements, merely  
The obituaries of political elites.  
Even if it were announced,  
Commented on in the evening  
Propaganda, even if such little  
Infant feet could walk on water  
Would the world bend to its knees  
If an icon of the Sphinx  
Was born say, in a socialized  
laboratory  
At Leningrad?

The time of reckoning is in sight  
The Apochryphal day has come.  
All rights were wronged, the world  
Spun crookedly upon its axis  
Until the poles met in Berlin and yet  
Lord, why did your light not come  
Above the straw of a manger?  
But in a new Son risen in the West  
on a desert floor.

Jonathan Bragdon Leff

## **Starry Night (Van Gogh's dream)**

In a dream  
the stars have no mass  
In church  
the mass has no stars  
My dream  
is to dream of that  
place, where bright  
masses of people sit content  
on oak benches  
dreaming of swirling stars  
with no mass  
or body  
only brilliance

Bradford White

## **Ode to a Tapeworm**

I get into tapeworms . . .  
and they get into me.

## **Ode to a Mercy Killing**

My cactus is dying, it shows little life;  
It's been dying for two years.  
To kill it or not is an emotional strife,  
Over which I have shed many tears.

My Grandmother bought it at Caldors one day,  
And gave it to me as a gift.  
It was bright pink and green, but its been turning gray;  
And it's slow death is getting me miffed.

So I've thought and I've thought about ending it all,  
Freeing it from its great misery.  
But once I begin may no job be too small,  
Could I start killing bushes and trees?

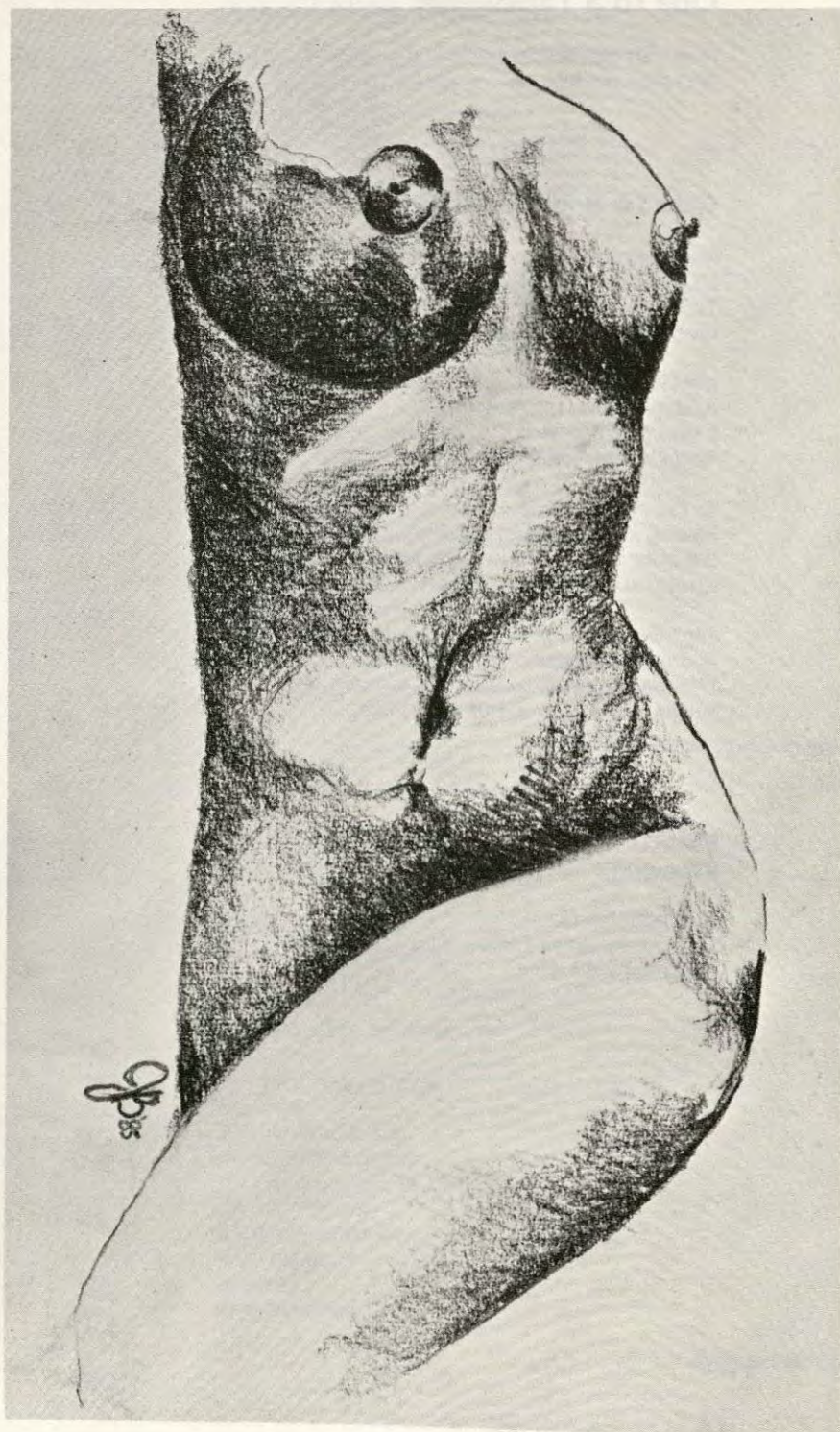
For the evil of man is wicked you say,  
and the goodness of cacti so great,  
That my cactus will die in this tortured way,  
So I'm saved from a murderous fate.

## **Halku (Oranges)**

Sent from Florida  
When they arrive I know that  
Grandma's still alive

Gini Vancil







## Blasphemy

The dishes had been put away, the table wiped off, chairs pushed in, the napkin holder filled, and the canister set turned so that their labels pointed cheerily into the room. I was meticulously folding a towel and centering it on its rod. I had not missed anything. I had even corrected the perpetual slouch of the charcoal drawing I once gave Mom for her birthday. There was nothing left to do. So I took a deep breath, and walked towards the living room. Stopping in the doorway, I braced myself in the frame. It was Christmas morning, and everyone had come home.

The family made a vaguely ritualistic pattern, arranged in layers like the ripples in a pond when you throw in a stone. The stone was the Christmas tree, laden with Sunday School ornaments, standing in a heap of gifts and wrapping in front of the fireplace where the electric log flickered monotonously, turned on for its festive effect. Along the edges sat pairs of parents, unconsciously next to their spouses, chatting politely with one eye on the kids who were dashing about in the center of the room like a physics experiment in random motion.

It was some terrible parody of a Norman Rockwell painting. Someone had put my brother and sisters' faces on the bodies of the standard smiling but frazzled parents, and had put Mom and Dad's faces on the grandparents in matching cardigan sweaters. The grandchildren were strangers with familiar features. The tree blinked its lights at me maliciously and the electric train puffed real smoke and laughed.

"Gracie, you're back! We thought you had been swallowed up in there," Cathy called, trying to balance her three year old Sarah on a lap filled with an eight month pregnancy.

"We were just about to go in and help you. I mean, it was great of you to offer to do all those dishes, but you're missing Christmas," Erin said, fumbling with her blouse to nurse one of the twins.

"Let's see those dishpan hands, Sis!" John leaped up and grabbed my hand, displaying it to the rest of the family. "Is this the hand of the twenty-five year old, or the eighty-seven year old? Only her Brillo knows for sure!"

Everybody else laughed so I didn't have to.

John led me back to the couch, looking pleased with himself. "Grace, come sit with your favorite, though only, brother."

Obediently I squeezed next to him, and he put his arm around me the way he used to do when he was showing me off to all of his basketball buddies. Sometimes he had gotten me dates with some of the guys who owed him a favor, or who wanted to get in with the coach's son. We always doubled so that John could make sure my date didn't try to corrupt me. I enjoyed these nights; it was easier than staying home.

"Isn't Christmas fantastic?" Making a gesture with his free hand, John nearly hit his wife Alyssa in the face. "I mean, it's so cliched that you can't help but love it. Kids smiling, egg nog, the tree, Christmas carols, ugly neckties..." Over his turtleneck, he wore the tie I gave him. He flicked it, making sure I knew that he was smiling his teasing smile. I flashed him a dutiful grin. "Wasn't it yesterday that we were the ones in pajamas, instead of the ones changing the diapers? Ah, the good old days."



Alyssa leaned over John's knees. "So what do you think, Grace? Has he got a career at Hallmark?"

I felt a tapping on my knee. "Aunt Grace?" It was John Jr., sheepishly clutching a toy dog. He looked like a Kodak ad. "Does my new puppy look like Kippy? Danny says he doesn't."

I looked at the arthritic border collie who has been in our family pictures for twelve years. He was snapping at wads of wrapping paper that Danny was bouncing off his nose. John Jr.'s dog was a sort of spaniel. I squinted until both dogs turned into smears of brown and white, then answered, "Of course he looks like Kippy. Danny should get some glasses."

"I know. That's how come I'm calling him Kippy too." He stuck out his tongue at Danny, then hopped off to find a different cousin to play with.

Erin appeared in front of me, trying to put the twin in the green sleeper into the portable crib, and take the one in the red sleeper out. Both of them wouldn't quite fit, so she juggled them for a moment, then turned and dropped the green one into my lap.

"Which one is this?" I asked, wrapping my arms around her so she wouldn't roll away.

"Kelly." She bounced the red twin up in the air, humming "Jingle Bells." Settling Suzy onto her shoulder, Erin looked at me as if she had been waiting all day for someone to ask her that. "Get it? Kelly's in green. Like the color, you know, Kelly green."

The rest of the family memorized this so that they could pretend they could tell them apart. Then I wondered how long I had to hold Kelly in order to not hurt Erin's feelings.

John leaned over to me. "Did you hear that Mad Max is running a contracting firm in Syracuse now? Doing pretty well, too. And still single too. Maybe you should look into it, Grace, give him a call. Syracuse isn't really that far to go for true love."

Mad Max had been on John's basketball team and was famous for driving an old Chevy which he had painted orange and brown, the Park School colors. In his senior year he was voted "Most School Spirit" and "Best Tan." We had gone out five or six times, and John was still sure he had made the perfect match.

James, Cathy's number two child, ran past me, and shot his little sister Sarah with the laser on his new toy spaceship. Sarah squeezed herself between Cathy's legs and cried mechanically until James got in trouble.

"What I really need for Christmas is a nanny, or a police force," Cathy said as she swatted James and confiscated his spaceship. "You aren't busy for the next twenty years, are you, Grace?"

I stared at her regularly pregnant belly, refusing to look up; I already knew what her big smile would look like, spread out under the only pointed nose in our family. I could feel the laughter in the room crawl across my skin. "Yes, I'm busy. I've got a job."



"Well, raising children is at least a full-time job too," Mom said, mediating by reflex. Her dress was the same soft blue as her chair so that, for a moment, she looked like a disconnected head, a 1930's movie trick to show inner conscience. Then I looked to Cathy, who was nodding her full agreement. I felt no sympathy. She was the one who got itchy for maternity clothes immediately after the Terrible Twos.

My legs felt stiff. I looked down and saw that Kelly was asleep. I stroked the nearly white down that covered her head, and she shifted slightly and sighed. Mom began to coo about how cute a picture we would make, so I carefully scooped her up and rolled the green bundle into Mom's lap. Mom looked like a social worker accepting a baby for adoption, all empathetic smiles and gentle confusion. "Bathroom stop," was my excuse before slipping away.

Upstairs, I wandered through the familiar rooms, strewn with open suitcases and unmade beds. In the room I used to share with Erin, a crib is squeezed into the corner where my easel used to stand, facing the window so I could daydream. Erin's family is camping out here: she and Phil, Danny and the twins. I sleep downstairs on the patched leather couch in Dad's office. Standing at my bookshelf, I paged through the books I had read and reread when I was younger. Their half-memorized words comforted me.

"Aunt Grace?" a little voice behind me asked. I turned around. It was John Jr. "We're taking a picture. You have to come downstairs."

I followed John Jr.'s bobbing blonde head down the stairs. He took them one at a time, clutching the rail. The enforced slowness gave me a chance to look at the pictures on the wall. They are the same pictures that had been there when I was growing up, except now there are more first birthday pictures and cozy sleeping baby scenes. I noticed a new picture and thought it was one of Cathy's kids until I saw the mother's bouffant hairdo and realized that Dad had framed my Christening picture. It must have been one of his ideas about fairness: apparently he was concerned that I wasn't getting equal representation on the stairwell wall and decided to make up for not even having a wedding picture by going through the albums to claim more space for me. I could see him getting it enlarged and framed with a stack of pictures from some basketball championship, then putting it up without a word while Mom was out grocery shopping.

When we got downstairs, Dad was pacing and giving orders. I could almost see his old coach's hat perched crookedly on top of his balding head. "Grace, get down here." He clutched my arm and pulled me to my spot next to Erin. On his way back to the camera, he saw John Jr. still at the foot of the stairs. "Johnny, what are you doing? Get over there next to Annie."

John Jr. ran frightened to the tree. When he passed Dad, Dad half-lifted him to get him to his place next to his sister. Dad bent behind the tripod and focused, waving his hands over his head to direct us to our positions. Then he called, "Ready?", pulled the timing lever, and trotted to the space next to Mom. We had all smiled too early, so we were taking breaths when the shutter clicked. The family mass began to shudder apart, and Dad yelled, "Wait! While we're all here, we're going to take another one." We solidified again, and planned out our facial expressions. Cathy held back James' hands so that he couldn't make rabbit ears over his sisters, Jill and Sarah, this time. Dad pulled the timer. As he dashed back to his place, Kippy got up to follow him. So when the shutter clicked, we were all looking at the dog.



During the disassembly, I slipped into Dad's office, and made sure the curtains on the glass doors were closed so that no one would wander in to chat. As an excuse to be in there, I pulled my sketchpad out of the leather portfolio I use to impress people. I laid the pad on Dad's desk, which had been uncharacteristically cleared so that the grandchildren wouldn't mess it up. I sat on the back of the chair, my feet on the seat, and began to draw women wearing clothes from Elena's, the boutique that I was doing my first ad campaign for. I was meeting with Elena as soon as I got back, and I had no ideas yet. I was beginning to wish that I was just a staff artist again.

I drew a woman in a sari-like evening gown holding a glass of champagne. First I put her on a mountain, then changed it to the moon. I was adding James' spaceship when Dad came in.

"What are you doing in here? Work? On Christmas?" He dug through a file and pulled out a blue piece of paper. "The Baileys are here. Come out and say hello." He pushed the file drawer closed with his hip and put his arm around me, looking at the drawing, but pretending not to. "Their boy David's the Park School track star, you know. They're going to sign him up for the AAU." He tugged me, and I let him lead me into the living room.

Dad handed the application to Mr. Bailey and began to explain each section as he pointed to it. Dad had been the coach at Park School, the private school at the end of the street, until we had all graduated and couldn't be on his teams. Since then, he's been the regional chairman of the Amateur Athletics Union, which gives him a chance to be in charge of hundreds of athletes and have official duties for the Olympics. It is his personal crusade to sign up every athlete he comes in contact with. Park School kids, though, remain his favorites. He usually knows their older brothers and sisters.

The front hall was jammed with grandchildren wrestling their way into snowsuits and boots. All of the mothers were crouching around them, forcing their hands into mittens.

I turned to Mrs. Bailey and noticed the cobweb of gray that had recently spun itself into her black hair. She was wearing the dress she brought out every Christmas, bright green wool with tiny candy canes and red ribbons scattered all over it. The holly leaf pin still hung slightly crooked over her left breast, where she put it when her daughter gave it to her five years ago. Her earrings were new: Christmas trees with tiny colored balls. She was asking me questions, and I was answering them to avoid zipper detail in the front hall.

"I'm working for an advertising firm right now, Mrs. Bailey. I'm doing the promotion for Elena's, a shop for custom made clothes in Rochester."

"Well, isn't that interesting, dear." Mr. Bailey had rolled the application into a tube and was pushing it with his chin through the circle his thumb and forefinger made, while Dad discussed a track meet he had been to recently. Mrs. Bailey turned to him and said, "Grace is working for an advertising firm, dear. Isn't that nice?" Without waiting for his nod, she looked at me with her watery blue eyes. "And what do you do there? Are you a secretary?" She leaned forward and tapped my cheek in confidence. "You're pretty enough, you know."

"I was hired to do layout and artwork, but I'm starting to work on ideas now also. I'm presenting my first solo proposal right after New Year's."



Mrs. Bailey smiled at me as if I had two heads, but she didn't want to say anything. I smiled back as if I knew I had two heads. Mom came in from the kitchen with her company tea tray piled with Christmas cookies. She took strangely short steps, and looked like the sepia photo of my grandmother. Mom had put on make-up because it was a holiday. The smears of rouge balanced on her cheeks as if someone was pointing two red lights at her face. A white lock had sprung loose from her hairpins. I lifted my hand to tuck it back in, but changed my mind halfway and instead made a weak wave and excused myself to join "the girls" in the kitchen.

As I walked in, Erin pointed to a stack of carrots and celery that needed to be cut into sticks. She handed me a paring knife, keeping her eyes focused on Alyssa, who was telling a story about her neighbors. "Well, they got the pool put in at the beginning of the summer, and immediately began to have loud parties every weekend. It drove me crazy. It got so I felt like I was invading their privacy any time I went into my own backyard. And, to top it all off. . . ." She stopped peeling her potato and looked up at all of us. "They only invited us over twice." We all nodded sympathetically, and I bent over my carrots.

"So Grace, what's going on in your life? Anything interesting?" Erin asked, opening a cupboard.

"Remember Elena's, the shop I took you to when you visited? The one on Monroe Avenue? Well, I'm in charge of the promotion for a new line of her clothes. I present my portfolio next Thursday."

Erin smiled politely and looked for a moment like Mrs. Bailey. "That's the expensive place with all the silk things, isn't it?"

"Yeah, that's the place," I said.

Alyssa jumped in. "Well, what I'd really like to know is if there's anyone interesting in your life."

"No, not really." I lined up the carrots and began to halve them.

"You're sure there's no one at all?" Cathy asked, steering her bulk past me to get to the sink.

"Last time I checked. . . ." I put my hand on her shoulder and felt like a tug boat nudging a freighter into dock. "Don't take Mom's wedding dress out of cold storage yet."

Cathy was cleaning out a frying pan. I heard it clank against the bottom of the sink. "Are you still living with that roommate of yours, ummm, Jan?"

I hesitated. "Nan. And yes, I'm still living with her."

"Nan then." She took the correction as if I had suggested she go five miles out of her way to get to the corner drugstore. "You know, that might be part of your problem."

"How so?" I pushed away the carrots and began to slice through the ribs of celery.

"Well, she's so. . . feminist." Her face looked like she was eating something bitter.



"And—"

"Well, all those pamphlets and things lying around. ERA's one thing but if you bring a guy back to your place, how's he supposed to know that they aren't yours? 'Are these manhating pamphlets yours, or your roommates?' It just doesn't work, and you've got to think about things like that. It's just common sense."

Nan works for the Women's Peace Encampment in Seneca Falls. We are on a number of mailing lists, and when Cathy visited not all of it was cleaned up. The dishes stopped clattering while they waited for me to explain. I clapped the knife down on the cutting board and two halves of a celery stick bounced onto the table.

A silence, then Erin opened another cupboard. "Oh, here it is!" she said, pulling out a blue bowl. "Geez, I was getting scared that I wouldn't find it."

Dad's mother won that bowl when she came in first place when she entered her famous cranberry sauce in a fair. Ever since then, Dad has refused to have cranberries served in anything but that bowl. One Thanksgiving, Erin put them in the wrong dish and he let his disappointment be known. Erin and Cathy remember the scene as a demonstration of the wrath of God. I believe in the preservation of good family folklore, so I have never corrected them. Dad had just used his coach's voice, the one that shames the team into working harder.

From Alyssa and Cathy's reaction to the appearance of The Blue Bowl, it was clear that they had been looking for quite a while. I got a beer out of our 1962 refrigerator for the celebration. The patriarch would now be appeased. As I took my first pull, I felt the eyes on me, and remembered that this was not done any more.

Last night at dinner Alyssa announced that she was expecting in June. Like he always does, Dad leaped up and opened a bottle of champagne. "Ladies first," he said as he started pouring.

"No thanks," Alyssa said. "Alcohol is bad news when you're pregnant. Doctor's orders, sorry."

Cathy just shook her head and patted her stomach, staring sullenly at Dad. When he got to Erin, he had a hopeful look in his eyes.

"Not good for nursing, either, Dad."

I was obligated to take a glass and toast to all of the coming grandchildren. Dad poured me seconds, but I couldn't drink it until we were clearing the table and they weren't looking.

Alyssa's jealous eyes brought me to the present. "Boy, do I wish I could have one of those." She held her still flat stomach as if it were the child itself.

"Go ahead," I told her. "You might as well enjoy yourself. After all, it's Christmas, and we found The Blue Dish. What better reason to celebrate?" It was blasphemy and I knew it.

"Don't you know what alcohol can do to a fetus?" Cathy asked from beside me. I knew that her doctor had taught her well: he knew she had a tendency to be rather free with the jug of white wine she always had around.

"Tell me," I said through clenched teeth, like a movie outlaw who's just been caught by the sheriff.

"It was only a joke, Cathy," Erin pleaded, not acknowledging me. "Don't worry about it."

"No, it wasn't 'just a joke.' What's one beer going to do anyway?" I said, knowing that they knew I didn't have to ask.

"When you start wanting kids of your own, maybe you'll understand," Cathy said, as she yanked a stack of plates from the shelf.

The back door opened with an explosion of snowcaked children, stamping their feet to shake the snow onto the floor. I turned quickly, and went into Dad's office to avoid having to undress them all.

I sat on the desk, without turning on a light. Outside, snow was beginning to fall. I watched it drift down as the blueness of the night filled the air like a fog. The streetlight in front of the Bailey's came on, and the sounds of the family gathering for dinner clattered in the next room. The wind picked up and whipped the snow wildly against the bareness of the trees, and I felt like I was in one of those globes that some child had shaken up too hard. I waited for the water inside to calm down, but it didn't. It was time for Christmas dinner.

Christina Fraser

## Quadrangle

I find myself on the beach we camped on last night  
to watch a summer meteor shower.  
I am sipping lemonade as you and your brother yell,  
"Fall! Fall!" at waterskiers.  
Even I applaud when they go down.

The sun is hot so I lie on my stomach  
to listen to the waves rattle against the shale.  
When I wake up, you have gone,  
bicycling back to the city.  
You have borrowed my sneakers.

You are riding back with the one you love and who loves you.  
In the hypnotic buzz of pine trees I do not recall  
the curses the one I love has for you  
for having the one she loves so easily and for so long  
I shift onto my elbows and feel the sweat on my face.

Your brother and I buy sweet corn and peaches on the drive home,  
and you return my sneakers the next day  
with new socks and apologies  
because mine had gotten stained.  
I forgive you. They were bought cheap.



## Shared Poem

You up on the hill  
and I across the road  
awoke together  
and looked into the East,  
into the morning

You saw a painter's first stroke  
red across the clouds  
and I  
saw the same.

## Spiders

The spiders have come out:  
It must be Spring.

Soon we will walk at dawn.  
The fog will string the webs with beads.

You will want a camera.  
I will want to kiss you.

Later in the day, someone will get a newspaper  
to kill the bug that drops from her ceiling.

I will remember dawn.  
She will not listen.

Christina Fraser





