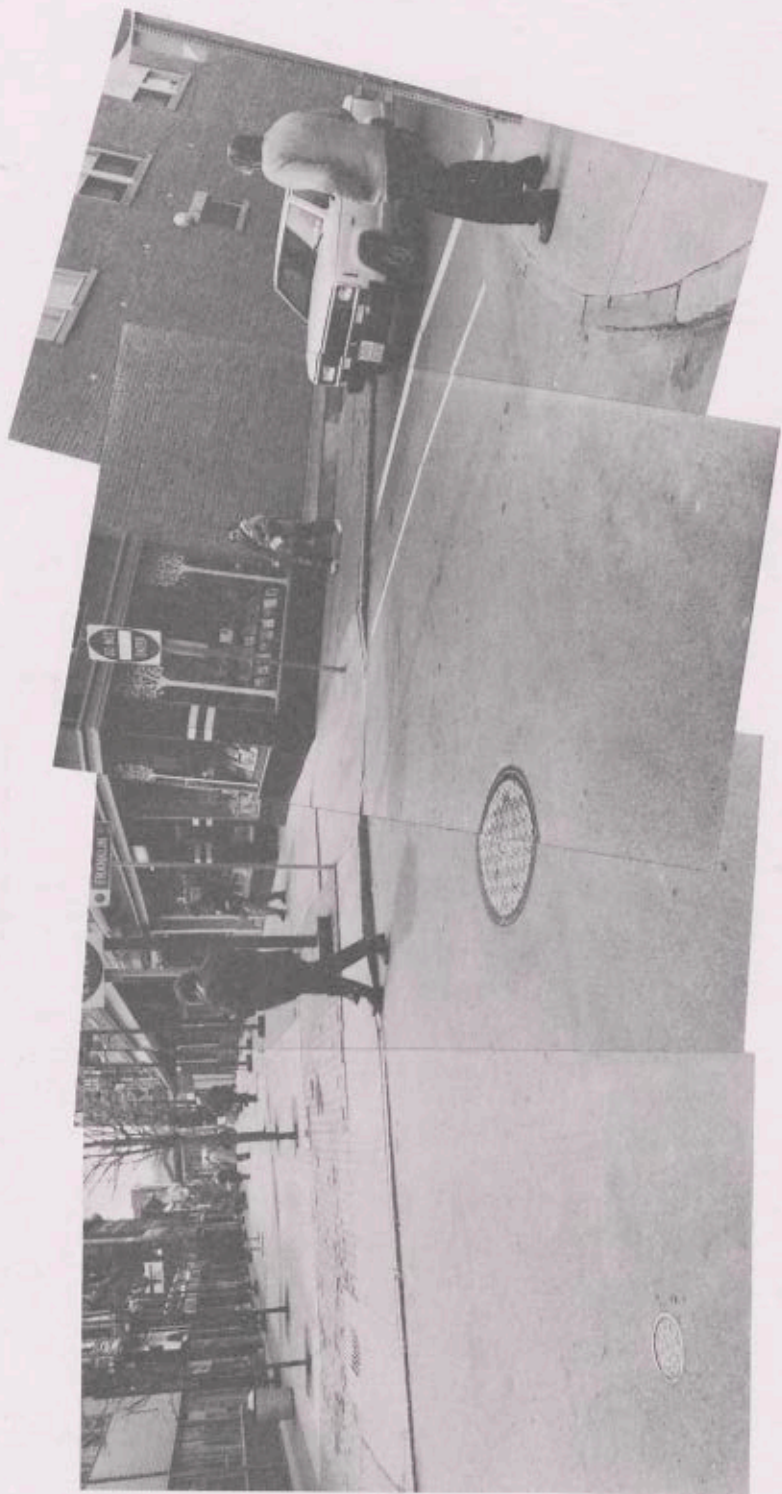


The Idiot

Spring 1991

LESLIE ROSS



JAY STREET #16

The Idol

SPRING 1991

EDITOR

MATTHEW FUTTERMAN

*

ASSISTANT EDITORS

MARY FARRIS

MISSY FABEL

*

ARTS EDITOR

LESLIE ROSS

*

ASSISTANT ARTS EDITOR

ADAM PAGET

*

FACULTY ADVISOR

JORDAN SMITH

*

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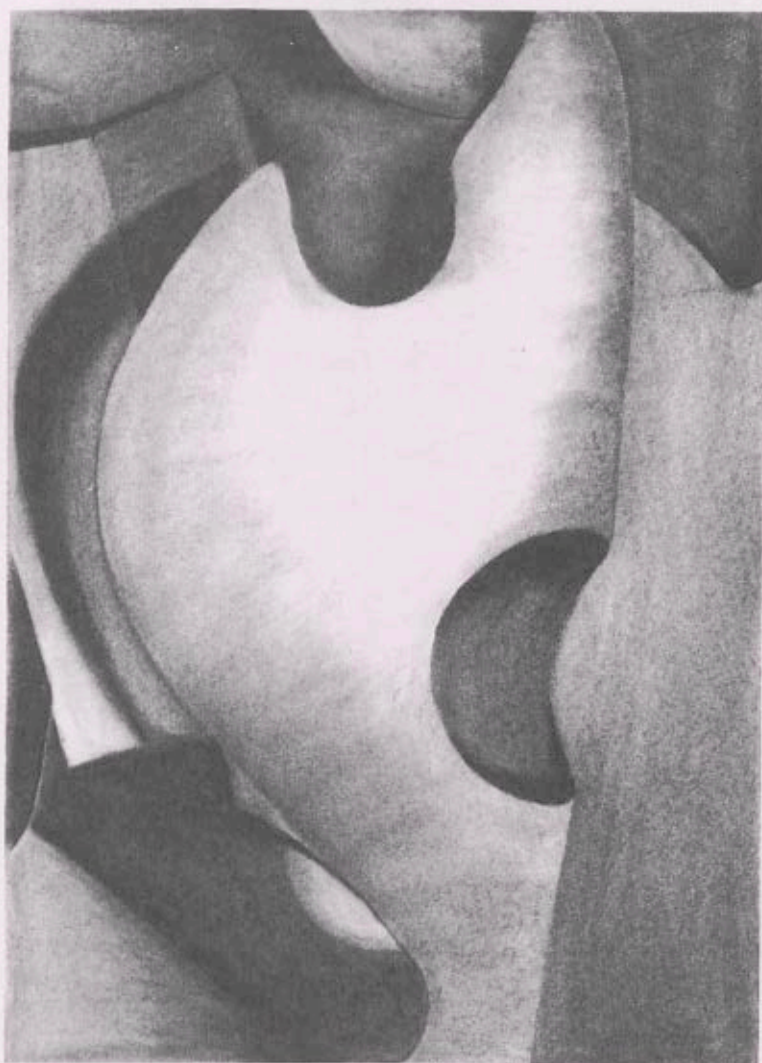
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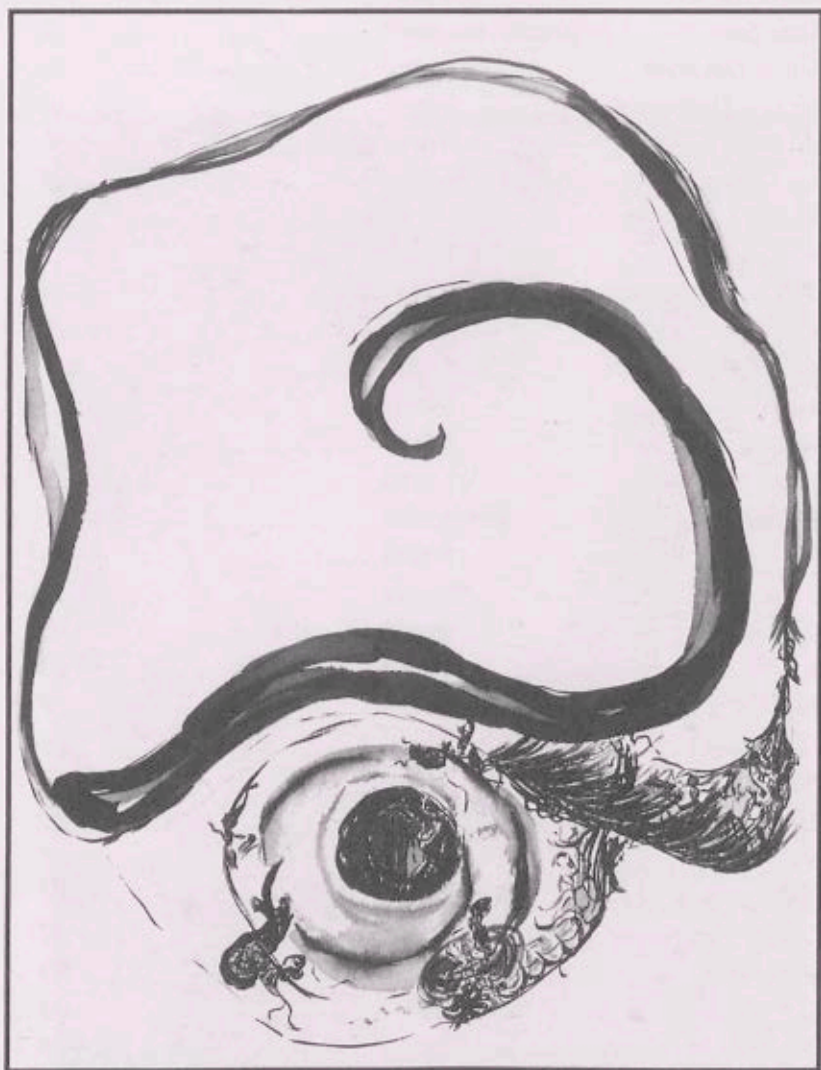
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KARA SWEET

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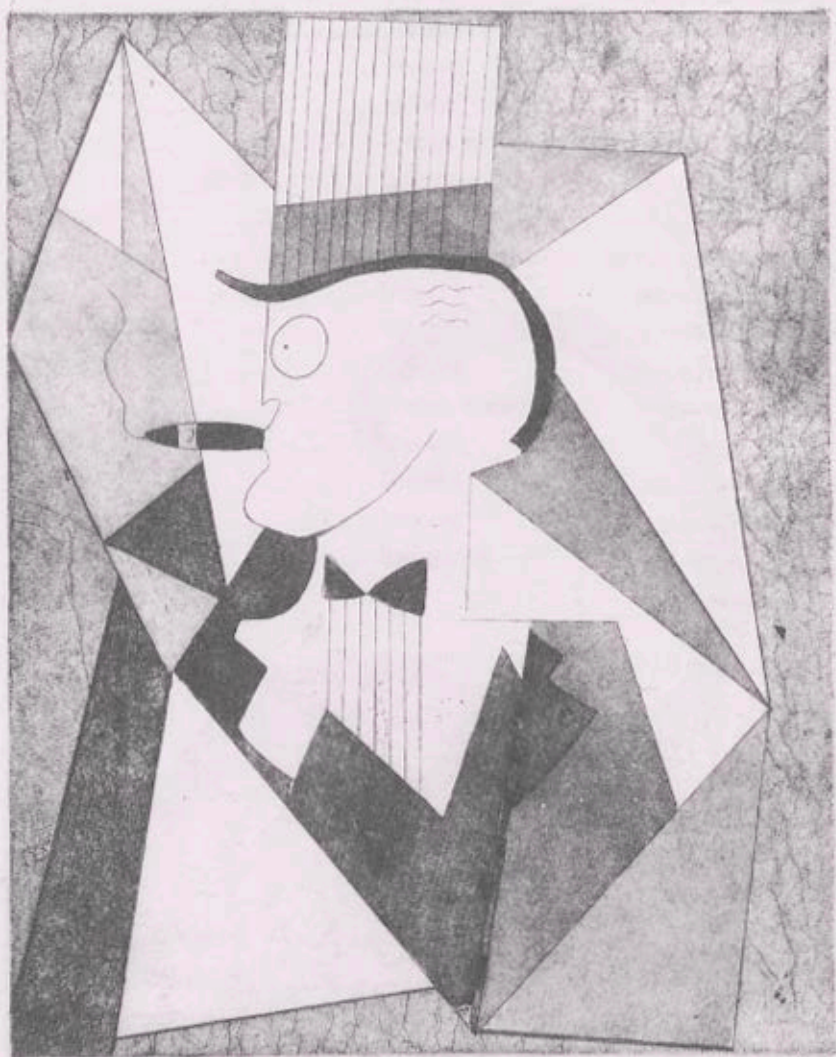
*" . . . but then what do I know, other
than what I can imagine?"*

PHILIP ROTH

THE GHOST WRITER

This edition of *The Idol* is dedicated to Kit Hathaway, because he forces us to imagine, helps us know, and teaches us how to learn.

MATTHEW FUTTERMAN



"GUEST"

ALLISON DRESCHER

NOTES OF A DIRTY YOUNG MAN

*I troll and skulk
lurching in the shadows pregnant
with dream, lyrical as swan I leap
over the barbs
over the wisps
I, sire of the waxy children bright
with the primordial
vaunt and masticate the cud of whimsy.*

*Kildeer shrill against
treelines at twilight
dense thrill tensely liquid
mouth to mons
I like to let those damned owls watch.*

*The sequoias are bent and
the lemmings are sprinting for the cliffs
the martyrs have begun their indignant wallow
but I, siblings of situation and verve
have prepared the rhythm of my notions to scald, bubble,
and illuminate.*

*It is not better to lurk under tables, in closets
to smell and think inconspicuously*

*I hiss at wizened ladies who dare
use umbrellas
I chase dogs my own size and glory in snakes.
I search under boxes for cats
but, guess what? I never find them.*

*Capitalism is like a herring in the moonlight
it shines, but it stinks!*

*I say salvage your sensibility and kindly
do not suffer out loud because
everyone can hear you
everyone can smell you*

*In politics a man must learn to rise above principle
off our walls the nightmares and hypnotisms vault
if only in vain this ejaculation of need and screech
a planet desperate to bury its skull in its bung hole
indigents in subways with metal begging tins*

the derelicts crumple to satiate clipped right-wing dogmatisms
(we've got Trump and Bob Hope
but we haven't got a clue
we've got Baltics, no ERA, Khadafy's babe
and Emelda's pretty shoes.
We've got Ollie and Saddam
youths killing for sneakers
we've got the Exxon Valdez
and a deluge of oily preachers)

On the endless radio the valium song sludges
thru its predetermined syncopation.
James Watt and Jim Baker chase little boys with
bondage kits.

The tatters and the hollows of my soul fill and drain from rage
the primary object of scream
as motionless police insist and Tipper Gore
howls to the earless lobe of parental misguidance
while, in the lair of university bedlam
silver trised lasses make me croon and dirty kneed.

Send ether to the brain and our little Johnny's to Brainwash
101

lest we engage the saviorless realm with the
5 glorious eyes of sense

I walk the plane insatiable
for verdant pubescent fruits
and trip the hunters, who chase earth's butterflies with
sickles.

In our Charybdis angrily aswirl
who will part the viscous, noxious water
to slam down the stopper?

though I have never been a slave to wisdom
we must let the green fuse flow, skirmish with
the bilious, truculent Republican ogres
and exult in the scarfing down of Canned Heat

better to puncture pretty moths with pins
smirk about wrath
giggle about sin.

— MAX HEINEGG



NUDE AFTER SEHIELE

JOHN ELLINWOOD

WENDY HALPERIN



DECEMBER

billows of frost eddying from the river's scaled back
of wire, discards, shale, and broken stones sinking
here at autumn's end, with my desires.
our water bears no recollection, overhead
a symmetric line of blackbirds escape, as I wish
at daybreak to uncoil from winter's gyves
which return only memory, which as a muse to her mime
never touches only breathes, of wantings
like the azure dusk, she was undesirous of sharing
her fauns, dryads and unicorns, kiosks opening
unto themselves, and I being my Orpheus
can only wake and walk to the quarry
in mornings I cannot life open, or shut to mold or mesh
once with arms, now with hands, and bony fingers fleshed

— MAX HEINEGG



DAPHNE A. SHIRLEY



ANNIVERSARY

JOHANNA CAMPBELL

A LETTER TO MY MENTOR

A funny thing happened at 3:00 this morning.
I awoke, stunned,
when a warm hand touched my shoulder.
Unaware of the identity of those marvelous fingers,
I accepted them out of animalistic need:
warmth in the cold air of my open window.
But physical pleasure wore thin,
and I became curious.
Who was it that slowly
yet gently, haunted me?
I shifted my weight, about to turn,
but hesitated for a moment,
basking in the pleasure of who it could be.
Disrupting the order of my sheets,
I rolled.
My eyes focussed,
and it was you.
You, looking down with your awkward smile,
and uncomfortable glasses;
the same glasses that hide
the overwhelming sensitivity I see in you;
the psychedelic artist of the 60's,
hiding behind the conservative standards of the 80's.
Let him out.
I waited for that strange silence
that always appears when I don't know what to say to you.
But it didn't come.
And I knew it must have been a dream.

— KAREN SCHAEFER



SELF PORTRAIT

ALLISON DRESCHER

THE MIND

*It has started.
The ruthless mind has started tinkering.
Slowly, Painfully.
Picturing, Imagining,
Visioning, Walking, Opening, Rising . . .
the knife
Slowly as the hand on the clock sways
from one hour to the next,
searching for a way to stop itself
before the next click signals a
change
of an hour.
Like a sprinkler, slowly watering a garden.
Tick . . . tick . . . tick . . . tick . . .
Instantly,
it clicks.
The clock . . .
The sprinkler . . .
The mind . . .
Reaches the end of its mundane
non-living, existence
to enter one of fast paced
action,
racing,
screaming,
until it slows . . .
and stops.
And realize it must start
once more
and do it all over again.
The clock, the hour.
The sprinkler, the water.
The mind,
the murder.*

MICHAEL J FREENEY

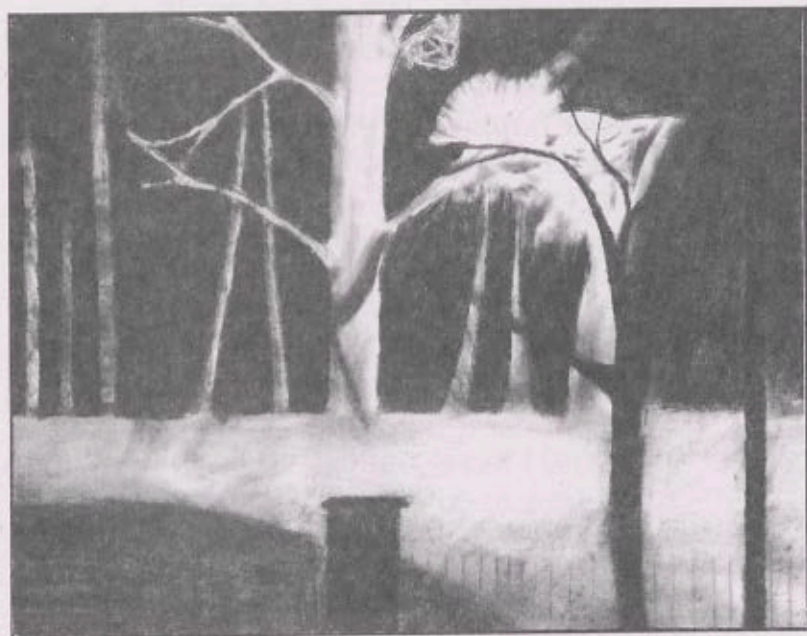
TANGLEWOOD'S DARK AUTUMN

On a chilly, fall day
the trees before me
stood grey and bare
blocking my entry
into the wood's
somber heart
Like a scout
my hot breath
preceded me
hanging softly in the air
as brown and tan leaves
crunched slowly
beneath my feet
Methodically, I pushed
my way through the sharp
tentacles of dry
twisted trees
that scratched
at my face
and ensnared my
heavy clothes

Once full of life,
the woods seemed so
uncommonly empty
Its cold air felt harsh
against my tired lungs
I worked hard
until at last
I came to him -
the master of Tanglewood
Overwhelmed with curiosity
and delight, I struggled
to keep it inside

"What has become of Tanglewood?"
I asked him, but
He silently kept his back to me
until a breeze blew him around
Creaking from the limb above
a noose had cut deep
into his leathery throat
His bulging eyes
riddled my body
with terror
and confusion
Heartbroken, I
had no choice
but to run
back from Tanglewood
Back from the life
that I was dying
to begin

— MIKE DUFAULT



JOHN JADHON

LAST MEMORY

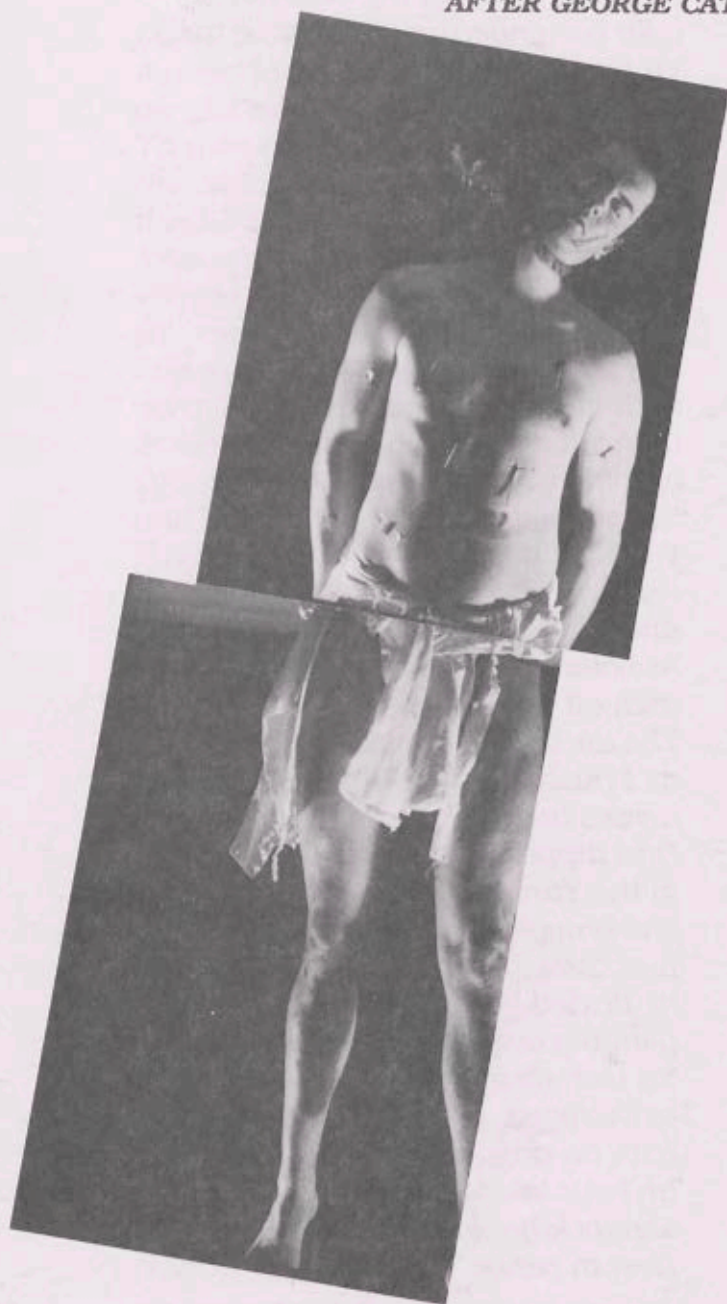
I was hurling
my mortarboard in
gleeful expectation
Ya was on her back in bed;
the cancer eating
the fullness out
from under her skin.
When I came home
from school senior year,
I always had to walk
past her door with my snack
to watch TV in the den.
Often I walked silently
and hoped she wouldn't hear;
I didn't like to see her,
blind, rocking to and fro,
listening to *The Great Gatsby*
time and again
on her tape player
for the vision impaired.
"Sometimes I think
it never happened,"
she said one afternoon
when I went in to
see if there was anything
I could get for her.
She pushed her black hair
by Clairol off of her face,
"I don't like being old."
The summer after graduation
Dad and I made the four
hour drive to go fishing
at Yankee Lake, near Monticello.
That night
while we gazed up from the veranda

counting shooting stars
chipping paint off the banister
with our fingertips, the phone rang;
Ya was getting worse;
Dad would leave
first thing in the morning.
I could stay, he said.
They'd come and get me
at the end of the week.
I couldn't.
Before we left, we filled
a big green plastic bag
with air from beside
the selfsame lake
at which Ya had passed
the previous fifty summers.
We filled a Gerber's jar
with water from the lake
and clipped a branch of evergreen.
At home she was breathing
with all her might.
The air breezed through her hair
as I pushed it from the bag
across her face;
Dad dipped her hand
in the Yankee Lake water --
she brought it to her mouth
and tasted it;
he tickled her nose
with the evergreen clippings.
Ya took time enough from breathing
to thank us
with an arduous smile;
an hour later
she took her last breath.
Rest in peace Ya.

- STEPHEN R. KENNEN

SELF PORTRAIT IN MANDAM OKIDER CEREMONY -

AFTER GEORGE CATHIN



JOHN ELLINWOOD

GIVEN UP

Taken back to the pretty streets of Vienna, the ugly picture has reappeared.

An arm, sticking into the constantly moving throng-clicking their AE-1's, pointing across the river at the past.

As the arm comes into sight, I see its attached to a man, grizzled, eyes looking into that same murky river – eyes as hollow as a soldier who has seen too much.

Some throw him Phennigs, but he doesn't catch them – eyes into oblivion, hand outreached, they strike him in the face, and clink to the ground. It is in Vienna that we first we met.

An old lady, sitting in the subway car, rubs her feet. She's wearing those old heels, designed in a time when the foot had to fit in the shoe. Now shoes fit into the foot, but this lady still rubs her old hurting feet, as I get off at my stop.

There I see my old Viennese friend again, huddled in a corner.

I don't place a Phennig in his hand this time, but walk right by him in my comfortable shoes.

– CARL R. FRIEDRICH

JOHANNA CAMPBELL

THE LAKE HOUSE #2



DARKNESS AGAIN

The silent lake
The settled mountains
A plague of darkness has stricken the land
Quietly he sits, head in arms, arms on knees
The water gently laps upon the shore.

A sigh.
"Who sighed?" he calls
Another is heard.

A glimmer catches his eye -
 a silver dollar upon the water.
Edges pointed skyward
 from the murky silence of water.
Growing, growing
 disbelief.

The object expands still more.
With each cautious step upward
 the incandescent sphere rests
 a piece of itself upon the water.

Gracefully rising.
Mid sky now
 one hundred bricks of light
 upon the water.

Incredulous eyes followed the being
A glittering path connected the shore
 to the source of light.

Eying the stretch of bricks -
 a mortal lunges at the water.
The bridge shatters into millions
 of dancing silver fish.

He falls into the water amidst
 a sickening chill of death.
Cold replaces the light
He shivers,

Darkness again.

- JEFFERY R. NAZZARO



BOSCH WARRIOR

JOHN ELLINWOOD

AN ARROW

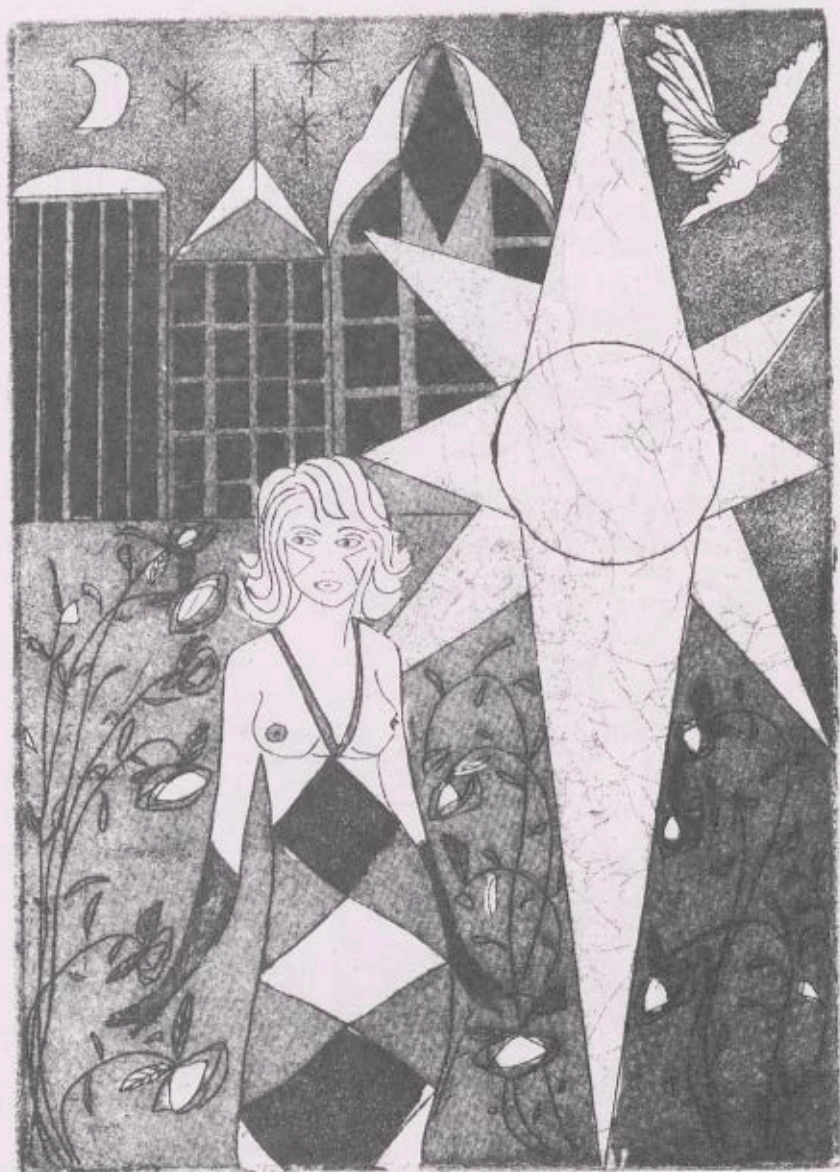
*I wish I could be an arrow
forged by the finest of hands*

*The sharpest of points
to breach my task
The straightest of shafts
to set me in flight
The greatest of feather
to keep my path straight
And if I could be all
of these . .*

*Would not the stealthiest grip
send me from the bow?*

— JEFFERY R. NAZZARO





CITY SCAPE

ALLISON DRESCHER

SHAKESPEAREAN THRUST

My soul is my own
gold filter around my heart.
Don't look too closely
(and surely don't touch)
 You'll mar me
 scar me
Missionary to my soul.
Leave me, paid converter
Your questions, footprints on my heart
Deter, transform me not.
Outrage, I'm no clam
for you to slice and pry.
External, not in-
I owe you naught—
 not enough to live.
Symoiosis, 'ere I turned
backing away
in strength—not fear
not insecurity-not anger:
(Methinks thou dost . . .)
Mirrored glass-
supposed translucence; clarity-
But what do you see
when you look to my soul?
Mars and Scars, Footprints and
similar faces?

MARCH 1, 1990 - MARY FARRIS

PIETA

why why why
why doesn't she cry?
Is she a stone?
Or just so alone
that without someone to watch
 she'll die?

APRIL 5, 1991 - MARY FARRIS

UNTITLED

She speaks to me with some accent, Perhaps East European
She certainly looks it (Oh!, the cheekbones)
We watch some foreign film, no subtitles, only misplaced vocals
They still advertise Elvis plates
I turn, she's gone, there by the stereo
She puts in a hip-hop CD, asks about cocaine
She speaks as if she learned English from The New Yorker
If she says "post modern" I'll bludgeon her to death
Some preacher is screaming about fire and brimstone on the TV
So is the hip-hop recording
She says something about horoscopes, but I'm studying the line
of her face.
I met her at a fashion show in the Village.
We took the subway home, she dared me to steal a poster,
laughed at her.
We picked up some Chinese food, she ate with chopsticks, I ate
with my fingers
She didn't want German beer, I got some anyway.
We stopped at a bar, it was German
She kept talking about Paris, I was thinking about New York.
She tells me her mother was manic depressive,
I ask about Lithium.
I invited her to a Jazz show next week, she shrugged
Was that a smile or a grimace?
She was talking about the rainforest, I look over her shoulder
at the shadows on the street.
We left, I stopped and bought razor blades. She bought The New
Yorker
She watched herself in the mirror, I watched her ass
Out on the street a drag queen passes out, she laughs
I smell ether and hope the queen doesn't explode.
She talks about the Bible as we walk, I start to listen to her.
Somehow we start talking about baseball, she doesn't understand
the rules.
I tell her not to worry, just always hope the Mets win.
We stand under a street lamp and kiss.
The drag queen walks by again.
I like this woman, she can tell, I know that she knows, she knows
that I know that she knows etc.

The Marx Brothers are on TV, she puts Bolero in the CD, I sweat.
As we make love she asks who the Mets are.
She tells me she has a child, I tell her I write.
She doesn't see the connection, I think it's obvious.
She smacks me, I invite her to an amusement park next month.
She shrugs again, we make love again, this time longer.
I like this one, she says I should tie my hair back.
Perhaps in a little while we might get something to eat.
She gets up and heads toward the kitchen
I write this . . .

DIRON ABRAHAMI



WENDY HALPERIN



JAY STREET #14

LESLIE ROSS

HOME OF THE BRAVE

for Kit Hathaway

*I've seen real Indians
Not strung out drunken Red Skins
But Bronze angels that know
and see the sky and earth and sun*

*I had looked beyond, to the edges
and caught a glimpse
I had fought and flown to find
my heroic noble natives
I wandered to whence I came
before the womb had spat me forth
but the grass has ceased glowing greener
And no buffalo roamed those ancient plains*

*So I returned to an old life
And found it good and heady with
a light tongue. I rubbed my filmy
vision clean to see and saw and sang.*

*I've seen real Indians
Not strung out drunken Red Skins
But Bronze angels that know
And I've smoked with a Brave.*

The shaman has shared me his dreams.

- DIRON ABRAHAMI



"OPPULENCE"

ALLISON DRESCHER

AT THE OPERA

*I never knew what studded meant
until I saw the light bulbs fastened into place
in Carnegie Hall
in the ceiling
looking like pearls
I'm sucking words out of air
de-tangling garbled Mozartian Latin
for my own use*

*There's your standard blonde
looking entranced
I count ceiling tiles
and wish for her hair
a mannish short-haired girl watches me.*

*Cellos face off violins
I liked playing cello
even young
the feeling of vibration
between my legs
I didn't like the French horn
too much spitting
but now I gnash me teeth for a
spit-valve or a plain brass mouthpiece
still sucking words, though,
I have no voice to speak of.*

— JANET SCHWARTZ



JAY STREET #3

LESLIE ROSS

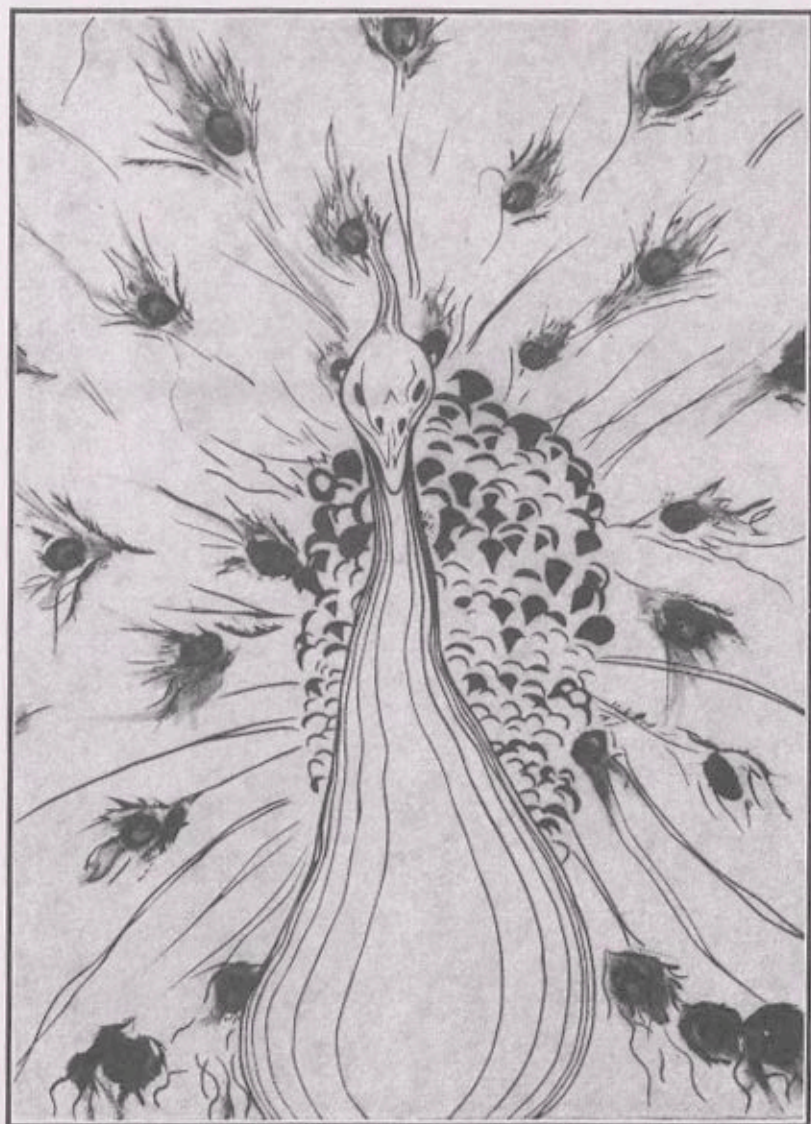
TEA AND SCONES

*Tea and scones
tea and scones
in from the rain
the mist has turned wet
we drip onto the elegant carpet
full of eye-laughter
and hat-beauty
and oh, we're a happy cliché.*

— JANET SCHWARTZ



— NANCY CONVISER



"PEACOCK"

JOHANNA CAMPBELL

UNTITLED

I know an artist
who has a passion,
but cannot play.
She can act and sing,
but something holds her back.
She is a beautiful thing.
Perhaps a butterfly in
embryonic stage,
a rose which has yet
to bloom, someday.
Spring will come and
rain and shine,
and so will she
with all that is divine.
She has a talent which none deny,
yet she does, I know not why.
She has a heart of gold
which few can see and
even fewer hold.
But soon she will alight,
and blossom
and delight.

WILLIAM HARDY





JOHN LENNON



"NINA #1"

LESLIE ROSS



"ZAIBE"

LESLIE ROSS

A WORD TO THE WISE

I suppose it may seem natural to say the words to someone, especially if you know them well. Not only natural, but easy. Until its your turn, of course, that's the way it is. Those three simple works-they're the crux of your past, your today, and your future. Everything leading up to them is preparation, and everything which follows is either joy or disaster. I guess its good in a way - knowing-because at least you can live or die. But like so many other things, knowing how you stand in is at the same time the most fearful and important revelation a person in a relationship can have.

The reason I mention this has to do with a letter I am holding in my hand. The letter reminds me of a situation the author of it and I were in some time back, a year or so ago. We had a conversation on the phone pertaining particularly to the above mentioned thought. He was an old school chum, and throughout our relationship, we were always able to give each other advice. We enjoyed the exchange, partially because by helping each other, we were able to solve some problem in our own lives. That's sort of funny, I think, when considering that if we were really interested in the other person, our own thoughts on how to solve the problem would have been secondary to the matter at hand-the other person. Then what's advice, right?

This matter, of course, was talk we had regarding the more palatable sex, whom the hopes of half the globe rest with (though these days, you never know). No matter how clever the gentleman, when 'the right' woman was in question, all thoughts of logic are shamefully overlooked. In fact, the only advice we'll listen to is that which we want to hear. So all you well meaning friends out there should remember that the next time a love lost friend comes seeking you out.

This was, in fact, what my afore mentioned friend Tim had done to me already a year ago. He was living at home, just outside of Boston (who lives in Boston?). When I returned his call it was obvious that he was on his way out, while I was on my way in. For the last few days we had been playing what the Yuppies call 'phone tag'. I know that may sound a bit derogatory, and that we all want to be Yuppies anyway, but doesn't the term fit them so well? For all I know, my grandmother's generation probably coined the phrase, but whenever I hear it I think of Pin-stripes and appointment books.

Oh yes, the conversation. Well, as I mentioned, Tim was in a rush of some sort (to be fair, I must remind you that it was I who was returning his call), but his voice possessed a tone which hinted that, though his friends were en route to pick him up, he wanted me to solve an impending life crisis in four minutes or less, if possible. Did I mention Yupples wanna-be's?

So very quickly we got through the essentials, which included school (they still had us at that point), the summer, and, surprisingly, his weight loss (no comment from me on this one). We both knew where this was heading, however, so I decided to be the good friend and break

the ice. "Well, Tim, how's Jennifer?" I was referring to his girlfriend of two years. According to my psychic (some call them psychotic) powers, I gathered that she was either on her way to boyfriend/girlfriend divorce court, or the chapel for the real McCoy.

"Ugh, yeah. I wanted to ask you about that." I sensed that he was craning his neck to a window, hoping that his ride had arrived so that he could avoid the issue which at heart he sorely wanted to discuss. "What's up? Trouble? Shoot."

"Yeah, well, she used the "L" word a couple of days ago." I paused and played it cool.

"So? She's used it before, hasn't she?"

"Well, its not that she said it, like, but we were eating ice-cream on the dock in the harbor ("haa-bor" spoken like a true Bostonian), and like, it was as if it were forever."

"Hmm." It was all I could get out.

The 'L' word, of course, was Love, as in "I Love You." Delivered in the right context, it could prove to be the death blow to one of these ex-jock types like Tim. Especially if he were cornered on a dock at the haa-bor. In a way, I felt sorry for him. If I were in that situation, my gut reaction might be to accidently trip and fall in the water. Or wet my boxers. Or both.

"So," I plodded on, "What did you say in response?"

"Well, I just kinda laughed."

"Oh."

Well, that was about as typical a response as I could have expected from my sometimes neanderthalic-like friend. Creativity and grace under pressure were neglected when they poured the lead for this one. If I hadn't known him so well, I would have thought of the situation as almost touching. I should repeat, however, that in the same situation I would have probably jumped ship.

"Well, Tim, what do you think about it?"

"Do you think, Nick, that I should tell her 'that' too?"

"Is that how you feel?" This was a sucker punch, but at the time I would have argued that he walked right into it.

"Well, Nick, you know I like her a hell of a lot, but its still too early for me."

Yeah, right Tim. I decided to let him off the hook after my cheap shot, though I shouldn't have. His tough macho armor wouldn't be penetrated that easily. Despite his 'confession,' the other meaning of what he said was loud and clear. That was 'if this works out then fine, but there are still quite a few shopping days left till Christmas. If you know what I mean.' Wink, wink.

"Tim, I know you 'like' her (our code word for love) a lot, but all's I can say is be honest - to yourself and to her. It's getting to that point, don't you think?"

"Yeah, well, you're probably right. Hey, I gotta go . . . I'll let you know what happens." Click. Whatever, Tim.

I was beginning to wonder why he called in the first place. I was annoyed because he could have gotten what advice I gave him from his sister, though she would have blackmailed his confidence in her till the day he died. Or got married. After all, what are siblings for? My annoyance was doubled, however, when I realized we had skipped a major topic in our conversation. Me.

As I mentioned, at this point in our lives, we were both in a similar situation, and we hadn't gotten anywhere with my problem. You see, I had also met the 'girl of my dreams,' but couldn't bring myself to tell her that. For a moment, I wanted to call Tim back, but I had to reconsider. Tim was as thick as mud, and our advice giving business had a hitch to it. We had a time-honored tradition of listening to each other's advice, and doing the exact opposite. It sounds stupid, but it really worked. I guess you could say we gave each other the worst available advice, and were grateful for it.

So what was I going to do with this girl? Over the past two months, we had done all of the typical things-dinners, movies, and even tennis (I could beat her though her background was better-she knew how to dress). The problem, for me at least, was that while she was beautiful and intelligent, she possessed a vanity or quality that would have put me to an extreme disadvantage in our relationship if I told her the tale of my heart. Looking back, that was pretty sad, because at that point, I wanted to believe that she could take such a confession from me.

But I had to listen to myself here. I had told my friend to be honest, excreta, which was the best advice for me. But also, I couldn't forget that the advice we gave was best left alone. It seemed that whatever I did, I would be a hypocrite, and, more than likely, wrong. For some reason, I couldn't forget my friend and our tradition. Do the opposite. It worked.

So I avoided the girl of my dreams, though for the next few days I continually wanted to see her, and then when I did, I could not bring myself to be near her. Oh, when the head and heart are at war. This is not to say that I did not have opportunities to face 'the moment of truth.' I just made it so that I wouldn't have to. I must add that I was avoiding all harbors.

After another grouping of a few days, with continued avoidance on my part, I was surprised to receive a phone call from Tim, which brings me to a little advice on advice. My theory, which I have since learned to listen to, is that there is no good advice. Only bad. There are just too many possibilities in this world to make a right decision. Even for the most careful gentleman, especially when it comes to women. Advice, for me, has become a four-letter word. I treat it as such, so please excuse the profanity of this piece.

Tim's phone call was quite revealing. Not only was I surprised that he called me back, but also that he had broken down, taken my advice, and used the 'L' word. Better, he confided in me that he and Jennifer were "engaged to be engaged." How cute. Though I was in

shock, deep down I knew Tim was a softie, but that is really unimportant. Tim had stunned me, but I was soon to be floored.

Our conversation was interrupted by another Yuppie bite, the call-waiting signal. On the other line was the love and fear of my life.

"We have to talk." By the time I reconnected with Tim he had already hung up, probably off to pick out flat-ware. I was dead in the water.

"What's up?" I said, trying to conceal my fear.

"Look, a while back . . . I, I thought that you loved me, and that I loved you. But I was waiting for a little encouragement. I'm not one to open up, but you hurt me." Agh, the 'L' word, like a good right cross. It was a knockout.

"Wait, I feel the same. 'I love you.'" There, I said it.

"No. Felt, maybe. But you never said anything. Its past tense now." And so was I.

"Can't we just go somewhere and talk?"

"No I won't see you anymore, Nick. I'm sorry, but I cannot."

"Hey, I love You."

I remember her laughing, and I held the receiver in my ear for some time after she hung up. I guess I thought that she somehow was going to reconnect and say "Do you mean it?", but after the grating noise interrupted the dial tone, I put the plastic assassin down.

The reasons I think back to the events which have shaped Tim's and my life in the past year comes down to the letter which you may remember I am holding in my hand. It's important, because Tim and I have spoken only a few times since then, and have since stopped giving advice to each other. That bugs me, not because it happened, as it was bound to, but because he never thanked me for the best advice I ever gave him. Maybe anyone, I suppose its just water past the stern now.

The letter he sent was on printed paper, and though my emotions are mixed on my friend now, I can't help but to smile at it. The wedding invitation was quite pretty, and I wondered if Tim in fact had picked it out. It had all the usuals - "the parents of," and "request the honour of," but what catches my eye is a handwriting I recognize from my college days. The words "and escort" are underlined and punctuated like this:

"and escort" ????

Should I tear it up?

CARL R. FRIEDRICH





INTELLECTUALS OVER COFFEE AND BAGELS

"What's so important to make you run down three flights of stairs at 10:00 am on a Sunday morning?"

"Your coffee."

"You hate my coffee. It's decaffeinated."

"So that's it."

"Help yourself to -"

"I was doing this guy last night -"

"Collegiate or other?"

"Collegiate."

"Forgivable by your standards. And did he live up to the legend?"

"What legend?"

"That collegiate men can do it more often in a night than others."

"Yes, of course. We've proven that true many times."

"You've proven that true many times. I will merely pass along your keen insight to my offspring someday."

"Don't act so prim with me."

"I'm not - I'm just in a bitchy mood - I got my period last night. But anyway, I don't have the track record you boast of."

"Don't give me that shit. Despite your resemblance to Lois Lane, you've gone a few rounds."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"It means stop judging the world by the standards that you don't live by."

"Sure, I've made my mistakes, but I've settled down; I've matured."

"Right, whatever. Hurry up and finish those and sit your pristine ass down."

"I'm almost done."

"So I was doing this guy last night and right as he's about to -"

"- come -"

"Yes, come, he stops."

"Stops?"

"Right. Stops, right there on the lawn."

"The lawn?"

"Right, whatever. He stopped."

"Why?"

"He got out this book from his bag and started writing in it."

"What kind of book?"

"I don't know - it was dark. A notebook, I guess."

"What was he writing?"

"I don't know. He just started ranting and raving about how beautiful the sky was behind me. Something about the contrasts he saw beyond

my shoulders. I told him he didn't need to use pick-up lines anymore
- I was with him."

"Did he stop?"

"No, he got offended."

"Did you continue?"

"Continue what?"

"Screwing."

"No, he put his clothes back on and left me there."

"On the lawn?"

"Right. And he told me I lack depth."

"I don't know where he'd get an idea like that. Where'd you meet this guy?"

"Some bar."

"Rough night?"

"Rough night."

"How'd you pick up a guy like that anyway?"

"Like what?"

"You know - an intellectual."

"Just because he was a defensive writer doesn't mean he was necessarily
an intellectual."

"Come on. You remember college."

"And?"

"All writers are defensive, and all defensive writers are intellectuals."

"You weren't."

"I was an exception."

"But you wrote."

"But not well. I valued peoples' advice."

"Maybe in public, but I recall weekly door slamming sessions that always
seemed to occur at the same time as your critiques."

"Shut up. We're talking about your buddy - the journalist."

"Kath?"

"Yes?"

"Why are you rinsing those dishes?"

"They're dirty."

"But they just came out of the dishwasher."

"So?"

"So why are you rinsing already washed dishes?"

"Cancer."

"What?"

"I was reading an article in the dentist's office last week about how some
dishwashers leave a film on dishes that can cause cancer."

"Of course."

"About the intellectual?"

"I'm telling you, Kath, this was no intellectual. What kind of god damn intellectual sits in a bar on a Saturday night drinking Tequila?"

"The kind who either just failed something major or got dumped by the woman who robbed him of his virginity."

"No."

"Why?"

"His shoulders were too wide."

"What does that have to -"

"Intellectuals don't have time to work out in a gym. They're too busy reading poetry in the sunshine."

"Maybe this guy was just naturally built that way."

"Trust me on this one - men are not naturally built that way."

"I guess you'd be the one to know."

"Forgive me for trying to have a good time."

"I wasn't putting you down - I was making a point."

"And what's that?"

"That you're more social than most people are."

"No, I'm just more social than you are."

"I'm happy the way I am."

"Are you really? I mean, don't you ever want to go back to the days when we'd go out drinking on weekends. Remember when Patrick was doing that term in Mexico - you and I'd go out at night and let interesting men buy us drinks."

"Sometimes - I don't know. I like things the way they are now. I don't want to screw it up."

"You wouldn't be screwing it up by going out every once in a while."

"I don't need it. I'm happy with Patrick."

"Forget Patrick for a moment. Think of me. I miss those times."

"Listen - I do too, but I don't think I'm up to it anymore."

"You just think you're not. You never know until you try."

"We're discussing your nocturnal escapades, not mine."

"Unlike you, I don't limit my sexual activity to night time. Some of us don't feel the need to always have the lights off."

"Drop it."

"You shouldn't be so defensive - someone out there might stereotype you as an intellectual."

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I tried to give a little insight into a situation that seemed to bewilder you."

"I knew damn well he wasn't my type. That was obvious from the moment we met."

"So why'd you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Sleep with him."

"I didn't sleep with him - we just screwed around."

"Call it what you will. Why'd you do it?"

"Those shoulders."

"His shoulders?"

"I already told you about them."

"Of course."

"Don't even try to tell me that you aren't physically attracted to the men you sleep with."

"I find Patrick attractive but -"

"Of course you do. He's an attractive guy. I wouldn't have done him for so long if he hadn't been."

"I'd hardly equate Patrick with the other guys you've slept with."

"Why shouldn't I? Does it bother you?"

"Why should it?"

"Because the man you're in love with slept in my bed for six months."

"That's in the past. Why should it bother me?"

"Because you're an easily intimidated person."

"Give me a little bit of credit. Patrick and I are in love. You are one of my closest friends - no, you're one of our closest friends. What went on between the two of you is behind us."

"You don't think about it?"

"About what?"

"Little things like that I know about the birthmark on the inside of his thigh."

"Patrick and I are the people we are today because of the experiences we've had."

"And it makes on difference that he's had more 'experiences' than you?"

"What difference or business is it of yours?"

"None. It just seems that he might be a bit more eccentric in bed than you'd be."

"I keep him interested enough so that he doesn't have to stop midstream to point out the sky and write in his journal."

"The guy was a fruitcake."

"With 'those shoulders.'"

"Give me a break, Kath."

"Give me a break."

"About what?"

"You and Patrick."

"Are you admitting it bothers you?"

"What bothers me is that you never let it rest."

"So you really can't handle it?"

"I can handle it."

"You don't like the fact that he's one of my leftovers."

"You're the one who's bitter. You're just pissed off because I succeeded where you failed."

"That's bullshit."

"Is it? Did you love him?"

"I was younger. I didn't know what love was."

"But did you think you did."

"I don't know. Maybe - but we weren't right for each other."

"That's right. He loves me."

"Drop it."

"Your water's ready."

"At last, real coffee. So why don't you think I'd get hit on by intellectuals?"

"I was just implying that intellectuals might not be turned on by what you portray."

"What do I portray?"

"Promiscuity."

"No I don't."

"Yes you do."

"People see what they want to see. I have fun dressing the way I do, and if a guy wants to notice, let him. That doesn't mean I'm going to screw him."

"But you do."

"If he meets my standards and I'm sufficiently amused."

"But people don't recognize that you do indeed have standards."

"Personally, I don't care."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Yes. At this point in my life, I should at least be comfortable with myself."

"But are you?"

"For Christsakes, yes. Do you have a problem with who I am?"

"It's not me we're talking about."

"But you're my friend. Are you ashamed of me?"

"Are you ashamed of you?"

"No."

"Then there's no problem."

"Why wouldn't an intellectual be turned on by sexuality?"

"I just said you looked promiscuous? That implies I'm sexy, and, anyway, I know I am. So why?"

"I've always figured an intellectual would want a woman who between orgasms can carry on a conversation if French about the correlation between Zen and the stock exchange."

"In case you've forgotten, I have a college degree, and I speak Spanish. I think I can carry my own weight in a conversation with an intelligent man."

"And there's no doubt in my mind that you can. But to the rest of the world, you're a bimbo in a tight skirt."

- "You're assuming the rest of the world stereotypes people as easily as you do."
- "You know they do."
- "Maybe. But I've always enjoyed having a bit more faith in people."
- "Whatever."
- "And what makes you assume that I would initially be turned on by an intellectual, anyway? What if it was he who made the first move, and that I needed to be conned into accepting his physical appearance?"
- "You have a point. I can't see you standing side by side with a man who doesn't have a ten pound gold chain around his neck."
- "That was low. Despite what you say, men can take me out to dinner."
- "And of course they will – imagine what you'll do for them with your foot under the table."
- "For a woman as demure as you, you have a cras mind."
- "What do you expect from me? For the last six years I've listened to your stories – who you fucked, where you fucked, how much you fucked, even which artificial objects you fucked first just to turn each other on."
- "And you never seemed to mind."
- "It's a wonderful way to keep a virgin's attention."
- "You're about as virginal as your average street walker."
- "But I don't broadcast it to the entire community, now, do I?"
- "No offense, dear, but who wants to know?"
- "No one. That's my point. No one wants to see your sexuality."
- "Yeah, but everyone's sick of hearing how virtuous you are."
- "I don't tell people I'm virtuous."
- "No, but you wear those prissy clothes, and I practically have to pry your mouth open at parties."
- "I remember being perfectly social before I met you."
- "But you were so easily intimidated by the likes of me that you wouldn't allow yourself to like me."
- "You were Patrick's ex-girlfriend. Was I supposed to welcome you with open arms?"
- "You could have judged me on more than that. Anyway, by thinking of me like that, you were putting me in a category which you also qualify for. Do you have any bagels?"
- "In the freezer. Throw one in the toaster for me too. It all worked out in the end."
- "Maybe. You know, you'd be fine if you'd stop being so damn worried about everything."
- "I don't worry about everything."
- "That's bullshit. You're the most insecure paranoid person I know. You're terrified by the littlest things."
- "I only worry about my future."

"That's my point. If you'd stop contributing every second of your life to the big picture, you might enjoy it and have a good time."

"What the hell did that mean?"

"It just means you need to chill out and stop worrying."

"I can have a good time."

"After a while, yes, you enjoy things that you're comfortable with. But look at how long it takes you to get that way. You're frightened by the least degree of change."

"That's not true."

"Yes it is."

"The bagels are burning. Do you want butter or cream cheese?"

"Cream cheese, thanks. Admit you're insecure."

"Yes, I admit I'm insecure, but I'm not paranoid."

"Yes you are."

"No I'm not."

"Yes you are."

"Do you want this bagel or not?"

"Alright, alright. Be what you want - I was just trying to help."

"I'm fine, thanks."

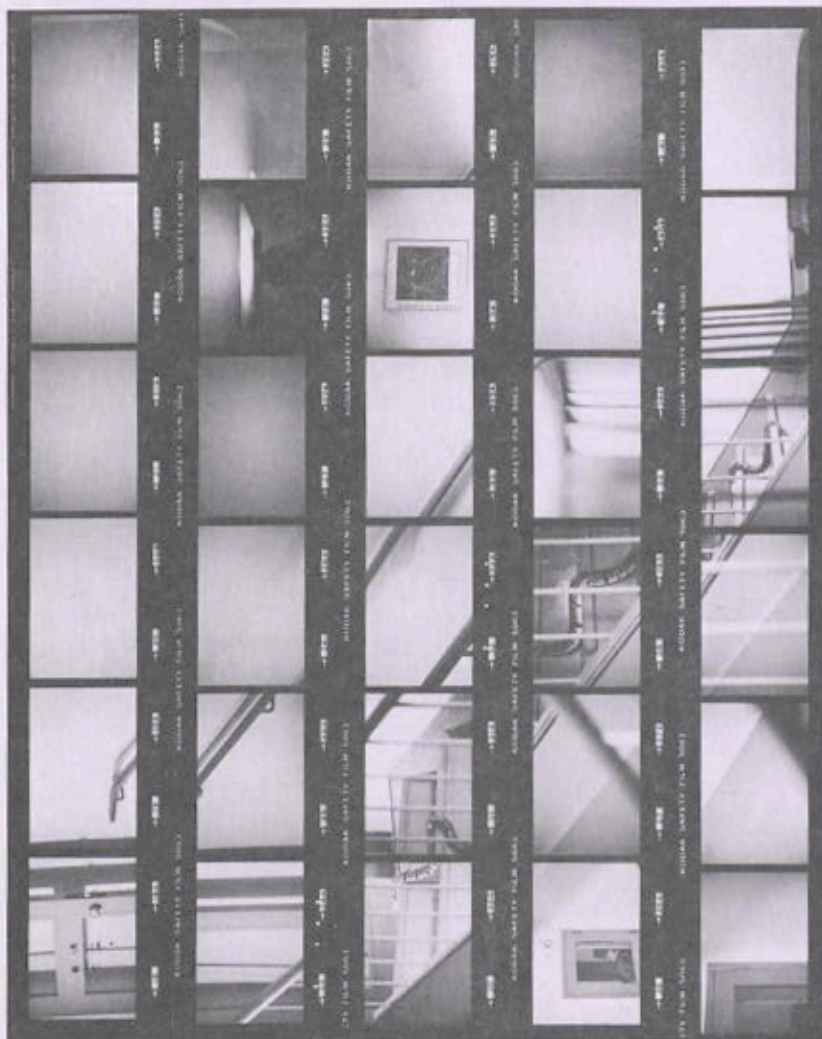
"Prude."

"Bitch."

"You're lucky I love you anyway."

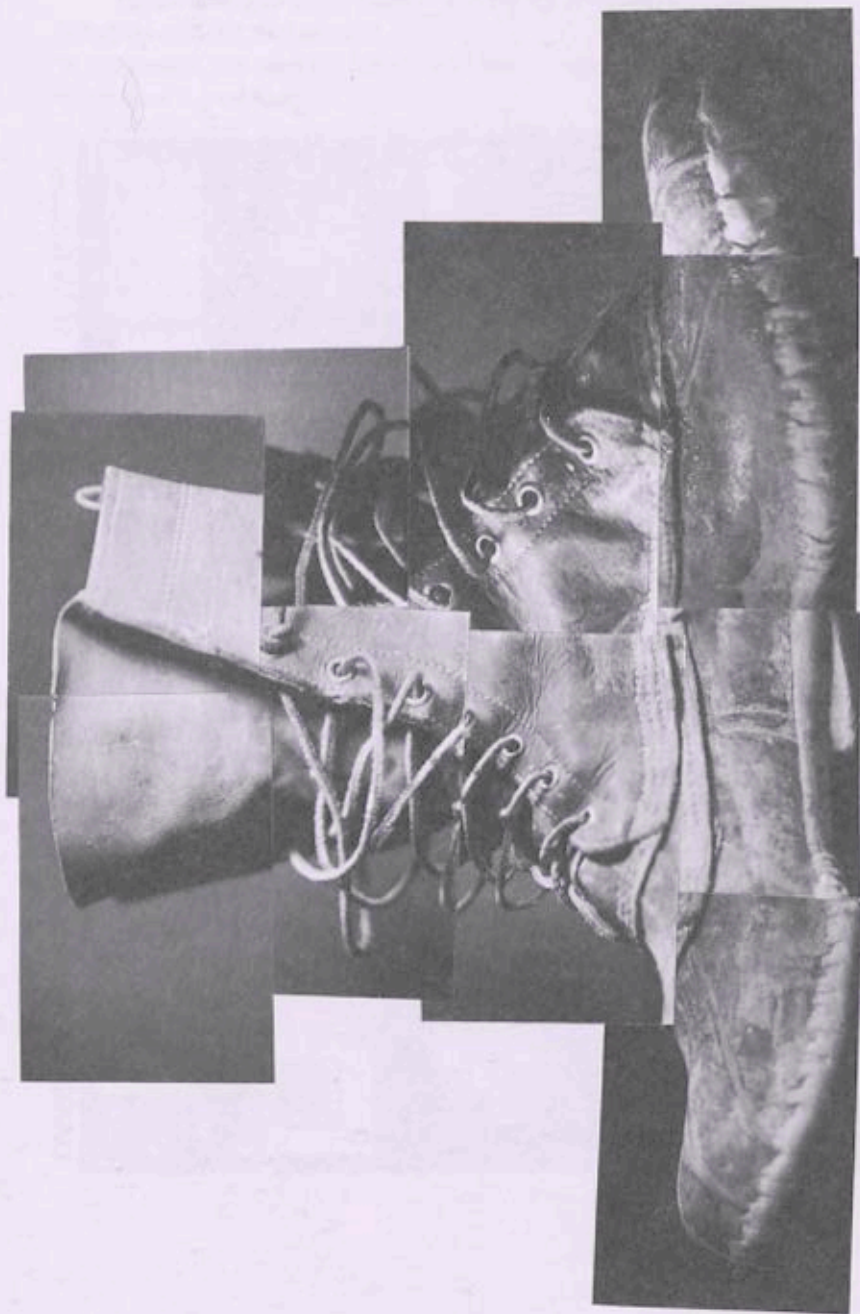
"You too."

KAREN J. SCHAEFER



DANGER AT THE STAIR CASE - PIERRE ROY

JOHN ELLINWOOD



JOHN ELLINWOOD

PEARL



CARE PACKAGES

"How could you break up with someone who sends you cookies?"

"How could you break up with someone you love?" I answered. Jordie shook his head in his "I really don't know: way, chin and shoulders up.

"What kind of cookies?"

"Chocolate chip."

We were sitting in the entrance way to Jesse's apartment. She wasn't home and her door was locked. Jordie and I went over there after the party hoping she would be in and up for a pizza, some butts, and conversation. She wasn't or maybe she was, but with her boyfriend. So we just sat down in the entry way and settled for sharing my last three cigarettes.

"What else did she send you?" I asked.

"Oh, brownies and other things, banana bread once. The cookies are my favorite though," Jordie answered lighting a cigarette and offering me a drag. We never smoked our own cigarettes but always shared one between us. It was sort of a bonding thing and the butts seemed to last longer this way. I inhaled deeply and exhaled while I spoke.

"When did she send you all this stuff?"

"Well, the brownies came about a month ago, the banana bread, which got a little hard in the mail, about two weeks ago."

"And the cookies, yesterday right?" I guessed.

"Yeah, they came yesterday," Jordie confirmed.

"How often do you guys talk?"

"Maybe once a week and she comes to visit every five weeks or so, but lately she's just been sending me food."

"Maybe she thinks you're hungry."

Jordie laughed and passed me the cigarette.

"Well, you never know, it looks like you might have lost some weight," I took the Raiders hat from his head and put it on my own. He grabbed it from my head and hit me in the arm before replacing it on his own dark hair.

Jordie looked more grubby than usual tonight. His jeans were faded and bleach splattered and his green flannel shirt hung loose about him. He wasn't a big kid but made up for his lack of size in his eyes. They were liquid brown and when they shone warmly, I sometimes wished I could get lost inside them and not have to worry about a thing. They scare me a little, too. I once caught a look he gave to Allie one afternoon. They weren't really friends and I think each put up with the other for my sake. We were having lunch outside at 'Salad Greens and Things.' It was a cool

and cloudy spring day. Allie and I each ordered a ceaser salad and I think Jordie had a burger. Allie had just won a small prize for a pencil sketch her boyfriend submitted to a drawing contest in some magazine. She didn't know about the submission but got the letter a day and a half ago and hadn't stopped talking about it since.

"Isn't Charley just the sweetest guy, ever?" she asked us for what seemed like the hundredth time. I nodded and took a sip of iced tea. I had to admit that they were a cute couple. I looked over at Jordie. He was frowning and munching on his fries. He didn't hold much stock in the cute couple thing. Allie was starting to tell us the story again making broad gestures with her arms for effect when it started to rain. "Hooray!" Jordie shouted, "Mother Nature has saved us. I guess she didn't feel like hearing your story again either, Al." Allie tried to protest as we ran inside but Jordie started singing to shut her out. His eyes went cold and black as he stood there in the restaurant staring at Allie and singing Joe Jackson's "Happy Loving Couples." When I saw him sing to her like that, with eyes half closed and eyebrows drawn together, I thought he could probably physically hurt Allie with some real satisfaction.

"What about you?" Jordie asked.

"Me?" I lighted our second cigarette.

"Yeah, what's up with you and Rob?"

I was starting to feel a little sick from the beer. If only I could have just one glass of water. Just one glass.

"Things are okay."

"That's not saying so much," he looked me in the eyes.

"Well Jords, you already know how things are," I began defensively, "we've been going out a long time - relationships are not easy things to deal with."

"Of course not," Jordie answered, "if they were, then they wouldn't be relationships. Come on Jas, relax, I was just asking. I mean you were flirting your ass off with Chris tonight."

"There's nothing wrong with flirting. It's fun."

"But what's the point if you have a boyfriend?"

"Why is your girlfriend sending you cookies?" I retorted.

Jordie smiled, "I know you Jasmine, you must really like this guy."

"We're just friends."

"You gotta start somewhere."

I lit our last cigarette with the remains of our second.

"After this we'll go, Okay?"

"Whatever you want," Jordie sighed leaning back against the wall. He always made me make those stupid "coming/going" decisions that usually never amounted to anything anyway. Jordie only

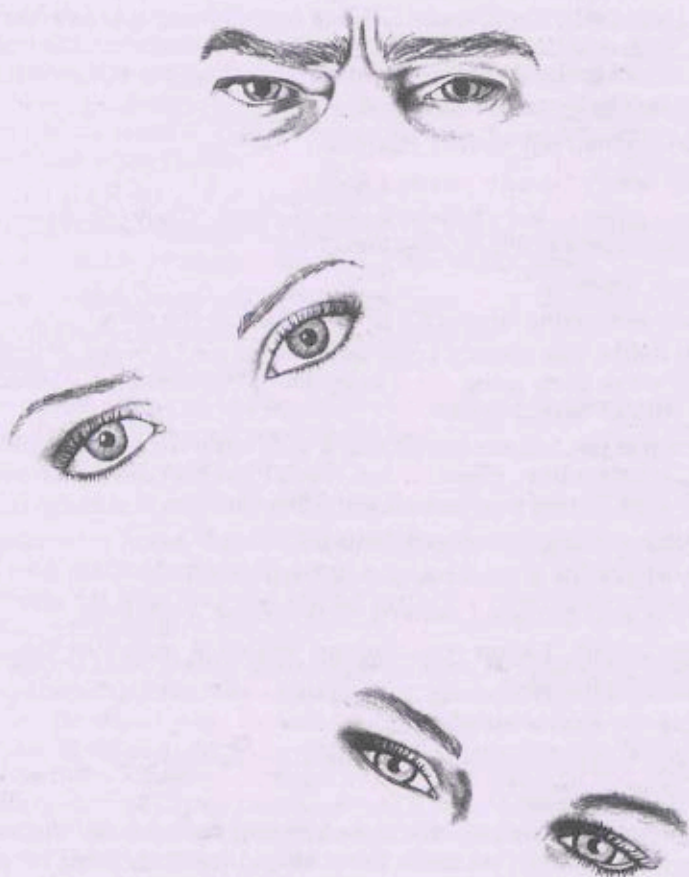
liked to make the important "life/death" ones. He tilted his chin up and I watched him blow smoke rings concentrating on the circles as they twisted out of shape.

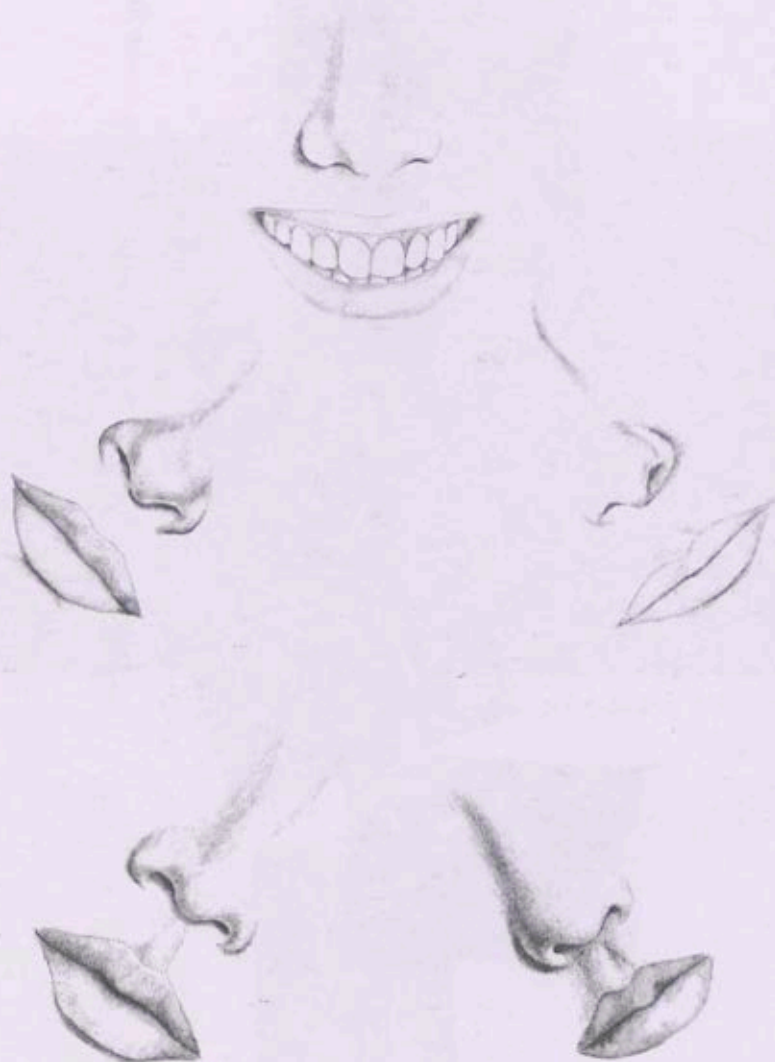
"You know what I think it is with Linda?" he asked. I sat silent knowing he didn't want me to answer.

"I got her. We're going out."

I moved next to Jordie and leaned my head against his arm. I was getting cold now that the beer was wearing off. I put out the cigarette watching the ash make a dark circle on the wooden floor. Jordie opened the door and I slipped my arm through his as he walked me home.

MISSY FABEL





LESLIE ROSS



JAY STREET #1



SCOTT WEISBERG

