

Joy Walsh

PAUMANOK

(For Walt Whitman)

Eastward, the pulse of Paumanok,
fish-shape and sea breeze,
the salt of your air,
birds, surf, & rhythms
Pounding like heart-beats
Eastward 120 miles
from Hudson's mouth
you spread yourself
in varieties of width...
Algonkian layered
beneath your folds,
dips, drifts, and ages.

Chippewa, Cree, Delaware,
Menominee...
hickory, moose, raccoon, and squash
of your small villages...
rivers: Housatonic,
Connecticut spilling into
your sound...

There was a child went forth
out of your thousand images
--a travelling bachelor
incessantly singing,
sniffing the sea,
seeking the stranger
speaking and understanding intimately.

Come down and sit
under the trees,
out front,
he'll be resting there.
Have a chat,
tell him of the endless books.

He will say:
Look out for books!

With loving perception
he will grab your arm,
eager to seduce you.

Ah,
& in his patient end;
America spread vast
and formless,
homely,
a body with little or no soul;
Full in love,
he gave her a voice:
his heart.