

## Samantha Bernstein

### Olga

As though the world were built to give her  
plums, she takes my proffered fruit without  
a thankyou. Hip phrases slip from her pretty  
little lips melodious and noncommittal as water  
over myriad pebbles, a pleasant, transparent babble.  
The firm familiar roundness of her East European arms  
a vulnerable pink against the bold corporate green apron  
she greets and serves with a sweetness that betrays her  
indifferent cute-bummed shuffle and dark eye-liner  
in the early mornings. Her nights are all packed New Wave  
and Britpop dances, a constellation of sleek babyfaces in expensive  
haircuts living it up, making the downtown scene, freed for a few  
hours from bitchy customers, dirty tables and lame corporate bosses,  
Olga and all the Olgas drunk on youth, cheap  
beer and the desperate importance of whatever  
newest sound or style. Yet she hungers to marry young, to settle down:  
I see her giving her kohl-lined brown eyes to the pampered College St.  
hipster guys she fled the dead satellite of Oakville to find.  
Twenty years old, sexy and cold, Olga with her studded belt and sharp little teeth  
is every shoppirl since cities began: supple limbs proficient  
behind lunch counters, retail counters, single girls dream Cinderella  
romances as they perform their routines, youth their temporary dowry,  
boredom, strange hours and cigarettes not yet etched into their tender mouths.  
Now, midnight's slick streetlit gleam sweettalks Olga's careful deadpan face; naked  
it radiates expectation, she's bright with the sheen of her nascent escape from traditional  
parents, from grey six-lane roads with puffy young mothers, plastic malls and hair-gelled  
teenagers in parking-lot brawls. No, there will be no multiplex blockbuster dates  
for Olga, no hockey barbeques in suburban backyards.  
What will the world offer to Olga? I try not to regret  
the loss of my almost-ripe plum, the pleasure expected  
from its sharp cold wet on my tongue, figure  
if nothing else, she makes a good poem.