

HEIRLOOM

center
for art and
archives

In English below

Mother Always Has A Mother

Elizabeth Bishop, Kirsten Christensen,
Jens Hüls Funder, Wakeah Jhane, Rosita Kær,
Florence Lazar og P. Staff

10. november 2023 – 10. februar 2024

Gruppetstillingen *Mother Always Has A Mother* præsenterer en række danske og internationale kunstneres værker, der alle beskæftiger sig med relationer mellem generationer. Værkerne på udstillingen forholder sig til familieforhold og forståelsen af én selv gennem ens ophav.

Udstillingen viser værker af Elizabeth Bishop, Kirsten Christensen, Jens Hüls Funder, Wakeah Jhane, Rosita Kær, Florence Lazar og P. Staff, der udfolder sig i forskellige medier som installation, collage, lyrik, video og grafisk tryk. Værkerne kredser omkring forandringsprocesser, forvandlinger, overgangsritualer og eftertidens forsøg på at forstå fortiden ved at række ud og forsone sig.

Titlen *Mother Always Has A Mother* er lånt fra filmskaber, forfatter og kønsforsker Trinh T. Minh-ha og peger på, hvordan viden, erindring og fortælling løber gennem generationer – hvordan den ældste form for arkiv er den mundtlige overlevering.

1 Elisabeth Bishop

”I venteværelset” (1976)

Tekst på papir

2 Wakeah Jhane

Grandmother’s Prayers (2021)

Print efter gouache, akvarel, akryl, blyant og blæk på antikvariske bogholderiark

3 Kirsten Christensen

Makulering (2023)

Installation, papir, foto, breve, tekst, plastfolie, grafit

4 Rosita Kær

Almost No Memory (2022-23)

MDF, tråde fra optrævlet kludetæppe, kniv med skæfte i modellervoks

Tekst på papir til værket: *K-H nr. 1555* af forfatter

Helene Johanne Christensen

5 Florence Lazar

Confessions d’un jeune militant, [En ung militants bekendelser] (2008)

Video, 32:00 min.

6 Jens Hüls Funder

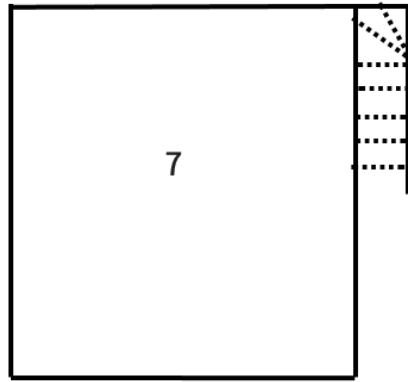
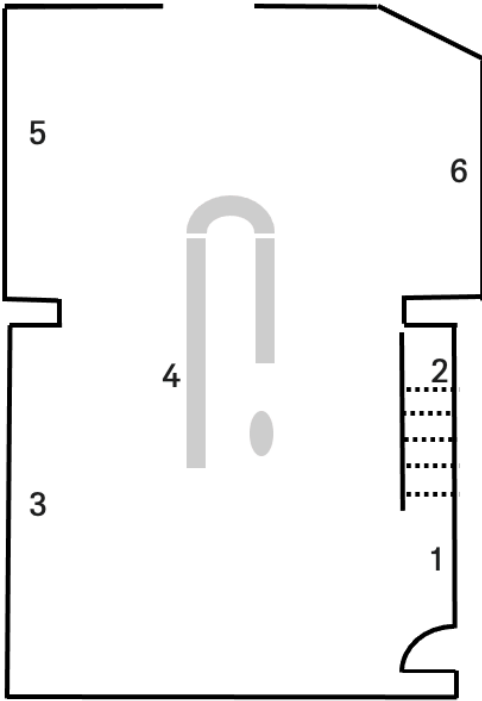
School ship (2014–2021)

Reolsystem, træmodelskib, legoklodser, støv

7 P. Staff

The Foundation (2015)

Video, 28:26 min.



Elizabeth Bishop stiller i “I venteværelset” jeg’et som lille pige overfor den pludselige og voldsomme erkendelse af at tilhøre en slægt, og ikke bare slægten, men også hele menneskeheden. Det udtrykkes gennem et højlydt suk. Bishop zoomer først ind på sansenære detaljer i kroppen, hvor digtets jeg oplever tantens og familiens tonefald som en del af sig selv, og derefter helt ud til “den runde snurrende klode / ud i det blåsorte rum” og til “National Geographic og de der frygtelige hængebryster”. En tilkendegivelse af at erkende sig selv som et individ, men også som et led i en familiehistorie og som en del af noget universelt.

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979, Massachusetts, USA) var digter og novelleforfatter. Et centralt emne hos Bishop er menneskets hovmod og dets evige forsøg på at kategorisere naturen og omverdenen. “I venteværelset” er fra digtsamlingen *Geografi III* (1976), som er udgivet af Antipyrene, 2023 og oversat af Tine Demandt og Claus Handberg Christensen.

Kirsten Christensen har til udstillingen produceret værket *Makulering*, som er en installation, hvor hun genbesøger og bearbejder sit tidligere værk *Idyl* fra 1978, der tog udgangspunkt i et fotografi af Christensen selv som spæd på armen af sin mor. Et værk, der har fulgt hende gennem hele hendes virke, og som hun i dag har behov for at gøre op med. For den tilsyneladende idyl er ikke hele historien.

Kirsten Christensen (1943, København) er billedkunstner og keramiker. I sine værker tager hun ofte afsæt i sin egen livshistorie og -situation, og forholder sig socialt indigneret, oprørsk og konstant reflekterende.

Jens Hüls Funder har i værket *School ship* færdigbygget et modelskib i træ, som hans far var begyndt på, men efterlod ufuldendt. Hüls Funder har fortsat arbejdet i sin egen generations legetøj, LEGO.

Jens Hüls Funder (1985, København). Hüls Funder arbejder varieret med medier og tilgange til materialer, så almindelige objekter sammenstilles med overraskende materialiteter og det genkendelige udfordres.

Wakeah Jhane udtrykker omsorgen, som hun oplever i relation til sin slægt, i det grafiske tryk *Grandmother's Prayers*. Jhane beskriver i en tekst til værket sit bånd til sin bedstemor:

Længe før hun overhovedet vidste, at hun ville blive mor og bedstemor – bad hun intenst for de kommende generationer. Hun plantede et frø i hver af os. Bad for, at vi aldrig skulle lide under denne verdens barske realiteter, som hun havde gjort. Bad for vores styrke og ukuelighed til at overvinde de prøvelser, vi kunne komme ud for. Bad for livmoderne og de små børn. Hendes bønner er selve vores rødder. De strømmer gennem blodet i vores kroppe så blidt og opmærksomt som vand. Skaber nye og bedre veje. Hun beder for, at hendes bønner stråler ud og når dem, der kommer i kontakt med hendes slægtninge. Vores matriarker fejres hver dag ved vores blotte væren og videreførelse af deres arv.

Wakeah Jhane (1995, Comanche og Kiowa). Jhane udtrykker sig gennem oprindelige kunst- og kunsthåndværkstraditioner, især “ledger art”, som er fortællende tegninger og malerier på papir og tekstil.

Rosita Kær har skabt tekstilværket *Almost No Memory* af materiale fra et optrævlet kludetæppe, som hendes mormor Karen-Hanne Stærmose Nielsen vævede af sin farmors, Kærs tipoldemors, undertøj og stømper. Tekstiler er gået fra hånd til hånd, fra kvinde til kvinde gennem årene. Værket indgår i Kærs afsøgning af, hvordan materialer lagrer minder, samt hvordan der i impulsen til at drage omsorg for noget altid bor muligheden for at ødelægge det. Men fragmenter gør det også muligt at forestille sig nye mønstre og forbindelser, genfortælle og genopfinde historier. Som en del af værket har Rosita Kær inviteret forfatter Helene Johanne Christensen til at bidrage med en tekst, som har titlen *KH nr. 1555*, efter registreringsnummeret på kludetæppet fra mormorens tekstsamling. I værket indgår også en kniv, som Stærmose Nielsen lavede skaffet på og syede skede til som 6-årig, og som ligeledes indgik i hendes tekstsamling.

Rosita Kær (1992, København og London). Kærs arbejde pendulerer mellem skulptur, tekst, arkivresearch og tekstil. I en række projekter har Rosita Kær samarbejdet med sin bedstemor, væver og tekstilforsker Karen-Hanne Stærmose Nielsen (1933-2023) og hendes tekstsamling.

Florence Lazar skildrer i videoværket *tabt* (og måske forældet) viden, der videregives gennem generationer ved at lade sin far fortælle om indholdet i sin marxistiske bogsamling til barnebarnet og datteren bag kameraet. Lazars far kommenterer på socialistiske bøger, der har formet ham intellektuelt og politisk som ung i 1950'erne. Hans barnebarn rækker ham pligtskyldigt, men med teenageagtig ligegyldighed, bøgerne. Det peger på en generationskløft og generelt på en aktuel historieløshed.

Florence Lazar (1966, Paris) er fotograf, videokunstner og filminstruktør. Lazar arbejdede op gennem 1990'erne primært med fotografisk portrætkunst. I slut-90'erne begyndte hun at inkorporere video i sin praksis og skildre Jugoslaviens opløsning og borgerkrig. I sine senere værker forholder hun sig til den franske postkolonitid.

P. Staff undersøger i videoværket *The Foundation* (2015) nye genealogier, som ikke knytter sig til blodets bånd, men derimod til kunstneriske og queer fællesskaber. Videoen er et portræt af Tom of Finland Foundation i Los Angeles og dets mange lag af subkulturer, relationer og erotiske og kunstneriske forestillinger. Tom of Finland Foundation startede som en fond, der skulle bevare værkerne af billedkunstner Tom of Finland (1920-1991), som var kendt for sine homoerotiske tegninger. Fonden har siden udvidet sit formål til generelt at beskytte og sikre erotisk kunst.

P. Staff (1987, London og Los Angeles) er billed-, film-, og performancekunstner. Staffs praksis er tværfaglig og sker ofte i form af samarbejder. Staff fokuserer på tematikker som disciplin, afvigelse og queer-kroppe i en løbende undersøgelse af historiske fortællinger om modkultur, radikal aktivisme og alternative former for fællesskabsopbygning.

Sandheden er, når den ikke længere er sig selv. Udsiger, Tanke-Kvinde, Edderkoppe-Kvinde, sandsigerske, historiefortæller, skæbne-fortæller, heks. Hvis du har tålmodighed til at lytte, vil hun glæde sig over at forbinde dig med det. En hel historie, en hel vision af verden, en livshistorie. En mor har altid en mor. Og fortids mødre huskes som gudinder for alle vande, kilderne til sygdomme og helbredelse, beskytter af kvinder og af fødsler. At lytte omhyggeligt er at bevare. Men at bevare er at brænde, for at forstå betyder at skabe.

Trin T. Minh-ha, "Keepers and Transmitters", *Woman Native Other*, 1989, p. 121

Trin T. Minh-ha

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1952, Hanoi, Vietnam) er forfatter, filmskaber, komponist, litteraturteoretiker og kønsforsker. Hun er optaget af køn og kulturarv på tværs af grænser både i arbejdet som filmskaber og som litterær teoretiker. I *Woman Native Other* fokuserer Trinh på mundtlig tradition – familien, sig selv og sin kultur. Trinh peger på vigtigheden af at undgå at tænke i binære modsætninger som understøtter en patriarkalsk og hegemonisk ideologi.

Tak til Henriette Heise, Mike Sperlinger, Claus Handberg Christensen, Isak Winkel Holm, Actum, Rasmus Brendstrup, Cinemateket, og Mathias Kokholm, Antipyrine.

HEIRLOOM – center for art and archives er et non-profit kunstcenter i København dedikeret til at udstille og initiere projekter med fokus på det kunstneriske arkiv. HEIRLOOM betyder arvestykke på engelsk, og organisationen er optaget af at udforske det kunstneriske eftermæle og oversete samlinger i dialog med samtidskunsten. Programmet retter særlig opmærksomhed på flygtige værkpraksisser og diskussioner omkring køn, identitet og transnationale udvekslinger. Det er HEIRLOOMs ambition at genbesøge og kontekstualisere kunstpraksisser gennem nye kuratoriske koncepter og formater. Organisationer er fysisk placeret i København, men opererer internationalt.

HEIRLOOM er støttet af: 15. Juni Fonden, Augustinus Fonden, Beckett Fonden, Bikuben Fonden, F.L. Foghts Fond, Novo Nordisk Fonden, Det Obelske Familiefond og Statens Kunstfond

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Mother Always Has A Mother

Elizabeth Bishop, Kirsten Christensen,
Jens Hüls Funder, Wakeah Jhane, Rosita Kær,
Florence Lazar and P. Staff

10 November 2023 – 10 February 2024

The group exhibition *Mother Always Has A Mother* presents the work of a collection of Danish and international artists, all of whom engage with the topic of intergenerational relationships. The works address family ties and questions of how to understand oneself through one's origins.

On exhibit are works by Elizabeth Bishop, Kirsten Christensen, Jens Hüls Funder, Wakeah Jhane, Rosita Kær, Florence Lazar and P. Staff, which unfold across different media including installation, collage, poetry, video and graphic print. All of the works revolve around processes of change, transformation, rites of passages and posterity's attempts to understand the past by reaching out and reconciling.

The title *Mother Always Has A Mother* is borrowed from filmmaker, author and professor of gender studies Trinh T. Minh-ha, and points to the way in which knowledge, memory and narrative flow through generations – how the oldest form of archive is oral transmission.

1 Elisabeth Bishop

“In the Waiting Room” (1976)

Text on paper

2 Wakeah Jhane

Grandmother's Prayers (2021)

Print after gouache, water colour, acrylics, pencil and ink on antiquarian bookkeeping sheets

3 Kirsten Christensen

Makulering, [Shredding], (2023)

Installation, paper, photo, letters, text, plastic foil, graphite

4 Rosita Kær

Almost No Memory (2022-23)

Fibreboard, threads from an unravelled rag rug, a knife with a sheath in playdough. Text on paper: *K-H nr. 1555* by author
Helene Johanne Christensen

5 Florence Lazar

Confessions d'un jeune militant, [Confessions of a young militant] (2008)

Video, 32:00 min.

6 Jens Hüls Funder

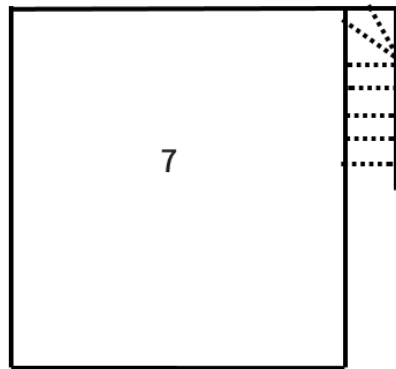
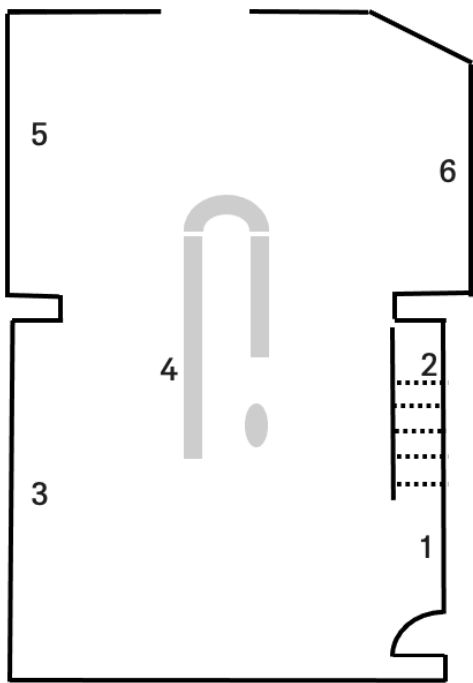
School ship (2014–2021)

Shelving unit, model ship in wood, LEGO blocks, dust

7 P. Staff

The Foundation (2015)

Video, 28:26 min.



Elizabeth Bishop faces in *In the Waiting Room* the poem's narrator, the "I" as a little girl, with the sudden and drastic realisation that she belongs to a family, and not just a family or lineage, but also to humanity in its entirety. This is expressed through a loud sigh. At first, Bishop zooms in on the completely sensory details of the body, where the poem's speaker experiences the aunt and family's tone as a part of herself, and then all the way out to 'the round, turning world / into cold, blue-black space'; out to 'National Geographic / and those awful hanging breasts'. It is a recognition of the self as an individual and yet also as a link in a family history and as part of something universal.

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979, Massachusetts, USA) was a poet and author of short stories. A central theme of Bishop's is the arrogance of mankind, its eternal quest to categorise nature and the rest of the world.

Kirsten Christensen has produced the work *Makulering, [Shredding]*, for the exhibition – an installation where she revisits and reworks her earlier work *Idyll* from 1978, which was based on a photo of Christensen herself as an infant on her mother's arm. This work has followed her throughout her practice and today she feels the need to confront and do away with it. For apparently, idyll is not the whole story.

Kirsten Christensen (1943, Copenhagen) is a visual artist and ceramicist. In her work, she often takes her own life story and situation as a starting point for her socially indignant, rebellious and constantly reflective work.

Jens Hüls Funder has finished building the wooden model ship his father began but never completed in the work *School ship*. Hüls Funder has continued his father's work using the toy of his own generation, LEGO.

Jens Hüls Funder (1985, Copenhagen) He works with a variety of media and approaches to materials, juxtaposing familiar objects with surprising materials to challenge recognisability.

Wakeah Jhane expresses in the graphic print *Grandmother's Prayers*, the care she experienced within her family. In this text about the work, Jhane describes her bond with her grandmother:

Long before she ever knew she would become a mother and a grandmother – she prayed hard for the future generations to come. She planted a seed in each of us. Praying that we would never suffer the harsh realities that this world carries, as she did. Praying for our strength and resiliency to overcome it all if we did. Praying for the wombs and the babies. Her prayers are the very roots of us. It flows through the blood in our bodies so gently and intently like water. Creating new and better paths. She prays that her prayers radiate and reach as far as those who come in contact with her relations. Our matriarchs are celebrated every day by us simply being and carrying on their legacies.

Wakeah Jhane (1995, Comanche and Kiowa). Jhane expresses herself through indigenous traditions of art and crafts, particularly 'ledger art', narrative drawings and paintings on paper and textile.

Rosita Kær has created the textile work *Almost No Memory* from material from a dismantled rag rug that her grandmother Karen-Hanne Stærmosse Nielsen wove from her grandmother, Kær's great-great-grandmother's, underwear and socks. Textiles have passed from hand to hand, from woman to woman over the years. The work is part of Kær's exploration of how materials store memory, as well as how the impulse to care for something always carries with it the risk of destroying it. But the fragments also make it possible to imagine new patterns and connections, to retell and reinvent histories. As part of the work, Rosita Kær has invited author Helene Johanne Christensen to contribute with a text, which is entitled KH nr. 1555, after the registration number of the rug. The work also includes a knife whose handle Stærmosse Nielsen made as a six-year-old and which was also part of her textile collection.

Rosita Kær (1992, Copenhagen and London). Her work oscillates between sculpture, text, archival research and textile. In a series of projects, Rosita Kær worked with her grandmother, weaver and textile researcher Karen-Hanne Stærmosse Nielsen (1933-2023), and her collection of textiles.

Florence Lazar depicts lost (and perhaps obsolete) knowledge transmitted across generations by letting her father explain the content of his collection of Marxist literature to the grandchild and the daughter behind the camera. Lazar's father comments on the socialist books that shaped him intellectually and politically as a young man in the 1950s. His grandson hands him the books, dutifully, but with the indifference of a teenager, pointing to a generational gap and, more generally, to a contemporary lack of history.

Florence Lazar (1966, Paris) is a photographer, video artist and film director. Through the 1990s, Lazar worked primarily with photographic portrait art. In the late 90s, she began incorporating video into her practice to depict Yugoslavia's disintegration and civil war. In her later works, she deals with the French post-colonial period.

P. Staff discovers in their video work *The Foundation* (2015), new genealogies that are not rooted in blood ties, but rather tied to artistic, queer communities. The video is a portrait of the Tom of Finland Foundation in Los Angeles and its many layers of subcultures, relationships, and erotic and artistic performances. The Tom of Finland Foundation began as a foundation to manage the estate of visual artist Tom of Finland (1920-1991), known for his homoerotic drawings. The foundation has since expanded its purpose to include the protection and security of erotic art.

P. Staff (1987, London and Los Angeles) is a visual, film and performance artist with an interdisciplinary and often collaborative practice. Staff focuses on themes such as discipline, deviance and queer bodies in a continuing examination of historical narratives of counterculture, radical activism and alternative forms of community building.

Truth is when it is itself no longer. Disease, Thought-Woman, Spider-Woman, griotte, storytalker, fortune-teller, witch. If you have the patience to listen, she will take delight in relating it to you. An entire history, an entire vision of the world, a lifetime story. Mother always has a mother. And Great Mothers are recalled as the goddesses of all waters, the sources of diseases and of healing, the protectresses of women and of childbearing. To listen carefully is to preserve. But to preserve is to burn, for understanding means creating.

Trin T. Minh-ha, "Keepers and Transmitters," *Woman Native Other*, 1989, p. 121

Trin T. Minh-ha

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1952, Hanoi, Vietnam) is an author, filmmaker, composer, literary theorist and professor of gender studies. In both her work as filmmaker and as literary theorist, she is occupied with gender and multi-national cultural heritage. In *Woman Native Other* Trinh focuses on oral tradition – family, herself and her culture. She points to avoiding thinking in the binary oppositions that support a patriarchal and hegemonic ideology.

Thanks to Henriette Heise, Mike Sperlinger, Claus Handberg Christensen, Isak Winkel Holm, Actum, Rasmus Brendstrup, Cinemateket and Mathias Kokholm, Antipyrine

HEIRLOOM — center for art and archives is a non-profit arts organization in Copenhagen dedicated to exhibiting and initiating projects with a focus on the artistic archive. HEIRLOOM is concerned with exploring artistic legacy and overlooked collections in dialogue with contemporary art. The program pays special attention to ephemeral practices and discussions around gender, identity and transnational exchanges. It is Heirloom's ambition to revisit and contextualize art practices through new curatorial concepts and formats. The organization is physically located in Copenhagen but operates internationally.

HEIRLOOM is supported by The 15 June Foundation, The Augustinus Foundation, The Beckett Foundation, The Bikuben Foundation, The F.L. Foght's Foundation, The Novo Nordisk Foundation, The Obel Family Foundation and The Danish Arts Foundation.

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In the Waiting Room

In Worcester, Massachusetts,
I went with Aunt Consuelo
to keep her dentist's appointment
and sat and waited for her
in the dentist's waiting room.
It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines.
My aunt was inside
what seemed like a long time
and while I waited I read
the *National Geographic*
(I could read) and carefully
studied the photographs:
the inside of a volcano,
black, and full of ashes;
then it was spilling over
in rivulets of fire.
Osa and Martin Johnson
dressed in riding breeches,
laced boots, and pith helmets.
A dead man slung on a pole
--"Long Pig," the caption said.
Babies with pointed heads
wound round and round with string;
black, naked women with necks
wound round and round with wire
like the necks of light bulbs.
Their breasts were horrifying.
I read it right straight through.
I was too shy to stop.
And then I looked at the cover:
the yellow margins, the date.
Suddenly, from inside,
came an *oh!* of pain
--Aunt Consuelo's voice--
not very loud or long.
I wasn't at all surprised;
even then I knew she was
a foolish, timid woman.
I might have been embarrassed,
but wasn't. What took me
completely by surprise
was that it was *me*:
my voice, in my mouth.
Without thinking at all
I was my foolish aunt,
I--we--were falling, falling,
our eyes glued to the cover
of the *National Geographic*,
February, 1918.

I said to myself: three days
and you'll be seven years old.
I was saying it to stop
the sensation of falling off
the round, turning world.
into cold, blue-black space.
But I felt: you are an *I*,
you are an *Elizabeth*,
you are one of *them*.
Why should you be one, too?
I scarcely dared to look
to see what it was I was.
I gave a sidelong glance
--I couldn't look any higher--
at shadowy gray knees,
trousers and skirts and boots
and different pairs of hands
lying under the lamps.
I knew that nothing stranger
had ever happened, that nothing
stranger could ever happen.

Why should I be my aunt,
or me, or anyone?
What similarities--
boots, hands, the family voice
I felt in my throat, or even
the *National Geographic*
and those awful hanging breasts--
held us all together
or made us all just one?
How--I didn't know any
word for it--how "unlikely" . . .
How had I come to be here,
like them, and overhear
a cry of pain that could have
got loud and worse but hadn't?

The waiting room was bright
and too hot. It was sliding
beneath a big black wave,
another, and another.

Then I was back in it.
The War was on. Outside,
in Worcester, Massachusetts,
were night and slush and cold,
and it was still the fifth
of February, 1918.

From *The Complete Poems 1927-1979*
by Elizabeth Bishop, published by Farrar,
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