**“Sunflower Sutra” – Allen Ginsberg**

I walked on the banks of the tincan banana dock and

sat down under the huge shade of a Southern

Pacific locomotive to look at the sunset over the

box house hills and cry.

Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron

pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts

of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed,

surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of

machinery.

The oily water on the river mirrored the red sky, sun

sank on top of final Frisco peaks, no fish in that

stream, no hermit in those mounts, just ourselves

rheumy-eyed and hungover like old bums

on the riverbank, tired and wily.

Look at the Sunflower, he said, there was a dead gray

shadow against the sky, big as a man, sitting

dry on top of a pile of ancient sawdust--

--I rushed up enchanted--it was my first sunflower,

memories of Blake--my visions--Harlem

and Hells of the Eastern rivers, bridges clanking Joes

Greasy Sandwiches, dead baby carriages, black

treadless tires forgotten and unretreaded, the

poem of the riverbank, condoms & pots, steel

knives, nothing stainless, only the dank muck

and the razor-sharp artifacts passing into the

past--

and the gray Sunflower poised against the sunset,

crackly bleak and dusty with the smut and smog

and smoke of olden locomotives in its eye--

corolla of bleary spikes pushed down and broken like

a battered crown, seeds fallen out of its face,

soon-to-be-toothless mouth of sunny air, sunrays

obliterated on its hairy head like a dried

wire spiderweb,

leaves stuck out like arms out of the stem, gestures

from the sawdust root, broke pieces of plaster

fallen out of the black twigs, a dead fly in its ear,

Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower O

my soul, I loved you then!

The grime was no man's grime but death and human

locomotives,

all that dress of dust, that veil of darkened railroad

skin, that smog of cheek, that eyelid of black

mis'ry, that sooty hand or phallus or protuberance

of artificial worse-than-dirt--industrial--

modern--all that civilization spotting your

crazy golden crown--

and those blear thoughts of death and dusty loveless

eyes and ends and withered roots below, in the

home-pile of sand and sawdust, rubber dollar

bills, skin of machinery, the guts and innards

of the weeping coughing car, the empty lonely

tincans with their rusty tongues alack, what

more could I name, the smoked ashes of some

cock cigar, the cunts of wheelbarrows and the

milky breasts of cars, wornout asses out of chairs

& sphincters of dynamos--all these

entangled in your mummied roots--and you there

standing before me in the sunset, all your glory

in your form!

A perfect beauty of a sunflower! a perfect excellent

lovely sunflower existence! a sweet natural eye

to the new hip moon, woke up alive and excited

grasping in the sunset shadow sunrise golden

monthly breeze!

How many flies buzzed round you innocent of your

grime, while you cursed the heavens of the

railroad and your flower soul?

Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a

flower? when did you look at your skin and

decide you were an impotent dirty old locomotive?

the ghost of a locomotive? the specter and

shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?

You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a

sunflower!

And you Locomotive, you are a locomotive, forget me

not!

So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck

it at my side like a scepter,

and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul

too, and anyone who'll listen,

--We're not our skin of grime, we're not our dread

bleak dusty imageless locomotive, we're all

beautiful golden sunflowers inside, we're blessed

by our own seed & golden hairy naked

accomplishment-bodies growing into mad black

formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our

eyes under the shadow of the mad locomotive

riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening

sitdown vision.

**“Marriage” – Gregory Corso**

Should I get married? Should I be Good?
Astound the girl next door with my velvet suit and faustus hood?
Don't take her to movies but to cemeteries
tell all about werewolf bathtubs and forked clarinets
then desire her and kiss her and all the preliminaries
and she going just so far and I understanding why
not getting angry saying You must feel! It's beautiful to feel!
Instead take her in my arms lean against an old crooked tombstone
and woo her the entire night the constellations in the sky--

When she introduces me to her parents
back straightened, hair finally combed, strangled by a tie,
should I sit knees together on their 3rd degree sofa
and not ask Where's the bathroom?
How else to feel other than I am,
often thinking Flash Gordon soap--
O how terrible it must be for a young man
seated before a family and the family thinking
We never saw him before! He wants our Mary Lou!
After tea and homemade cookies they ask What do you do for a living?
Should I tell them? Would they like me then?
Say All right get married, we're losing a daughter
but we're gaining a son--
And should I then ask Where's the bathroom?

O God, and the wedding! All her family and her friends
and only a handful of mine all scroungy and bearded
just waiting to get at the drinks and food--
And the priest! He looking at me as if I masturbated
asking me Do you take this woman for your lawful wedded wife?
And I trembling what to say say Pie Glue!
I kiss the bride all those corny men slapping me on the back
She's all yours, boy! Ha-ha-ha!
And in their eyes you could see some obscene honeymoon going on--

then all that absurd rice and clanky cans and shoes
Niagara Falls! Hordes of us! Husbands! Wives! Flowers! Chocolates!
All streaming into cozy hotels
All going to do the same thing tonight
The indifferent clerk he knowing what was going to happen
The lobby zombies they knowing what
The whistling elevator man he knowing
The winking bellboy knowing
Everybody knowing! I'd be almost inclined not to do anything!
Stay up all night! Stare that hotel clerk in the eye!
Screaming: I deny honeymoon! I deny honeymoon!
running rampant into those almost climatic suites
yelling Radio belly! Cat shovel!
O I'd live in Niagara forever! in a dark cave beneath the Falls
I'd sit there the Mad Honeymooner devising ways to break marriages, a scourge of
bigamy a saint of divorce--

But I should get married I should be good
How nice it'd be to come home to her
and sit by the fireplace and she in the kitchen
aproned young and lovely wanting by baby
and so happy about me she burns the roast beef
and comes crying to me and I get up from my big papa chair
saying Christmas teeth! Radiant brains! Apple deaf!
God what a husband I'd make! Yes, I should get married!
So much to do! like sneaking into Mr Jones' house late at night
and cover his golf clubs with 1920 Norwegian books
Like hanging a picture of Rimbaud on the lawnmower
like pasting Tannu Tuva postage stamps all over the picket fence
like when Mrs Kindhead comes to collect for the Community Chest
grab her and tell her There are unfavorable omens in the sky!
And when the mayor comes to get my vote tell him
When are you going to stop people killing whales!
And when the milkman comes leave him a note in the bottle
Penguin dust, bring me penguin dust, I want penguin dust--

Yet if I should get married and it's Connecticut and snow
and she gives birth to a child and I am sleepless, worn,
up for nights, head bowed against a quiet window, the past behind me,
finding myself in the most common of situations a trembling man
knowledged with responsibility not twig-smear not Roman coin soup--
O what would that be like!
Surely I'd give it for a nipple a rubber Tacitus
For a rattle bag of broken Bach records
Tack Della Francesca all over its crib
Sew the Greek alphabet on its bib
And build for its playpen a roofless Parthenon

No, I doubt I'd be that kind of father
not rural not snow no quiet window
but hot smelly New York City
seven flights up, roaches and rats in the walls
a fat Reichian wife screeching over potatoes Get a job!
And five nose running brats in love with Batman
And the neighbors all toothless and dry haired
like those hag masses of the 18th century
all wanting to come in and watch TV
The landlord wants his rent
Grocery store Blue Cross Gas & Electric Knights of Columbus
Impossible to lie back and dream Telephone snow, ghost parking--
No! I should not get married and I should never get married!
But--imagine if I were to marry a beautiful sophisticated woman
tall and pale wearing an elegant black dress and long black gloves
holding a cigarette holder in one hand and highball in the other
and we lived high up a penthouse with a huge window
from which we could see all of New York and even farther on clearer days
No I can't imagine myself married to that pleasant prison dream--

O but what about love? I forget love
not that I am incapable of love
it's just that I see love as odd as wearing shoes--
I never wanted to marry a girl who was like my mother
And Ingrid Bergman was always impossible
And there maybe a girl now but she's already married
And I don't like men and--
but there's got to be somebody!
Because what if I'm 60 years old and not married,
all alone in furnished room with pee stains on my underwear
and everybody else is married! All in the universe married but me!

Ah, yet well I know that were a woman possible as I am possible
then marriage would be possible--
Like SHE in her lonely alien gaud waiting her Egyptian lover
so I wait--bereft of 2,000 years and the bath of life.

**“American Journal” – Robert Hayden**

here among them the americans this baffling

multi people extremes and variegations their

noise restlessness their almost frightening

energy how best describe these aliens in my

reports to The Counselors

disguise myself in order to study them unobserved

adapting their varied pigmentations white black

red brown yellow the imprecise and strangering

distinctions by which they live by which they

justify their cruelties to one another

charming savages enlightened primitives brash

new comers lately sprung up in our galaxy how

describe them do they indeed know what or who

they are do not seem to yet no other beings

in the universe make more extravagant claims

for their importance and identity

like us they have created a veritable populace

of machines that serve and soothe and pamper

and entertain we have seen their flags and

foot prints on the moon also the intricate

rubbish left behind a wastefully ingenious

people many it appears worship the Unknowable

Essence the same for them as for us but are

more faithful to their machine made gods

technologists their shamans

oceans deserts mountains grain fields canyons

forests variousness of landscapes weathers

sun light moon light as at home much here is

beautiful dream like vistas reminding me of

home item have seen the rock place known

as garden of the gods and sacred to the first

indigenes red monoliths of home despite

the tensions i breath in i am attracted to

the vigorous americans disturbing sensuous

appeal of so many never to be admitted

something they call the american dream sure

we still believe in it i guess an earth man

in the tavern said irregardless of the some

times night mare facts we always try to double

talk our way around and its okay the dreams

okay and means whats good could be a damn sight

better means every body in the good old u s a

should have the chance to get ahead or at least

should have three squares a day as for myself

i do okay not crying hunger with a loaf of

bread tucked under my arm you understand i

fear one does not clearly follow i replied

notice you got a funny accent pal like where

you from he asked far from here i mumbled

he stared hard i left

must be more careful item learn to use okay

their pass word okay

crowds gathering in the streets today for some

reason obscure to me noise and violent motion

repulsive physical contact sentinels pigs

i heard them called with flailing clubs rage

and bleeding and frenzy and screaming machines

wailing unbearable decibels i fled lest

vibrations of the brutal scene do further harm

to my metabolism already over taxed

The Counselors would never permit such barbarous

confusion they know what is best for our sereni

ty we are an ancient race and have outgrown

illusions cherished here item their vaunted

liberty no body pushes me around i have heard

them say land of the free they sing what do

they fear mistrust betray more than the freedom

they boast of in their ignorant pride have seen

the squalid ghettoes in their violent cities

paradox on paradox how have the americans

managed to survive

parades fireworks displays video spectacles

much grandiloquence much buying and selling

they are celebrating their history earth men

in antique uniforms play at the carnage whereby

the americans achieved identity we too recall

that struggle as enterprise of suffering and

faith uniquely theirs blonde miss teen age

america waving from a red white and blue flower

float as the goddess of liberty a divided

people seeking reassurance from a past few under

stand and many scorn why should we sanction

old hypocrisies thus dissenters The Counse

lors would silence them

a decadent people The Counselors believe i

do not find them decadent a refutation not

permitted me but for all their knowledge

power and inventiveness not yet more than raw

crude neophytes like earthlings everywhere

though i have easily passed for an american in

bankers grey afro and dashiki long hair and jeans

hard hat yarmulka mini skirt describe in some

detail for the amusement of The Counselors and

though my skill in mimicry is impeccable as

indeed The Counselors are aware some thing

eludes me some constant amid the variables

defies analysis and imitation will i be judged

incompetent

america as much a problem in metaphysics as

it is a nation earthly entity an iota in our

galaxy an organism that changes even as i

examine it fact and fantasy never twice the

same so many variables

exert greater caution twice have aroused

suspicion returned to the ship until rumors

of humanoids from outer space so their scoff

ing media voices termed us had been laughed

away my crew and i laughed too of course

confess i am curiously drawn unmentionable to

the americans doubt i could exist among them for

long however psychic demands far too severe

much violence much that repels i am attracted

none the less their variousness their ingenuity

their elan vital and that some thing essence

quiddity i cannot penetrate or name

**“Skunk Hour” – Robert Lowell**

 *for Elizabeth Bishop*

Nautilus Island's hermit

heiress still lives through winter in her Spartan cottage;

her sheep still graze above the sea.

Her son's a bishop. Her farmer

is first selectman in our village,

she's in her dotage.

Thirsting for

the hierarchic privacy

of Queen Victoria's century,

she buys up all

the eyesores facing her shore,

and lets them fall.

The season's ill--

we've lost our summer millionaire,

who seemed to leap from an L. L. Bean

catalogue. His nine-knot yawl

was auctioned off to lobstermen.

A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.

And now our fairy

decorator brightens his shop for fall,

his fishnet's filled with orange cork,

orange, his cobbler's bench and awl,

there is no money in his work,

he'd rather marry.

One dark night,

my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull,

I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,

they lay together, hull to hull,

where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .

My mind's not right.

A car radio bleats,

'Love, O careless Love . . . .' I hear

my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,

as if my hand were at its throat . . . .

I myself am hell,

nobody's here--

only skunks, that search

in the moonlight for a bite to eat.

They march on their soles up Main Street:

white stripes, moonstruck eyes' red fire

under the chalk-dry and spar spire

of the Trinitarian Church.

I stand on top

of our back steps and breathe the rich air--

a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail

She jabs her wedge-head in a cup

of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,

and will not scare.

**“Sestina” – Elizabeth Bishop**

September rain falls on the house.

In the failing light, the old grandmother

sits in the kitchen with the child

beside the Little Marvel Stove,

reading the jokes from the almanac,

laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears

and the rain that beats on the roof of the house

were both foretold by the almanac,

but only known to a grandmother.

The iron kettle sings on the stove.

She cuts some bread and says to the child,

It's time for tea now; but the child

is watching the teakettle's small hard tears

dance like mad on the hot black stove,

the way the rain must dance on the house.

Tidying up, the old grandmother

hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac

hovers half open above the child,

hovers above the old grandmother

and her teacup full of dark brown tears.

She shivers and says she thinks the house

feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

It was to be, says the Marvel Stove.

I know what I know, says the almanac.

With crayons the child draws a rigid house

and a winding pathway. Then the child

puts in a man with buttons like tears

and shows it proudly to the grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother

busies herself about the stove,

the little moons fall down like tears

from between the pages of the almanac

into the flower bed the child

has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.

The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove

and the child draws another inscrutable house.

**“Daddy” – Sylvia Plath**

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time--

Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,

Ghastly statue with one gray toe

Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic

Where it pours bean green over blue

In the waters off beautiful Nauset.

I used to pray to recover you.

Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town

Scraped flat by the roller

Of wars, wars, wars.

But the name of the town is common.

My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.

So I never could tell where you

Put your foot, your root,

I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

Ich, ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak.

I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene

An engine, an engine

Chuffing me off like a Jew.

A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

I began to talk like a Jew.

I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna

Are not very pure or true.

With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck

And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack

I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you*,

With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.

And your neat mustache

And your Aryan eye, bright blue.

Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You--

Not God but a swastika

So black no sky could squeak through.

Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute

Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,

In the picture I have of you,

A cleft in your chin instead of your foot

But no less a devil for that, no not

Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.

I was ten when they buried you.

At twenty I tried to die

And get back, back, back to you.

I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,

And they stuck me together with glue.

And then I knew what to do.

I made a model of you,

A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.

And I said I do, I do.

So daddy, I'm finally through.

The black telephone's off at the root,

The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two--

The vampire who said he was you

And drank my blood for a year,

Seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart

And the villagers never liked you.

They are dancing and stamping on you.

They always *knew* it was you.

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

**“Lady Lazarus” – Sylvia Plath**

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it--

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin

O my enemy.

Do I terrify?--

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath

Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh

The grave cave ate will be

At home on me

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.

What a trash

To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot--

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands

My knees.

I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

The first time it happened I was ten.

It was an accident.

The second time I meant

To last it out and not come back at all.

I rocked shut

As a seashell.

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.

It's easy enough to do it and stay put.

It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

'A miracle!'

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart--

It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge

For a word or a touch

Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

So, so, Herr Doktor.

So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,

I am your valuable,

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.

I turn and burn.

Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash--

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--

A cake of soap,

A wedding ring,

A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

**“Her Kind” – Anne Sexton**

I have gone out, a possessed witch,

haunting the black air, braver at night;

dreaming evil, I have done my hitch

over the plain houses, light by light:

lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.

A woman like that is not a woman, quite.

I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,

filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,

closets, silks, innumerable goods;

fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:

whining, rearranging the disaligned.

A woman like that is misunderstood.

I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,

waved my nude arms at villages going by,

learning the last bright routes, survivor

where your flames still bite my thigh

and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.

A woman like that is not ashamed to die.

I have been her kind.

**“Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” – Anne Sexton**

No matter what life you lead

the virgin is a lovely number:

cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper,

arms and legs made of Limoges,

lips like Vin Du Rhône,

rolling her china-blue doll eyes

open and shut.

Open to say,

Good Day Mama,

and shut for the thrust

of the unicorn.

She is unsoiled.

She is as white as a bonefish.

Once there was a lovely virgin

called Snow White.

Say she was thirteen.

Her stepmother,

a beauty in her own right,

though eaten, of course, by age,

would hear of no beauty surpassing her own.

Beauty is a simple passion,

but, oh my friends, in the end

you will dance the fire dance in iron shoes.

The stepmother had a mirror to which she referred--

something like the weather forecast--

a mirror that proclaimed

the one beauty of the land.

She would ask,

Looking glass upon the wall,

who is fairest of us all?

And the mirror would reply,

You are the fairest of us all.

Pride pumped in her like poison.

Suddenly one day the mirror replied,

Queen, you are full fair, 'tis true,

but Snow White is fairer than you.

Until that moment Snow White

had been no more important

than a dust mouse under the bed.

But now the queen saw brown spots on her hand

and four whiskers over her lip

so she condemned Snow White

to be hacked to death.

Bring me her heart, she said to the hunter,

and I will salt it and eat it.

The hunter, however, let his prisoner go

and brought a boar's heart back to the castle.

The queen chewed it up like a cube steak.

Now I am fairest, she said,

lapping her slim white fingers.

Snow White walked in the wildwood

for weeks and weeks.

At each turn there were twenty doorways

and at each stood a hungry wolf,

his tongue lolling out like a worm.

The birds called out lewdly,

talking like pink parrots,

and the snakes hung down in loops,

each a noose for her sweet white neck.

On the seventh week

she came to the seventh mountain

and there she found the dwarf house.

It was as droll as a honeymoon cottage

and completely equipped with

seven beds, seven chairs, seven forks

and seven chamber pots.

Snow White ate seven chicken livers

and lay down, at last, to sleep.

The dwarfs, those little hot dogs,

walked three times around Snow White,

the sleeping virgin. They were wise

and wattled like small czars.

Yes. It's a good omen,

they said, and will bring us luck.

They stood on tiptoes to watch

Snow White wake up. She told them

about the mirror and the killer-queen

and they asked her to stay and keep house.

Beware of your stepmother,

they said.

Soon she will know you are here.

While we are away in the mines

during the day, you must not

open the door.

Looking glass upon the wall . . .

The mirror told

and so the queen dressed herself in rags

and went out like a peddler to trap Snow White.

She went across seven mountains.

She came to the dwarf house

and Snow White opened the door

and bought a bit of lacing.

The queen fastened it tightly

around her bodice,

as tight as an Ace bandage,

so tight that Snow White swooned.

She lay on the floor, a plucked daisy.

When the dwarfs came home they undid the lace

and she revived miraculously.

She was as full of life as soda pop.

Beware of your stepmother,

they said.

She will try once more.

Looking glass upon the wall. . .

Once more the mirror told

and once more the queen dressed in rags

and once more Snow White opened the door.

This time she bought a poison comb,

a curved eight-inch scorpion,

and put it in her hair and swooned again.

The dwarfs returned and took out the comb

and she revived miraculously.

She opened her eyes as wide as Orphan Annie.

Beware, beware, they said,

but the mirror told,

the queen came,

Snow White, the dumb bunny,

opened the door

and she bit into a poison apple

and fell down for the final time.

When the dwarfs returned

they undid her bodice,

they looked for a comb,

but it did no good.

Though they washed her with wine

and rubbed her with butter

it was to no avail.

She lay as still as a gold piece.

The seven dwarfs could not bring themselves

to bury her in the black ground

so they made a glass coffin

and set it upon the seventh mountain

so that all who passed by

could peek in upon her beauty.

A prince came one June day

and would not budge.

He stayed so long his hair turned green

and still he would not leave.

The dwarfs took pity upon him

and gave him the glass Snow White--

its doll's eyes shut forever--

to keep in his far-off castle.

As the prince's men carried the coffin

they stumbled and dropped it

and the chunk of apple flew out

of her throat and she woke up miraculously.

And thus Snow White became the prince's bride.

The wicked queen was invited to the wedding feast

and when she arrived there were

red-hot iron shoes,

in the manner of red-hot roller skates,

clamped upon her feet.

First your toes will smoke

and then your heels will turn black

and you will fry upward like a frog,

she was told.

And so she danced until she was dead,

a subterranean figure,

her tongue flicking in and out

like a gas jet.

Meanwhile Snow White held court,

rolling her china-blue doll eyes open and shut

and sometimes referring to her mirror

as women do.

**“Why I Am Not a Painter” – Frank O’Hara**

I am not a painter, I am a poet.

Why? I think I would rather be

a painter, but I am not. Well,

for instance, Mike Goldberg

is starting a painting. I drop in.

"Sit down and have a drink" he

says. I drink; we drink. I look

up. "You have SARDINES in it."

"Yes, it needed something there."

"Oh." I go and the days go by

and I drop in again. The painting

is going on, and I go, and the days

go by. I drop in. The painting is

finished. "Where's SARDINES?"

All that's left is just

letters, "It was too much," Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of

a color: orange. I write a line

about orange. Pretty soon it is a

whole page of words, not lines.

Then another page. There should be

so much more, not of orange, of

words, of how terrible orange is

and life. Days go by. It is even in

prose, I am a real poet. My poem

is finished and I haven't mentioned

orange yet. It's twelve poems, I call

it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery

I see Mike's painting, called SARDINES.

**“Having a Coke with You” – Frank O’Hara**

is even more fun than going to San Sebastian, Irún, Hendaye, Biarritz, Bayonne
or being sick to my stomach on the Travesera de Gracia in Barcelona
partly because in your orange shirt you look like a better happier St. Sebastian
partly because of my love for you, partly because of your love for yoghurt
partly because of the fluorescent orange tulips around the birches
partly because of the secrecy our smiles take on before people and statuary
it is hard to believe when I'm with you that there can be anything as still
as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary when right in front of it
in the warm New York 4 o'clock light we are drifting back and forth
between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles

and the portrait show seems to have no faces in it at all, just paint
you suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them

I look
at you and I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world
except possibly for the *Polish Rider* occasionally and anyway it's in the Frick
which thank heavens you haven't gone to yet so we can go together the first time
and the fact that you move so beautifully more or less takes care of Futurism
just as at home I never think of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* or
at a rehearsal a single drawing of Leonardo or Michelangelo that used to wow me
and what good does all the research of the Impressionists do them
when they never got the right person to stand near the tree when the sun sank
or for that matter Marino Marini when he didn't pick the rider as carefully
as the horse

it seems they were all cheated of some marvelous experience
which is not going to go wasted on me which is why I am telling you about it

**“The Mother” – Gwendolyn Brooks**

Abortions will not let you forget.

You remember the children you got that you did not get,

The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,

The singers and workers that never handled the air.

You will never neglect or beat

Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.

You will never wind up the sucking-thumb

Or scuttle off ghosts that come.

You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,

Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed

 children.

I have contracted. I have eased

My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck.

I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized

Your luck

And your lives from your unfinished reach,

If I stole your births and your names,

Your straight baby tears and your games,

Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches,

 and your deaths,

If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,

Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.

Though why should I whine,

Whine that the crime was other than mine?--

Since anyhow you are dead.

Or rather, or instead,

You were never made.

But that too, I am afraid,

Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?

You were born, you had body, you died.

It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.

Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you

All.

**“We Real Cool” – Gwendolyn Brooks**

 THE POOL PLAYERS.

 SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.