

i thought of all the boys
waiting in camp --
i thought of father and i and captain goodwin --

i thought of john kennedy --
i thought of oswald --
i thought of ruby --
i thought of dallas --
i thought of the elm trees
blowing over the grey beard of whitman --
i thought of emerson
asleep like apple blossoms --

a clean fascism --
a gentle anarchy --
anything with guts.

-- neeli cherry

Los Angeles, Calif.

"How I Was Almost Donna Reed"

The Night I met you at the
Greek dance concert I wore
that horrid shocking dress
because I was mad at my father
and you tried to pick me up.

And for once I didn't tell
you, the mass you, that I
was Dominique Vanderbilt and
I was home for the weekend
from a small college in
Poughkeepsie -- Vassar, you know.

No, I told you the truth
about me if a name is a truth
and you pursued me; I love
to be pursued; it's so dramatic

I said are you sure you're
not married? No, you said.
Are you sure you're not Catholic?
No, I said. And you said I have
to see you again and I gave
you my Sarah Bernhardt look.

And you called me that night
between autopsies and I was
fascinated and told you
about my grandmother's autopsy
and about Dylan Thomas.

That Saturday we went to
your apartment and I liked it

and your red Alfa-Romeo
and told you about my
speed and power complex
and you gave me a stethoscope.

And we went out to dinner
which I thought was terribly
bourgeois but then we went
to the underground flicks
which was better and then
you tried to screw me which
was best but I said it
was too risqué and you
called me a prude.

So on the second date we
did the thing at Camille's
apartment after you
helped me study the amniote
egg and I said it was
the first meaningful, really
meaningful, experience I had.

And we went walking on the
beach and fell in love without
your knowing about my going
to the Princeton Jr. Prom or
about my rendezvous in St. Louis
with Glueckman who said only
Jewish men appreciated
Catholic girls.

And we went walking on the
beach and fell in love without
my knowing about your Lisa
or the girl you got pregnant
six years ago or
knowing your family.

And then you rented an
executive room at the Newporter
and I watched television
because I didn't want to
do it all the time in motels --
only sometimes -- and you said
I really was pure and I
looked like somebody's sister.

We were always honest. I
said that literature was my
only love and I was going
to get my doctorate and
live in a haunted house
with a parrot on my shoulder

And I said you were so
fantastic with women that

you should go into residency
in gynecology to show you
I wasn't the jealous type.

And you like me because I
was so blase even though
I told you I was rather intense.
And your lecture telling
me I talked in abstracts was
so true -- everything you say
is true.

So now this time I really
love you -- your beer belly and
lower extremities and everything
in between and your face
that looks like Norman
Mailer -- but most of all
your brilliant mind.

And all I want to do is be
pregnant. I practiced walking
with pillows all the time.
And how nice it would be
to breastfeed a baby. Isn't
that what life's all about anyway?

But that will never happen
because you'll leave me
for someone you'll meet
at a Mongolian singing
festival and I'll never
go out with anyone else.
I'll become a nun and say
Hail Mary's to my memories of you.

-- Patricia Hamilton O'Connor

Long Beach, Calif.

The Blahs

I am thirty-two years old
and like to get letters from poets
and excitable people. But there aren't
many people writing excitable poems
(horray for those who do) anymore.
People have this dull look about them, lately.
What is the matter with them?
The mail comes slowly and I've been
looking around for something better to do.