

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.