

She lengthily exhales and looks at me,
With her eyes full of distance, saying
In that incomparable voice of hers:

"I was thinking about getting rid of you,
Maybe, a week from Tuesday"

CONVERSATIONS & THE NEW POETICS

Koertge & I were born in little
Illinois towns, so, whenever we
happen to meet, we never discuss
the ultimate wedding of literary

politics & poetry; we talk about
things like how far it is between

Oak Park & Aurora, or, if one were
in Streater, would Olney be closer

than Ancona

-- Michael C Ford

Westside Station CA

THE YEARBOOK

a box, a coffin full of garbage, junk
left over from high school, and inside
on top my senior yearbook like Halloween
all the ghosts returned from the tomb
screaming, bloody, and knocking about
my brain. I never joined anything: not
Latin Club, Spanish Club, History Club,
Future Teachers, Junior Achievers, Rifle
Club, Art Club, Science Club, stage crew.
I never went to my high school proms,
not a dance, not a hayride, or a basket-
ball game, not a football game, not
a free night in the gym. I never
went out for a sport: not swimming,
wrestling, track, not football, basket-
ball, baseball, soccer or any of those
boy games. my fellow students hated me,
generously, and I hated them. I flip
through the pages, glossy pages, they
feel like a pornographic magazine. I

did not belong to a frat, or Glee Club, never helped out in the office, not in the school store, didn't write for the paper. I turn the pages, page after page of my class peers, pictures by the thousands, stacks and stacks all skulls like a European catacomb. yearbook faces: hungry and ignorant, optimistic, wanting the freedom and prosperity of American Ivory soap and Wonder bread. I was right about everybody. in their portraits I see: drug addicts, alcoholics, bureaucrats, divorcees, rapists, the murder of all life on the planet. I see suburbs and mortgages, two rusting cars, unemployment and unpaid bills, higher prices, wishes with broken spines, dreams in cold conversations over a second cup of coffee, ulcers, hernias, and ruptures, mastectomies, hysterectomies, wrinkles, psychosis, neurosis, schizophrenic eyes, open heart surgery, fat bellies, sagging tits, and one lousy poet.

STREET OF POETS

across the street lives a boy
who never comes outside much
and when he talks he chews
his tongue. he never walks
the dog. he never cuts the
grass. he is a poet. and
then there is the old woman
with her blue hair, who is
our block guard, who peeks
through a crack in her drapes
at every noise, at every car
stopping, starting. she has
the dirt on everybody. she's
a poet. and then there is
the immigrant man with his
skin like dried clay who
feeds the street's stray cats,
and the divorced woman with
her high high heels and the
nut down the block who helps
the garbage men heave the black
Heafy bags full of vodka
bottles, chicken bones, and
moldy cucumbers: they are poets,
waiting for the high point
of the day: the mailman!