Sonnet 127

In the old age black was not counted fair,  
Or if it were it bore not beauty's name;  
But now is black beauty's successive heir,  
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame.  
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,  
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,  
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.  
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,  
Her brows so suited, and they mourners seem  
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
Standing creation with a false esteem.  
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says beauty should look so.
Sonnet 132

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even
Doth half that glory to the sober west
As those two mourning eyes become thy face.
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part.
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.
with those charms, that must decay,
e to see your future doom;
ied — nor were those flowers more gay,
owers that did in Eden bloom;
dying frosts, and Autumn's power
I leave no vestige of this flower.

morning suns and evening dews
thy little being came:
ing once, you nothing lose,
ten you die you are the same;
space between, is but an hour,
fail duration of a flower.

Indian Burying Ground

e of all the learned have said,
y my old opinion keep;
true, that we give the dead,
out the soul's eternal sleep.

the ancients of these lands —
ian, when from life released,
is seated with his friends,
ner again the joyous feast.

ged birds, and painted bowl,
mison, for a journey dressed.
the nature of the soul,
ry, that knows no rest.

w, for action ready bent,
tows, with a head of stone,
ly mean that life is spent,
et the old ideas gone.

 stranger, that shalt come this way,
ud upon the dead commit —
e the swelling turf, and say
o not lie, but here they sit,
ill a lofty rock remains,
ich the curious eye may trace
asted, half, by wearing rains)
ies of a ruder race.

Here still an aged elm aspires,
Beneath whose far-projecting shade
(And which the shepherd still admires)
The children of the forest played!

There oft a restless Indian queen
(Pale Shebab, with her braided hair)
And many a barbarous form is seen
To chide the man that lingers there.

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews,
In habit for the chase arrayed,
The hunter still the deer pursues,
The hunter and the deer, a shade!

And long shall timorous fancy see
The painted chief, and pointed spear,
And Reason's self shall bow the knee
To shadows and delusions here.

1788

PHILLIS WHEATLEY (c. 1753–1784)

A slave ship brought Phillis Wheatley from West Africa to Boston in 1761. John Wheatley, a wealthy tailor, and his wife, Susannah, purchased her and gave her an American name. Her first poem appeared in print in a Newport, Rhode Island, newspaper in 1767. In 1773, thirty-nine of her poems were published in London as Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral. This, her only collection of poems, was the first published book by an African-American. She was freed in 1778 and married a freedman, John Peters, but the marriage turned out badly. Abandoned by Peters, she lived in penury in Boston. She had already lost two children, and a third lay mortally ill, when she died and was buried in an unmarked grave.

On Being Brought from Africa to America

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.
sired my eyes upon the sea of nothing
memory brought back a sea more bright,
g, long waves of light, and the swift sun,
good trees that bowed upon the wind;
and until grown dizzy with that dream;
in all that joy of things remembered
ge, one the dearest, one most bright,
+, one star, one daisy, one delight,
or with wings most heavenly and swift,
d the tenderest upon my heart;
no image came, save of that sea,
ner thing than thought of tenderness,
or daisy brighter than the rest;
/ sadness at the bright sea lost,
unfulness that all had not been praised.
of chaos, atoms of desire,
nd of fruitfulness, destruction's seed,
w upon the void my late delight,
& brief cry of memory, that knows
ark's edge how great the darkness is.

McKay (1889–1948)

Jamaica, Claude McKay figured prominently in the Harlem Renaissance.
England, spent a year in the Soviet Union, and met Trotsky. Disillusioned
McKay converted to Catholicism after returning to the United States in
most famous poem, “If We Must Die,” in response to the race riots in New
and other cities in the summer of 1919. Winston Churchill declaimed the
Commons during World War II.

Must Die
ist die, let it not be like hogs
and penned in an inglorious spot,
xund us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
their mock at our accursed lot.
2st die, O let us nobly die,
ur precious blood may not be shed
then even the monsters we defy
constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

1922

America

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate.
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

1922

The White City

I will not toy with it nor bend an inch.
Deep in the secret chambers of my heart
I muse my life-long hate, and without flinch
I bear it nobly as I live my part.
My being would be a skeleton, a shell,
If this dark Passion that fills my every mood,
And makes my heaven in the white world's hell,
Did not forever feed me vital blood.
I see the mighty city through a mist —
The strident trains that speed the goaded mass,
The poles and spires and towers vapor-kissed,
The fortified port through which the great ships pass,
The tides, the wharves, the dens I contemplate,
Are sweet like wanton loves because I hate.

1922
and Piave are silver spoons,
he spoonbowl-metal is thin and worn,
d on the keys of a postboy’s horn,
will remember where I was born.

remember Carquinez Straits,
French Lick and Lundy’s Lane,
Yankee ships and the Yankee dates
the bullet-towns of Calamity Jane.
remember Skunktown Plain.

fall in love with a Salem tree
a rawhide quirt from Santa Cruz,
get me a bottle of Boston sea
a blue-gum nigger to sing me blues.
tired of loving a foreign muse.

tes Martyrs and Bleeding-Heart-Yard,
s, Pisa, and Blightedman’s Oast,
a magic ghost you guard
i am sick for a newer ghost,
isburg, Spartanburg, Painted Post.

ry and John were never so
Henry and John were always right?
ted, but when it was time to go
the tea and the laurels had stood all night,
they never watch for Nantucket Light?

Il not rest quiet in Montparnasse.
Il not lie easy at Winchelsea.
may bury my body in Sussex grass,
may bury my tongue at Champmêdy.
Il not be there. I shall rise and pass.
my heart at Wounded Knee.

Mu (from Harlem Gallery)
Hideho Heights
and I, like the brims of old hats,
slouched at a sepulchered table in the Zulu Club.
Frog Legs Lux and his Indigo Combo
spoke with tongues that sent their devotees out of this world!

Black and brown and yellow fingers flashed,
like mirrored sunrays of a heliograph,
on clarinet and piano keys, on cornet valves.

B. TOLSON (1898–1966)
bis was born in Moberly, Missouri, the eldest son of a Methodist preacher. His first about the sinking of the Titanic, appeared in an Iowa newspaper when Tolson 1947, he was named poet laureate of Liberia and wrote Libretto for the Republic the centennial of the small African republic founded by freed American
Fact
There's been an eagle on a nickel,
An eagle on a quarter, too,
But there ain't no eagle
On a dime.
1951

Hope
He rose up on his dying bed
and asked for fish.
His wife looked it up in her dream book
and played it.
1951

Dream Boogie: Variation
Tinkling treble,
Rolling bass,
High noon teeth
In a midnight face,
Great long fingers
On great big hands,
Screaming pedals
Where his twelve-shoe lands,
Looks like his eyes
Are teasing pain,
A few minutes late
For the Freedom Train.
1951

Harlem
What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

1951

Good Morning
Good morning, daddy!
I was born here, he said,
watched Harlem grow
until colored folks spread
from river to river
across the middle of Manhattan
out of Penn Station
dark tenth of a nation,
planes from Puerto Rico,
and holds of boats, chico,
up from Cuba Haiti Jamaica,
in buses marked New York
from Georgia Florida Louisiana
to Harlem Brooklyn the Bronx
but most of all to Harlem
dusky sash across Manhattan
I've seen them come dark
wondering
wide-eyed
dreaming
out of Penn Station —
but the trains are late.
The gates open —
Yet there're bars
at each gate.

What happens
to a dream deferred?

Daddy, ain't you heard?
1951

Same in Blues
I said to my baby,
Baby, take it slow.
I can't, she said, I can't!
I got to go!
hem back into her body as petals
f a rose close when the garden
iffens and odors bleed
om the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.
he moon has nothing to be sad about,
aring from her hood of bone.
he is used to this sort of thing.
er blacks crackle and drag.

oppies in October
ven the sun-clouds this morning cannot manage such skirts.
/or the woman in the ambulance
/o these red heart blooms through her coat so astoundingly —

gift, a love gift
lerly unasked for
y a sky
alery and famly
nitting its carbon monoxides, by eyes
illed to a halt under bowlers.

my God, what am I
hat these late mouths should cry open
a forest of frost, in a dawn of cornflowers.

BERRIGAN (1934–1983)
was born in Providence, Rhode Island. After military service in Korea, he enrolled
sity of Tulsa. While there he met Ron Padgett, then still in high school, and the
lifelong friendship that flowered in New York City. To Berrigan, who never held
or had a bank account, poetry was something you did twenty-four hours day. A
he second generation of the "New York school," Berrigan worked variations on
"I do this I do that" poem and James Schuyler's "Things to Do" format. His
The Sonnets (1964), an exhilarating sequence in which he uses the techniques of the
utup, repeats lines in shifting contexts, and incorporates lines from a transla-

from The Sonnets

XV

In Joe Brainard's collage its white arrow
He is not in it, the hungry dead doctor.
Of Marilyn Monroe, her white teeth white-
I am truly horribly upset because Marilyn
and ate King Korn popcorn," he wrote in his
of glass in Joe Brainard's collage
Doctor, but they say "I LOVE YOU"
and the sonnet is not dead.
takes the eyes away from the gray words,
Diary. The black heart beside the fifteen pieces
Monroe died, so I went to a matinee B-movie
washed by Joe's throbbing hands. "Today
What is in it is sixteen ripped pictures
does not point to William Carlos Williams.

XXXVI
after Frank O'Hara

It's 8:54 a.m. in Brooklyn it's the 28th of July and
it's probably 8:54 in Manhattan but I'm
in Brooklyn I'm eating English muffins and drinking
pepsi and I'm thinking of how Brooklyn is New
York city too how odd I usually think of it as
something all its own like Bellows Falls like Little
Chute like UijoIlgbu

I never thought on the Williams-
burg bridge I'd come so much to Brooklyn
just to see lawyers and cops who don't even carry
guns taking my wife away and bringing her back
No
and I never thought Dick would be back at Gude's
beard shaved off long hair cut and Carol reading
his books when we were playing crible and
watching the sun come up over the Navy Yard
across the river

I think I was thinking when I was
ahead I'd be somewhere like Perry Street erudite
dazzling slim and badly loved
contemplating my new book of poems
to be printed in simple type on old brown paper
tearl marvelous and tough
Sweeter than sour apples flesh to boys  
The brine of brackish water pierced my hulk  
Cleansing me of rot-gut wine and puke  
Sweeping away my anchor in its swell  
And since then I've been bathing in the poem  
Of the star-steeped milky flowing mystic sea  
Devouring great sweeps of azure green and  
Watching flotsam, dead men, float by me  
Where, dyeing all the blue, the maddened flames  
And stately rhythms of the sun, stronger  
Than alcohol, more great than song,  
Fermented the bright red bitterness of love  
I've seen skies split with light, and night,  
And surfs, currents, waterspouts; I know  
What evening means, and doves, and I have seen  
What other men sometimes have thought they've seen  

1964  

Living with Chris  

for Christina Gallup  

It's not exciting to have a bar of soap  
in your right breast pocket  
it's not boring either  
it's just what's happening in America, in 1965  

If there is no Peace in the world  
it's because there is no Peace  
in the minds of men. You'd be surprised, however  
at how much difference  
a really good cup of coffee & a few pills can make  
in your day  

I would like to get hold of  
of the owner's manual  
for a 1965 model "DREAM"  
(Catalogue number CA-77)  

I am far from the unluckiest woman in the world  
I am far from a woman  

An elephant is trampling in my heart  

There is nothing worse than elephant love

Still, there is some Peace in the world. It is night. You are asleep. So I must be at peace  
The barometer at 29.58 and wandering  
But who are you?  
For god's sake, is there anyone out there listening?  
If so, Peace.

1965  

My Autobiography  

For love of Megan I danced all night,  
fell down, and broke my leg in two places.  
I didn't want to go to the doctor.  
Felt like a goddam fool, that's why.  
But Megan got on the phone, called my mother.  
Told her, Dick's broken his leg, & he won't go to the doctor!  
Put him on the phone, said my mother.  
Dickie, she said, you get yourself up to the doctor right this minute!  
Awww, Ma, I said. All right, Ma.  
Now I've got a cast on my leg from hip to toe, and I lie in bed all day  
and think. God, how I love that girl!

1988  

JOSEPH CERAVOLO (1934–1988)  

Born in the Astoria section of Queens, New York, Joseph Ceravolo began serving in the U.S. Army in Germany in 1957. He wrote his first poem guard duty in a stockade tower. A civil engineer by trade, he studied poetry at the New School in New York City in 1959. "Drunken Winter" owes it in it," Koch maintains. "Even the words like like seem thinglike." Cerav
**Pennsylvania Station**

by Langston Hughes

The Pennsylvania Station in New York
Is like some vast basilica of old
That towers above the terror of the dark
As bulwark and protection to the soul.
Now people who are hurrying alone
And those who come in crowds from far away
Pass through this great concourse of steel and stone
To trains, or else from trains out into day.
And as in great basilicas of old
The search was ever for a dream of God,
So here the search is still within each soul
Some seed to find to root in earthly so,
Some seed to find that sprouts a holy tree
To glorify the earth—and you—and me.

**Mythology**

by Marilyn Hacker

Penelope as a garçon manqué
weaves sonnets on a barstool among sailors,
tapping her iambs out on the brass rail. Ours
is not the high-school text. Persephone
a.k.a. Télémaque-who-tagged-along,
sleeps off her lunch on an Italian train
headed for Paris, while Ulysse-Maman
plugs into the Shirelles singing her song
("What Does a Girl Do?"). What does a girl do
but walk across the world, her kid in tow,
stopping at stations on the way, with friends
to tie her to the mast when she gets too
close to the edge? And when the voyage ends,
what does a girl do? Girl, that’s up to you.
Runaways Café II

by Marilyn Hacker

For once, I hardly noticed what I ate
(salmon and broccoli and Saint-Véran).
My elbow twitched like jumping beans; sweat ran
into my shirtsleeves. Could I concentrate
on anything but your leg against mine
under the table? It was difficult,
but I impersonated an adult
looking at you, and knocking back the wine.
Now that we both want to know what we want,
now that we both want to know what we know,
it still behooves us to know what to do:
be circumspect, be generous, be brave,
be honest, be together, and behave.
At least I didn’t get white sauce down my front.

“Didn’t Sappho say her guts clutched up like this?”

by Marilyn Hacker

Marilyn Hacker
Didn’t Sappho say her guts clutched up like this?
Before a face suddenly numinous,
her eyes watered, knees melted. Did she lactate
again, milk brought down by a girl’s kiss?
It’s documented torrents are unloosed
by such events as recently produced
not the wish, but the need, to consume, in us,
one pint of Maalox, one of Kaopectate.
My eyes and groin are permanently swollen,
I’m alternatingly brilliant and witless
—and sleepless: bed is just a swamp to roll in.
Although I’d cream my jeans touching your breast,
sweetheart, it isn’t lust; it’s all the rest
of what I want with you that scares me shitless.
Quickly I press a narrative into service
to substitute for the leaky center

Now in the Mid-Atlantic southern flavors
the itch you cannot scratch

Or girlhood a thing I’ve parlayed for cash
a kind of uneven barter that justifies my existence

Even past hoping for hope or wanting for want
implosion the next order of business

Where lust is altogether unbecoming
take cover from hunger

I imagine a “you” to meet the “me”
that keeps flapping its gums

Under and over, and in between
passing static across time zones