"Smell!"
by William Carlos Williams

Oh strong-ridged and deeply hollowed
nose of mine! what will you not be smelling?
What tactless asses we are, you and I, boney nose,
always indiscriminate, always unashamed,
and now it is the souring flowers of the bedraggled
poplars: a festering pulp on the wet earth
beneath them. With what deep thirst
we quicken our desires
to that rank odor of a passing springtime!
Can you not be decent? Can you not reserve your ardors
for something less unlovely? What girl will care
for us, do you think, if we continue in these ways?
Must you taste everything? Must you know everything?
Must you have a part in everything?

--

"Danse Russe"
by William Carlos Williams

If I when my wife is sleeping
and the baby and Kathleen
are sleeping
and the sun is a flame-white disc
in silken mists
above shining trees, —
if I in my north room
dance naked, grotesquely
before my mirror
waving my shirt round my head
and singing softly to myself:
“I am lonely, lonely.
I was born to be lonely,
I am best so!”
If I admire my arms, my face,
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks
against the yellow drawn shades, —
Who shall say I am not
the happy genius of my household?
A Supermarket in California

Related Poem Content Details

By Allen Ginsberg

What thoughts I have of you tonight Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes! — and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

Berkeley, 1955
"Grandfather advised me" or "Poet's Work"

by Lorine Niedecker

Poet's Work

Grandfather
advised me:
  Learn a trade

I learned
  to sit at desk
  and condense

No layoff
  from this
  condensery

Lorine Niedecker's "You are my friend"

You are my friend--
you bring me peaches
and the high bush cranberry

you carry

my fishpole

you water my worms
you patch my boot
with your mending kit

nothing in it

but my hand

Lorine Niedecker, "Foreclosure"

Foreclosure

Tell em to take my bare walls down
my cement abutments
their parties thereof
and clause of claws

Leave me the land
Scratch out: the land

May prose and property both die out
and leave me peace
"It isn't for want"
by Cid Corman

It isn't for want
of something to say —
something to tell you —
something you should know —
but to detain you —
keep you from going —
feeling myself here
as long as you are —
as long as you are.

"The Way"
by Rae Armantrout

Card in pew pocket
announces,
“I am here.”
I made only one statement
because of a bad winter.
Grease is the word; grease
is the way
I am feeling.
Real life emergencies or
flubbing behind the scenes.
As a child,
I was abandoned
in a story
made of trees.
Here’s the small
gasp
of this clearing
come “upon” “again”