

1. Filling Station by Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)

Oh, but it is dirty!
 --this little filling station,
 oil-soaked, oil-permeated
 to a disturbing, over-all
 black translucency. 5
 Be careful with that match!

Father wears a dirty,
 oil-soaked monkey suit
 that cuts him under the arms,
 and several quick and saucy
 and greasy sons assist him 10
 (it's a family filling station),
 all quite thoroughly dirty.

Do they live in the station?
 It has a cement porch 15
 behind the pumps, and on it
 a set of crushed and grease-
 impregnated wickerwork;
 on the wicker sofa
 a dirty dog, quite comfy.

Some comic books provide 20
 the only note of color--
 of certain color. They lie
 upon a big dim doily
 draping a taboret
 (part of the set), beside 25
 a big hirsute begonia.

Why the extraneous plant?
 Why the taboret?
 Why, oh why, the doily?
 (Embroidered in daisy stitch
 with marguerites, I think,
 and heavy with gray crochet.) 30

Somebody embroidered the doily.
 Somebody waters the plant,
 or oils it, maybe. Somebody
 arranges the rows of cans
 so that they softly say:
 ESSO--SO--SO--SO 35

to high-strung automobiles. 40
 Somebody loves us all.

2. The Old Flame by Robert Lowell (1917-1977)

My old flame, my wife!
 Remember our lists of birds?
 One morning last summer, I drove
 by our house in Maine. It was still
 on top of its hill - 5

Now a red ear of Indian maize
 was splashed on the door.
 Old Glory with thirteen stripes
 hung on a pole. The clapboard
 was old-red schoolhouse red. 10

Inside, a new landlord,
 a new wife, a new broom!
 Atlantic seaboard antique shop
 pewter and plunder
 shone in each room. 15

A new frontier!
 No running next door
 now to phone the sheriff
 for his taxi to Bath
 and the State Liquor Store! 20

No one saw your ghostly
 imaginary lover
 stare through the window
 and tighten
 the scarf at his throat. 25

Health to the new people,
 health to their flag, to their old
 restored house on the hill!
 Everything had been swept bare,
 furnished, garnished and aired. 30

Everything's changed for the best -
 how quivering and fierce we were,
 there snowbound together,

simmering like wasps
 in our tent of books! 35

Poor ghost, old love, speak
 with your old voice
 of flaming insight
 that kept us awake all night.
 In one bed and apart, 40

we heard the plow
 groaning up hill -
 a red light, then a blue,
 as it tossed off the snow
 to the side of the road. 45

3. Epilogue by Robert Lowell

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme--
 why are they no help to me now
 I want to make
 something imagined, not recalled? 5
 I hear the noise of my own voice:
 The painter's vision is not a lens,
 it trembles to caress the light.
 But sometimes everything I write
 with the threadbare art of my eye
 seems a snapshot, 10
 lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,
 heightened from life,
 yet paralyzed by fact.
 All's misalliance.
 Yet why not say what happened? 15
 Pray for the grace of accuracy
 Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination
 stealing like the tide across a map
 to his girl solid with yearning.
 We are poor passing facts, 20
 warned by that to give
 each figure in the photograph
 his living name.

4. Young by Anne Sexton (1928-1974)

A thousand doors ago
 when I was a lonely kid
 in a big house with four
 garages and it was summer
 as long as I could remember, 5
 I lay on the lawn at night,
 clover wrinkling over me,
 the wise stars bedding over me,
 my mother's window a funnel
 of yellow heat running out, 10
 my father's window, half shut,
 an eye where sleepers pass,
 and the boards of the house
 were smooth and white as wax
 and probably a million leaves 15
 sailed on their strange stalks
 as the crickets ticked together
 and I, in my brand new body,
 which was not a woman's yet,
 told the stars my questions 20
 and thought God could really see
 the heat and the painted light,
 elbows, knees, dreams, goodnight.

5. The Applicant by Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

First, are you our sort of a person?
 Do you wear
 A glass eye, false teeth or a crutch,
 A brace or a hook,
 Rubber breasts or a rubber crotch, 5
 Stitches to show something's missing? No, no? Then
 How can we give you a thing?
 Stop crying.
 Open your hand. 10
 Empty? Empty. Here is a hand

To fill it and willing
 To bring teacups and roll away headaches
 And do whatever you tell it.
 Will you marry it? 15
 It is guaranteed

To thumb shut your eyes at the end
 And dissolve of sorrow.
 We make new stock from the salt.
 I notice you are stark naked. 20
 How about this suit -

Black and stiff, but not a bad fit.
 Will you marry it?
 It is waterproof, shatterproof, proof
 Against fire and bombs through the roof. 25
 Believe me, they'll bury you in it.

Now your head, excuse me, is empty.
 I have the ticket for that.
 Come here, sweetie, out of the closet.
 Well, what do you think of that? 30
 Naked as paper to start

But in twenty-five years she'll be silver,
 In fifty, gold.
 A living doll, everywhere you look.
 It can sew, it can cook,
 It can talk, talk, talk. 35

It works, there is nothing wrong with it.
 You have a hole, it's a poultice.
 You have an eye, it's an image.
 My boy, it's your last resort. 40
 Will you marry it, marry it, marry it.

6. Cinderella by Sylvia Plath

The prince leans to the girl in scarlet heels,
 Her green eyes slant, hair flaring in a fan
 Of silver as the rondo slows; now reels
 Begin on tilted violins to span

The whole revolving tall glass palace hall 5
 Where guests slide gliding into light like wine;
 Rose candles flicker on the lilac wall
 Reflecting in a million flagons' shine,

And gilded couples all in whirling trance
 Follow holiday revel begun long since, 10
 Until near twelve the strange girl all at once
 Guilt-stricken halts, pales, clings to the prince

As amid the hectic music and cocktail talk
 She hears the caustic ticking of the clock.