

SONNET OF: THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

I am electric blue on the tongues of the elderly.
I am the grin they wear when they smile my name
and drum up sales on autographed headshots.
I am shrift for the crusty julep drinkers, and candy
on the eyeballs of the has-beens and maybe-laters
that hate the labels but hang on the hope of having.
I am her "grin-and-bear-it." I am his "heart medication."
I am the graft on the zipper scar (over the pacemaker,
under the bra). I coast on the poolside daydreams
of the socially secure and the terminally fatheaded.
There's a word for me. Yes, I know it's *wunderkind*.
I am a transplant of hair and worth and love and skin.
Summer sun will shine a-plenty:
Four years sober; five years twenty.

DAILY TIPS FOR LIVING PEOPLE

1. Exhale through your nostrils as people walk by. That way,
you'll be free and clear of their grave-stink.
2. A combination of Ajax and table salt will obliterate those
pesky bathtub blood rings. That way, you may have company over
without fear of nasty rumors being spread.
3. After the passing of a loved one, carve their name into the
wood paneling above the television. That way, you will never
forget their name when the specter of Billy Mays quizzes you in
a surprise Lightning Round.

AT THE CARD TABLE

Hidden behind fans of whist and
the shakes, christened
in the harsh wisps that
dragontail off the butts
and lick the thick
cloud that hangs
like a head above the game table,

the silent folded faces,
the blue veins,
the crags,
all hush.
High heart trumps.

In an uneasy way
the silence
is punctured by the
sharp sucks of smoke,
and the women,
old enough to know worse,
curl their mouths while
hiding their teeth.

DIRTY LADY

Please don't kiss me
after you've showered.
Your breath is
overpowered by the
minty mask of Scope,
and the fragrance on
your skin
is nothing more than
soap.