

## A Supermarket in California

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*

## A Co-op in California

Brian Quale

I think I have some ideas to share with you today,  
Sal Paradise, as I stroll down the sidewalks,  
over the train tracks on the shortcut  
to the food co-op—  
maybe we can find some metaphors here  
to purchase, instead of cheap port wine and day-old bread, your favorites:

The spinach is your spirit

The apples are your health

The freetrade coffee is conscious consumerism to make us feel a false sense of  
good (inside).

I went down the aisles and realized you'd be off in the back,  
trying to convince everyone to be good Bodhisattvas  
and buy organic, as if it mattered.

And there you were, shouting words of encouragement:

“These are from the valley and good for your soul.”

“Drink green tea steeped in a tin pot and, like Japhy said,  
the last sip is ecstasy.”

“You don't have to buy anything.”

I think about your scroll-of-a-book (in a museum)

and wonder about life on the road,

and how different it was

from my trip—SF to Atlanta last summer—in eight slow days, stopping to visit  
friends in Colorado.

When we stumble through the afternoon heat, I wonder where we go.

Where do we go when the lost American  
feels found and no one feels alone?

Where do we go when tv and reality  
create an illusion of one?

What America did you revision  
and vision again until it consumed  
you, drowned you in liquid fear, fame, and conformity?

Where do we go, Sal Paradise, when

The names become read and

Japhy becomes Gary

Alvah becomes Allen

And Sal Jack?

I've read about the best minds of your generation

and I want them back, stark raving mad, before the sun sets in the  
valley on a warm, windless, mindless May evening.

*Davis, 2005*