

The Coffee-Drinkers

by George E. Curran, III

The view from the booth is so curious,
And the coffee so bitter - and true

To the Cup, earthen, heavy, factory
That scalds my lips and floods my mouth

With the lingering mordancy of still faces,
Drawn and creamy-gray, across the glass.

Waitress! you with the heavy shoes
And cross stride, I have a few coins

And my finished newspaper to offer you.
Fill my cup again - I thirst for the city.

Those, there, leaning at the counter,
Do you know their lives? Tell me truly:

Does he, with the hunched shoulders and wretched
Cough, staring into his cup, have hope

In his sullen vision? Does she, the one in red,
With polished fingers, have love in that

Lipstick she snuffs in the ashtray? And what of
The people in the window, marching face-down;

Is there purpose in their hurriedness? Tell me,
Caterer to the coffee-drinkers!

Coffee is our miracle, you and I;
With spoons and saucers we need not

Wine, nor urns, nor salvation,
Nor time, nor space, nor urgency

In this, our concrete calvary. I take mine black;
Pour it deep. And others -

Drink and you shall never thirst!
Drink and you shall never feel!

Drink on and on 'til palms sweat and nerves
Rise like the back of a cat, and sleep.

Sweet sleep, wanders the streets aimlessly,
Touching bums in doorsteps bathed in Lamp-

Light. Steady your hand; stir the essence;
Feel life made liquid in your mouth;

And with that bitterness, that acid pungency,
Raise your head to meet across the table

The shadows, the sordid generation who are known
To me - prophets all! - the coffee-drinkers!