

Betty Boop, on the Unemployment Line

Men have always wanted me
despite my obvious flaws:
oversized head and liquid eyes,
querulous singing voice, lack
of kitchen skills. They love
to watch my teeter-totter walk,
my oops-a-daisy clumsiness
so charming they'll stop whatever
they're doing whenever they're
doing it to pick up what I've
dropped. What they want
is a glimpse of the garter
around my impossible thigh,
a peek up the tight flapper dresses
that are all a girl can find on sale.
These days, I've got to save money-
all the candy and limp bouquets
can't pay my rent, and I won't
let the landlord chase me around
the kitchen, dirty mitts grabby.
*'When I sing, I wanna be loved by you
by you, and nobody else but you,*
I'm no longer sure who I'm
singing to, all the whistles and catcalls
drowning out my voice, so loud
I've thought of giving up singing,
joining a steno pool instead
where a girl can make a decent living
without men thinking that all I am
is one bodacious *boop-boop-a-doop*.
All I want is one day without
this walking punchline body.
this caboose every man wants
to set loose, this tremulous quaver
of a voice, these mincing steps
that can't turn into strides.