

Under the Lights, 1966

after vs. *Vanitas* by Anna Campbell

by Laura Secord

Under the make up lights

I cannot find my face.

Forty-eight bulbs blind me.

All I see—their anger's lightning strike—

blue filaments exploding.

Mirrors all around.

The unseen self grows strong,

and won't become accustomed to

manhandling.

Four dozen bulbs leave

impressions on my retina—

Behind that image, her true

face—the screaming Queen.

Reflections left behind—

the cop seizes her shoulder,

she hurls her hot coffee;

Tenderloin divas chuck

mean sugar shakers, shatter

windows, blasting mirrors;

Compton's Cafeteria up-ended,

beehives against the pigs,  
sirens and paddy wagons meet  
packed purses swinging.

This gingham Dorothy Gale  
dress is ripped and fallen.

48 lights are mirrored, multiplying.

They will not grow accustomed  
to those glass holes  
etched behind their eyes.

In tumbling gowns,  
    refusing  
        to live unseen