

## The Tanning Salon

You climb into the lighted coffin,  
close the lid, drift  
through the white noise,  
the nose-cone of a rocket

until countdown ends  
and fluorescence pours  
over your open pores  
sealing the oily coat of melanin

stimulators which seep  
through the stratum basal  
where pigment cells scatter  
and the yeasty batter of

epidermis prepares  
to radiate interface  
between your pasty shell  
and that of the outer worlds.

Maybe you could toughen up, after all  
since the skin and the nervous tissue  
have the same root cell and while

the sheath of ego coppers  
under the unquestionably  
cancerous apparatus,

blood vessels blush  
like poppy pods in opium fields.

You surface toasted  
and exit naked--  
an illuminated animal  
behind a new shield, the glow  
of an inner mirror  
both permeable and cracking  
like any good snakeskin.