

Kak

Her heroines were Pola Negri,
Gloria Swanson, and Mae West-
one for glamour, one for style,
one for nerve.

First on her scale
of praise came courage of the heart,
then brains, then something called
in Arabic "lightbloodedness."

All

birds but owls she loved, all
that was green and growable,
including weeds, all operas
in Italian, the schmaltzier the better....

Lightning she feared, then age
since people thought the old
"unnecessary," then living on
without us, then absolutely nothing.

Each time I'd say some girl
had perfect legs, she'd tell me
with a smile, "Marry her legs."

Or if I'd find a project
difficult, she'd say, "Your mother,
Lottie, mastered Greek
in seven months."

Or once

when Maris bested Ruth's
home runs by one, she said,
"Compared to Ruth, who's Harris?"

Crying while she stitched my shirt,
she said, "You don't know
what to suffer is until

someone you love is suffering
to death, and what can you do?"

On principle she told one bishop
what she thought of him.

On personality she called one
global thinker temporarily
insane.

She dealt a serious
hand of poker, voted
her last vote for Kennedy,
and wished us a son two years
before he came.

She hoped
that she would never die
in bed.

And never she did.

"When you and your brother were young,"
she said, "and I was working,
then I was happy."

And she was.

The folderol of funerals disgusted
her enough to say, "I'm
telling no one when
I die."

And she didn't.

One night she jotted down
in longhand on a filing card,
"I pray to God that I'll be
with you always."

And she is.