

Holly Hobby Dolls

They fill the toy store ads
like mail-order brides.
I have two —
one, big as a baby,
the other, travel size.
They wear dresses of pre-printed patchwork.
Yarn braids hang from blue sunbonnets
glued to their cotton skulls.
Underneath, their heads are bald,
bodies bland,
figures, flattened by naptime weight.
They purse their painted lips in unison,
pillow features reflecting a twin placidity.

I pretend I'm Laura Ingalls' blind sister, Mary,
bear furniture with a stick, feel my way across the house.
Bored, I'm reduced
to crawling, eyes closed, up the stairs,
lying on the landing
listening to my sister read in her room.
Her fingers separate the pages.
She breathes, bedsprings shift.
She has all the Little House on the Prairie books
with custard-color spines lined up like teeth along the bookshelf.
I tell her I have scarlet fever,
press my palms against her face.
That is how I see.

For the Bicentennial
our mother sews us matching calico costumes.
Outside, wild beasts howl and pace the sidewalk.
For Christmas I want a dog that bites.