

Paper Dolls

They taught us to cut them out in school, rows of identical girls, a pattern.

One breaks off from the rest, or an arm appears, a leg, from another doll.

Now she is excessive, interesting.

As a child I saw a film: a man stood over a beautiful laughing woman,
raised his riding crop.

The scene ended and I wanted to know what happened to women like her.

Since then I've heard this tale many times, its varying degrees of clumsy
violence.

Do the scissors make the mistake, or does the hand?

Imagination

Stop reading in the dark, it will ruin your eyes!

If you could enter a picture or book, slip into it, what would be required
of you *there*?

Your model Alice was at ease with the Red Queen.

And Dorothy chatted with the mechanical man Tik-Tok and Princess

Langwidere, who changed her head whenever she felt like it.

The woman in Lessing's novel walked through a wall into another world.

After a while, *there* becomes domestic.

Today a head with crooked smile, tomorrow one with vanilla placidness.

A self wardrobe.

You're only crazy at the point you stop feeding the children.

Judith Taylor

Statement

These two short poems are part of a series of sixty making up my first collection, *Curios*. I love the sentence. My task was to discover how to write poems that emphasized the sentence instead of the line, yet still be poems, not prose poems. A curio is an “odd or unusual object of art or bric-a-brac,” so I called these poems *Curios*. Their shape on the page seemed to have a kind of three-dimensionality, a physicality, a “thingness.” With the *Curios*, I was looking for a way (one way) of enacting how a mind acts: a flash of a thought, or an image, examining it, then often jumping somewhere else with an association.

—Every line, as it is a sentence, is end-stopped, so there’s a kind of pause. Each sentence is self-contained, and also joined or juxtaposed to the sentence that follows. Any sentence in such a short poem of “sentence-ness” also has a close relationship to every other sentence in the poem.

—Making sentences lends itself to making statements. These are voiced poems, there’s definitely a person(a) speaking them. I would write an assertion, then sometimes one that would logically follow, and sometimes a contradictory or qualifying one. Or one that didn’t seem to follow at all. I wanted the statements that were being made to waver, for the poem as it went along to create a more complex or ambiguous truth. I wanted there to be spaces.

—One of my tasks was to try to make each sentence interesting. To have variety within each poem in syntax, tone, rhythm. I also wanted speed. And I didn’t want the energy in the poem to lag. Once I had written a rough draft of a poem, I would play around with the order of the sentences to see what different effects I could get.