

## CINDY CHILDRESS

### Response to the Critical Theory Professor, who explained how ridiculous the suggestion is that patriarchy controls girls' minds with dolls.

Sir, spare me the Barbie rhetoric.  
Little girls don't measure our idols  
for dimensions. The dollars are promises  
of a red Corvette and dream house  
If you're blond, slim-waisted, big-boobed, and  
date Ken.

Don't blah-blah about beauty being  
subjective.  
Well-meaning men subjected this beauty to  
cat calls  
As I jogged around the gym until I fainted  
[?cause] Exercise Barbie never eats or tires,  
and when I try to live objectively  
within three days I am kneeling in front of the  
toilet:

*Forgive me, Calvin Klein,  
for I have eaten Rocky Road.*

And again, I run around the gym  
caged in my mind by the men

I want to please;

I hate them wanting me,  
but I want them to

And I resent your hypothesis  
that my pink-boxed illusions are "clearly  
fake"

Even now, my credit cards are maxxed out  
from effort to make my closet match my  
childhood collection

of Barbie's ball gowns, party clothes, and  
sparkling silver shoes.

I took out a loan on a red Pontiac Firebird  
that cost more than I make a year.

There was no Accountant Barbie,  
no pink calculator included  
in my prescription for identity.

You can stop saying how this is all in my  
head.

My body's been bruised by Kens  
wearing leather blazers like yours,  
who grew up watching G.I. Joe  
and tormenting voiceless frogs.  
They don't get that I'm not a rubber Mattel  
product  
when I've got a hot pink smile  
painted still over bloody lips  
that lack a voice to speak  
in their Oedipally complexed language.

Teacher, I'm living dreams I was taught,  
though in theory I am absurd.

Still, generations of American women  
will hate our bodies in your hell  
of BMI standard weights and heights.

Correct me if this looks wrong;  
having been practicing  
for years with dolls

I got as a child for birthdays,  
I am easy to revise.

*Cindy Childress is in the Ph.D. program in creative writing at the University of Louisiana. Her poetry can be found in the Austin International Poetry Anthology 2002 and 2003, X-Magazine, the Red Booth Review, Real Poetik, and the all-Tampa poets spoken word CD, Vital Signs: The Primal Sessions.*