

Imaginary Friends

“It is easier to smash the world of fantasy, to cut down upon the emotional interest that the child pays to his inner experiences, than it is to redirect his behavior in the socially acceptable channels”

—Dr. Walter Freeman and Dr. James Watts on performing child lobotomies.

Imaginary friends are not baby dolls
to cradle, plastic bottles to painted lips,
not soft like girls or as quiet.

They do not listen to reason—
heard but never seen,
laughing giraffes
or elephants in overalls
that prefer paints to petticoats,
jacks to jump ropes. They shout.

Imaginary friends lead to wandering—
from the piano to the ball field,
the kitchen to the river's edge,
dreams of real babies and bottles
drifting away like the mind.
Probe the elephant until mere grey
matter, use icepick to jostle giraffe.
Silence is the desired side effect,
perfect for rocking dolls once more.

Someone hold a cup to her unmoving lips.