

Cathy Barber

The Tube

In the early days of TV,
which is to say my early days,
my Dad, white t-shirt, belly
like a flour sack drooping
over his pants, would hoist
himself out of the one good chair,
twist the antennae until
static settled and faces emerged,
mouths and eyebrows discernible,
then plop heavily back down
for more. *Tennessee Ernie Ford,*
Gunsmoke, Wagon Train,
What's My Line. Hypnotized.

Once, my toddler brother ran
between my father and the TV.
Dad never saw him, didn't register.
Tim crashed through the glass door
onto the porch and Mom came screaming.
Saturday mornings, I'd watch
Winky Dink and You, special
Winky Dink plastic spread
over the screen, my oil crayon raised
to follow directions, face inches
from hidden radiation. Then
The Huckleberry Hound Show, Howdy
Doody, The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show.

I had no parental limits, but when
the neighborhood kids knocked,
my parents would shoo me out—
go, get some air, some exercise—
and the trance would gradually lift,
the trees and pavement come into focus,
and the dull world would gel, boring and
lifeless compared to “the tube,”
rectangle of endless proportions
for which I would have eschewed
all friendships, all real life.

Cathy Barber has an MFA in Poetry, Vermont College of Fine Arts, and an MA in English, CSU East Bay. Her work has been published in a wide range of journals including *SLAB*, *Slant* and *Kestrel*, and anthologies, including *The Cancer Poetry Project Vol 2*. Her poetry has been nominated for a Best of the Net. Her chapbook (Dancing Girl Press) is titled *Aardvarks, Bloodhounds, Catfish, Dingoes*. She makes her home in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.