

At the Galleria Shopping Mall

by Tony Hoagland

Just past the bin of pastel baby socks and underwear,
there are some 49-dollar Chinese-made TVs;

one of them singing news about a far-off war,
one comparing the breast size of an actress from Hollywood

to the breast size of an actress from Bollywood.
And here is my niece Lucinda,

who is nine and a true daughter of Texas,
who has developed the flounce of a pedigreed blonde

and declares that her favorite sport is shopping.
Today is the day she embarks upon her journey,

swinging a credit card like a scythe
through the meadows of golden merchandise.

Today is the day she stops looking at faces,
and starts assessing the labels of purses;

So let it begin. Let her be dipped in the dazzling bounty
and raised and wrung out again and again.

And let us watch.
As the gods in olden stories

turned mortals into laurel trees and crows
to teach them some kind of lesson,

so we were turned into Americans
to learn something about loneliness.

Source: *Poetry* (July/August 2009).