Barbara's Bonnet

Marcie Pierson

I wonder—
are you laughing,
this photo of you,
1937—a Salt Lake hotel?
You were only four when
you stepped out on stage.
They called you "Bobbie" then.
You tapped rhythms to Berlin.
In your Easter bonnet,
with all the frills upon it . . .

Your parents popped buttons,
their little girl's debut.
The beginnings of Kodachrome,
the beginnings of you.
A dress adorned with flowers.
Crisp organdy. Blue,
like sun-lit water,
the bonnet too.
The beautifully tied bow,
the daisy-duo.
Your hair pinned in waves,
like a grown-up Garbo.
Your head inclined,
hands perfectly placed—
in the folds of your skirt,
on the brim of your bonnet.

You played the part back then,
precocious and pleasing,
before you knew “Barbara,”
before you read Ginsberg—
spent hours at City Lights Books.
Your daddy called you “his little beatnik,”
you wore black zip-up boots with heels,
a black jumper, a black sweater.
Your hair was cut butch.
I was your little girl.