

## Painted Lady

What am I to be  
your painted lady  
neither proud nor free?

Put flowers in my hair,  
behind my ear,  
and round my head;  
let their colors bleed intensely  
down my face  
onto my neck.

Twist me up  
in tight corsets,  
belts, and buckles  
'til my face turns blue,  
'til lungs and legs crumble.

Make *me* your painted lady?  
Free from pride and dignity?

Make *me* your painted lady?  
Come, come, I am not she.

Replace my legs and  
piece my lungs back together;  
Unhook, unhook these corsets,  
these belts, and all these buckles

so I may dance and sing  
and fly and play  
free from all this trouble.

Walk me to the pond  
where I may dip my  
hands and face;  
Wipe clean, wipe clean  
this mask,  
this dye, this ink, this paint!

Take the crown  
from round my head  
and pluck the blooms  
from near my ears  
But stop,

stop there,  
I choose to keep  
these flowers in my hair!