

SOCKS

She thinks she's silly, making love in them.
“Sorry,” she says. “My feet get cold.”

She can't believe he loves the contrast—public
parts clothed, private not—the unsettling

quality, like clouds lolling on the ground
as rain falls up. Socks make her human—

no Maja in majesty, or Bunny with an airbrushed
muff. Socks show her frail and suffering,

a wounded thing, like Plato's people
when the gods cut male and female apart.

As a boy, he loved to give girls jewelry,
then pose them wearing just the silver necklace,

topaz earrings, turquoise brooch.
Now age has taught him all about cold feet.

He knows how small the range of temperature
that lets people live, how exacting their demands

of atmosphere. He knows how fragile
is that flesh people protect with cloth

and leather: tenderness on which they walk
or run or vault or hobble painfully

around the globe, forlorn as single socks
until they make a pair.

Charles Harper Webb