

The Glorious Tumult of Boys

Not often do we hear people
giving thanks for Teenage Boys of any stripe,
what with their fuzzy, troubled skin either too rough or too slick,
their un-brushed teeth, rumpled clothes, gargantuan appetites;
with their loamy odors shrouded in dime-store cologne
sprayed with flourish and abandon,
the way they do everything now.

No,
rarely extolled are the virtues of this slaphappy ilk
who not so long ago slept cradled in our arms
but now stumble forward topsy-turvy
both fortified and depleted by their feral yens;
and in their wakes scatter mysterious leavings of all manner,
the origins of which are best left unknown.

But what a grand species and not to be missed,
these invincible, impervious Boys,
at least The One in my life
whose angst and exuberance race hand in hand,
rivals on the crash course of life unfurling before him,
blissfully ignorant of the light he casts so
broadly and generously,
glittery and all aglow,
full sun disguised as penumbra.

Confessing to Confusion

I.

So long ago,
back when I was a newly aggrieved widow but my status was not granted,
back before the ubiquity of the pink memorial ribbon
(a thing whose very making bathes us in ironic blight)
We gathered:
atheist here, nun-lover there,
lapsed Jew here, ordained minister there
the pagan, the druid, the Sapphic Wiccan,

Gathered to summon g-d knows what,
consorting on the splintering sun-warped deck
cantilevered above the
undulating green of a Marin yet to be cluttered,
soon to slip into the shadows of The Sleeping Lady (how perfect!)

We gathered to get better
by facing in pairs, hands joined overhead
as if taking prisoners in a London Bridge falling down,
attempting to re-capture birth's circuitous journey,
dragged through a femme phalanx to life anew
each one pulled by the rest,
the next tugged through by the last.

This rendering was for my benefit, the mourner, the flounderer,
But the paisley blindfold and the fumbling sister hands
Were in the end unavailing to my cynic's heart,
And I hustled the oppressive silk from my eyes,
blinking against the éclat of my soul,
No rebirth today.

II.

Some revolutions later, a new clan with spouses and little ones now in tow,
we gathered monthly (moon-thly!) on the Inverness Ridge
where to the south The Lady slept;
we stood awash in huckleberries, Bishop Pine, and fire-scorched shrubs,
witnessed by critters daring and feral and with no need of prayer.

Passing around tales of Demeter and pomegranate promises,
we swelled the void with ritual and cunning;
the wee ones anxious now for the tale to end, for the inevitable fade of enchantment,
anxious now
to get back to cars still warm,
to swigs of hot chocolate and cinnamon-dusted apples,
to the lulling descent home,
a new confusion of pilgrims seeking to be sated.

Sorority

First crush fell on Sister Mary P of Grade 5,
robust gazelle
graceful in spite of the black drapery and
stiff surround of white
framing the handsome face, the only flesh revealed
save the large, sun-burned hands without stigmata, the left one bearing the band of gold
binding her to the Christ-husband

How stirring she was and fleet of foot
running bases or spiking at the net,
-a really flying nun;
not even the colossal circle of and burnished rosary hooked to the mannish belt
could slow her down.
Just imagine her speed and breadth outside the garb,
relieved of the vexing habit and cumbersome keys.

This very Christ-bride herself got all tangled up with
Sister Mary R of Grade 3 (and my own sister's personal pash),
down two long corridors of buffed brown linoleum flecked with white
echoing now in the mid-day elementary emptiness
as I carry the sealed (with a kiss?) note to her,
She of the mischievous, ample face,
So young and still jolly,
Cheeks always in bloom and gaining their highest color
When an illicit note reached her hand.
In return,
I carried back through the polished mute halls
A heart-shaped rock tenderly, artfully dressed in gold paper and purple India ink,
Exalting words in the finest of script.
What higher plane could there be?