

Hysteria

by Ann Bogle

"Does a nameless horse make you more nervous or less nervous than a named horse?"

—Padgett Powell, *The Interrogative Mood*

The fathers hit their daughters who grew up to fear women, fear or avoid them, distrust or blame them, wanting to shock or maim them, the hitting fathers masterminds against lesbians.

One father in thirty-seven—or one in three—depending on the reckoner—thought to have fornicated with his teenage daughter. I have learned to ask whether “fornication” is what is meant or whether that’s a false rumination, wishful insistence on what is dire.

I once sat in therapy sessions with a kind male psychologist who took notes after our visits. Twenty years later, I reread the notes. Whereas I had told him that I had had my clothes torn from me on numerous occasions by boys—what I now call gang stripping—he wrote that it bothered me that a boy had “fondled” me. My sacred boxes contained this misinformation. I called Dr. Hall and asked him to revise his records, shredded by then.

Brad Errett sucked my nipples until I screamed “suck them.” Keith Lammi kissed me in the raspberry bushes at band camp near Moosehead. We met there daily when he wasn’t playing trumpet and I wasn’t playing clarinet. Marco Popp and Robert Raithel kissed me in Germany. Marco Popp pinned me to the sofa in the disco after he’d watched Robert Raithel whisper in my ear. Marco’s pinning me hadn’t upset me so I name them.

What bothered me was the violence of American boys—a Roman conquering by one of them when I was fifteen and he was sixteen—a childhood friend. Son of my father’s friend, paddled by my mother’s friend—neighbors like the Rubbles and the Flintstones—dead. He died of a heart attack at almost 41, days after 9/11. Someone

superstitious might say that he's my husband, I'm his widow. Boys had learned that football is gay.

Mark Jacobson died of a heart attack days before 9/11. Mark Jacobson didn't ransack "the girls," meaning a girl, but a tree limb knocked him to the ground as he rode bareback through the park trying to tame the wandering Appaloosa.

