

On a Son Turning Twenty-One

by Con Chapman

I have watched him, back from illness,
skating at a hockey rink,
round and round the face-off circle,
lost in himself, it made me think--



long after the others had left the ice
and the Zamboni man had honked his horn--
there was within him a manic will,
a restless soul struggling to be born.



I stood with him in the onyx waters
off the beach at Osterville,
as he tumbled beneath the surface, turning
somersaults as if he breathed by gills.

It is these moments, like waking dreams,
a sleepwalking through the visible world,
that call to mind my innocence
of money and men and place and girls.

We have within us the blood of Celts
McGillicuddys and O'Keefes
just a few generations back.
Diluted now, a quarter in me

an eighth in him. The rest is Scots,
people for whom a taste is enough
and a lyric's as rare as a dragon
or a poet named MacDuff.

May you put down your cup when done
And drink a glass of water,
unlike, let's say, the bootless man
who married your grandfather's daughter.

