

CALL TO WORSHIP

I am the parent of two young adults – one of them soon to be a former young adult. This is unsettling to me. I'm still getting used being a former young adult myself, and already, here come these two.

To me, of course, they will always be children. My daughter Marianne graduated from college last month, but it seems like it was only a few months ago that we took her there to enroll. Her first year was pretty bumpy – so she decided to take a year off. It was just what she needed. She got beyond the feeling that she was only going to college because everyone else was, because teachers at her high school were expecting big things from her.

Before I knew it she had spent a whirlwind four years that included biology fieldwork in Africa, working in a fish processing plant in Alaska, doing news features for the San Francisco Bay Guardian, and writing a senior honors thesis on Vladimir Nabokov that was way over my head.

She grew up. Now she's heading off to New York City, with what the vagrancy laws used to call "no visible means of support," to take up the writing life. I'm excited and proud. But I'm also left to worry about how she will find her way in the strange and disturbing world that my generation is bequeathing to hers. And even more, about how she will find her self in a world that, as Heather just told us, never quiets down.

Reflecting on today's young adults, I think of a poem by William Stafford called "A Story That Could Be True."

If you were exchanged in the cradle and

your real mother died

without ever telling the story,

then no one knows your name,

and somewhere in the world

your father is lost and needs you,

but you are far away.

He can never find

how true you are, how ready.

When the great wind comes,
and the robberies of the rain,
you stand in the corner shivering.

The people who go by –
you wonder at their calm.

They miss the whisper that runs
any day in your mind,
“Who are you really, wanderer?” –
and the answer you have to give,
no matter how dark and cold
the world around you, is:
“Maybe I’m a king.”

Yes, or a queen. Or something noble enough to justify my presence here. Who will be with young adults in that cold and dark, that rain and wind? In the worry over being a wanderer, in feeling like a troubled guest on a dark planet. Who will hear the whispered “maybe”? If today’s young adults turn to us, what can they count on us for? What do we want to be counted on for?

Come, let us live in the questions again today. Come, let us worship together.