ForeWord Reviews

Boomer Girls: Poems by Women from the Baby Boom Generation

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The question sent out by the editors in the submission call: “Where were you between Betty Crocker and Gloria Steinem?” defines the generational poems collected here. Boomer Girls is broken into five sections ranging from birth through adolescence and on to middle age. Each section explores the experiences the poets have witnessed throughout their baby boomer lives.

Names, such as Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash and Marvin Gaye, punctuate the poems with nostalgia. Events like owning the first Philco TV, playing records, watching the moon landing date their world with an innocence and excitement that no longer seems to exist in the age of instant e-mail, CD’s and international space stations. The simplicity, however, of the girls? childhoods also allude to serious family and cultural issues such as wife beating, incest, drunk-driving and rape.

Boomer Girls consider their siblings, other children in their neighborhoods and the mysterious world of grown-ups. In “Apron,” Holly Iglesias describes a classic image of her mother dressing for a night out: “?kiss me goodnight, now, before I put on my lipstick.? We leaned in, careful to avoid the crisp skirt, the lacquered hair. We bent for our kiss, our brief waft of her—smoke, perfume, shampoo, leather …”

As a new generation becoming aware of their maturing bodies, their first periods, slow dancing with boys, the authors? poems strike a familiar chord of an innocent time. Childhoods that spoke of making cookies, skipping rope and selling lemonade juxtapose with an adolescence that includes the Vietnam War, smoking cigarettes and experimental drugs. The view of boomer puberty in “Vacation, 1969” by Dorothy Barresi provides a hilarious, yet strong glimpse: “Rocking my new breasts in my arms,/I was conked out by hormones and Mick Jagger/ … and my iron-eyed parents took turns/lashed to the wheel,/ America, by God, filling the car windows.”

All the stages of girlhood, puberty, young womanhood and adulthood are addressed in these bright, comforting, serious and sometimes silly poems. Any gal, boomer or not, will relate to these personal life vignettes. At first glance, the reader would assume the 50s and 60s theme would dominate the book. In reflection, however, each poem speaks more to the ordeal of

“girlness”…no matter what generation.

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