

## Nine Weeks After Giving Birth, a Feminist Ponders the Male Gaze

When was it I stopped taking my body so seriously?  
I cannot recollect the day the word “titties”  
ceased to offend, the hour when “twat” and “cooter”  
evolved from instruments of oppression  
to cute nicknames, such as you’d call a favorite pet.

That poor boy, the first to place his hand on my bare breasts—  
in his excitement he compared my nipples  
to radio dials instead of rose buds  
and wound up alone in the dark static of his parents’ porch.

My flesh, so sternly nubile then,  
has become less defensive with age and a happy marriage.  
Not less sacred, mind you, but a church  
where parishioners aren’t afraid to laugh,

or an amusement park of rides hysterical and horrifying.  
It is good we reached this understanding,  
my body and I, before the joke of pregnancy—  
after the tunnel of love, yet prior to becoming  
the fun house mirror—stretched and ballooned taut.

Now, saggy and droopy as a hound dog,  
I change my son’s diaper, hastily wiping  
under his tiny scrotum, little peach pit  
when the temperature is chilly.

Perhaps this irreverence is why he often plucks at my nipple,  
bopping it with his nose or rearing back,  
the peak in his mouth, in a move I call the “taffy pull.”  
If I wince it is only because it hurts.

In no way am I put off by his maniacal, milky grin,  
fluid from my body sloshed over his bottom lip  
and down the chin of a toothless old man,  
no longer able to feed himself and not caring,  
staring at my boobs, so much eye candy.

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