



The Prose Dispatch

Bringing you news from my author's desk and drawing table

Lammastide

New Moon in July

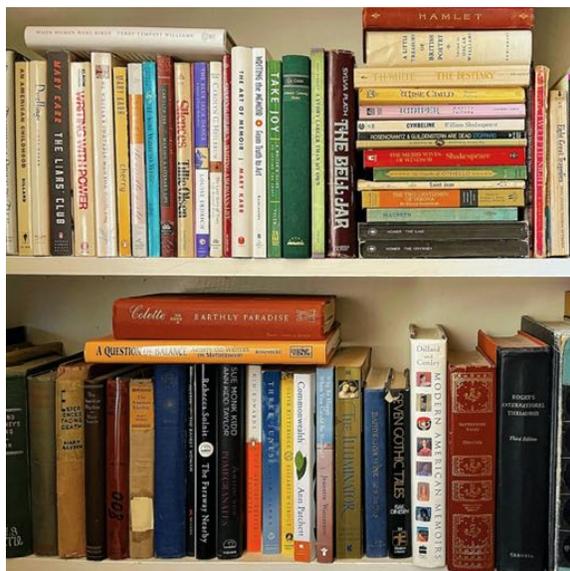
We are at the first harvest on the [Wheel of the Year](#), known as Lammastide or Lughnasa. It is a time of gathering in the first grain, and a time of festivals and the showing off of skills. As a hermit writer I mark the season by the sharing of good words from the wide world of the writing community, and some of my own. If I follow the tags in my online journal, I can see a continuing thread in how I observe this season.



From an old post in 2014 I found this treasure: One of my earliest introductions to the old ways was Traffic's 1970 "[John Barleycorn](#)" album. The haunting title song just got under my skin and I probably played the album until the grooves were gone. I was happy to discover [this beautiful acoustic take](#) sung by Steve Winwood.

We are on water allocations here in middle California and for the first time in many years we are not growing a vegetable garden. I keep the fruit trees alive, and my rose bushes. A bright bouquet of yellow roses gladdens my heart during this sunniest season. And the new moon in Leo reminds me of the tarot card for strength.

: : Newly published in the Journal : :



28 July 2022

My Faithful Community of Writers

A few days ago, I woke in the morning with an image of an old book in my mind. First I found the book, on a bottom bookshelf, and blew the dust of decades from its top edge. Then I found the scene I had cut from an early draft of my memoir *Mother Knot*, in the folder where I always keep deleted content.

Its title is "Working as a Typist." The year is 1973, the place is Southern California, and I am nineteen years old.

The closer I came to leaving home, the more fraught the dinnertime conversations with my father became, tinged with more challenge and ridicule. Classes at the junior college had stimulated my opinions about political and social issues, but when I tried to express them, the terrain was rocky. It was a tense time in the country and it filtered down to our table. The war in Vietnam was the source of protest in the streets, and Nixon was on his way out, though we didn't know it at the time. My mother resumed her silence at our exchanges, an onlooker only.

Continue . . .

What I'm reading

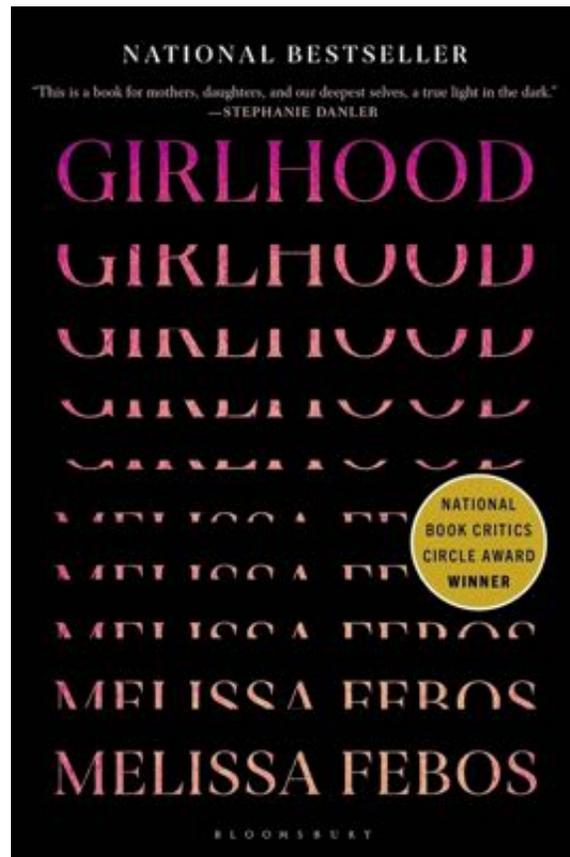
A Good Book

This summer I've been reading work by Melissa Febos, a writer new to me: first an essay, then her book on craft, and finally her book *Girlhood*. To say this book took my breath away does it an injustice. Perhaps it

would be better to say it let me breathe.

If you have been following my work for a while you will know of my deep devotion to the goddess Demeter and the story of her daughter Persephone's abduction by Hades to become Queen of the Underworld. I have **written** more than once about it, but often obliquely, for it is primarily my daughter's story and not mine to tell.

But when I got to the chapter in *Girlhood* titled Thesmophoria, I knew instantly what its subject was, for this is the name of the ancient festival of Demeter. The story commonly has Persephone departing and arriving at the two equinoxes, but I begin **thinking of Demeter** at this turn of the Wheel, at the barest beginnings of autumn, when we are still in the midst of summer. This passage in the book gave me a bittersweet perspective of the first rupture we suffered, and which, I think, many daughters and mothers experience.



“

I imagine myself as my mother—which is to say, a lover, and my beloved as someone with whom I spend twelve years of uninterrupted, undifferentiated intimacy. It is an affair in which the burden of responsibility, of care, lies solely upon me. I imagine, also, simultaneous duties, now seemingly less important since my child's arrival: in Demeter's case, the earth's fertility, the nourishment of all its people, and the cycle of life and death. After twelve years, my beloved rejects me. She does not leave. She does not cease to depend on me—I still must clothe and feed her, ferry her through each day, attend to her health, and occasionally offer her comfort. Mostly, though, she becomes unwilling to accept my tenderness. She exiles me from her interior world almost entirely. She is furious. She is clearly in pain and possibly in danger. Every step I take toward her, she backs further away.

...

It must have been thus for my mother—for Demeter, as she watched Persephone be carried away in that black chariot, and then the earth broke open to swallow her.

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Thank you for reading!

Cari Ferraro

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