

Howl for the Piedly Pious

I saw the most individual spirits of my generation diminished
into half-life's by a depth of identities, each of which they sought to do justice,
dragging themselves through church pews, listening to church-do's and
-don'ts, filing in uncomfortably, stuck between family members all fully devoted,
not fully devoted themselves, but not altogether against,
stuck between conflicting thoughts and conflicting self-images,
contrasting identities, stuck between a rock and a rock and a rock and a hard place, and
having no place,
unwilling to surrender, unwilling to deny,
neither for nor against, neither heathen nor saint,
a pied piety, existential paucity,
unwilling to commit either way and so committing to nothing,
one foot out the sanctuary door and the other in the baptismal font,
dappled spirits who dabbled in unsanctioned
activities and called it love because it was,
who bow down to American Idols and who indulge in worldly passions, who quote,
like scripture, lines from good books, who celebrate
the splendor, the beauty and creativity, that fills the world
and the shelves and the Spotifys and the Netflix queues of all God's children, and who follow pop icons'
Tweeters and follow Jesus still,
who curse and use the Lord's name in vain (for emphasis), because god damn it some emotions are just that
explicit and demand the holy weight of a whole
expletive, but who use His name, in such cases, with an audibly lower-case 'g',
who sleep in on Sundays because sleep is holy, mornings holy,
who enjoy sunny days outside because
nature is holy, who spend time with loved friends and family because
family and relationships and love are holy,
and so they honor the sabbath without sanctuary walls,
who honor thy father and mother, and tease them too, who respect their elders and
respectfully disagree sometimes, who honor their parents out of love for them as
individuals, not out of admonition of an age hierarchy,
who do not murder, do not cheat, do not steal, do not lie, do not covet —
“for Humanity told [them] so,”
who, above all, love one another,
above all,
above all,
above *all*, love,
and who wrestle in despair with the reality that this cardinal commandment, written in red, is too often
broken
in the name of God, in the name of the Bible, in the name of doing what is commanded;
for who can purely and proudly claim membership to a group that is pied in practice?

By: Katherine Flitsch