

Women With Children

You see them in the malls, at the park
or standing in the checkout at the grocery store,

gaunt-faced women with slumped shoulders,
their screaming children in tow,

little toads hopping about haphazardly,
indifferent to any mother's care.

Even the youngest appear worn out
before their time as if the process

of child rearing has bled all the vitality
from their bodies.

In their eyes, there always seems
a hint of impending insanity.

And when you hear of a tragedy,
a mother who's snapped,

drowned her child in the tub
or left it abandoned in a crowded store,

there is justifiable outrage that a mother
visit such atrocity on a child.

But deep within, where she
will not admit even to herself

every mother knows the same
temporary madness,

how much simpler it would be
to simply strangle the squalling monster.

But it is a fleeting madness,
not one most mothers would entertain.

Indeed it is always her to whom we look to most,
for her good sense and invaluable advice.

So when you see those women
straggling about with their mad eyes

and sagging skin, with a trailing mob
of rambunctious youth behind them,

respect the fact that without them, we men
would be stuck with the task of raising the little brats.

-Roger Cowin