

Catholic Boys served at the Altar;  
Catholic Boys were guilty —  
Catholic Boys were hot ...

ALL.

Brightly shone the moon that night  
Though the frost was cruel

MAN.

And the littlest one whispered:

“What do we believe?

Is Christ the King? What’s Redeemer mean?

Does Christ Rise like Bread? What’s the feast of Stephen?”

“Later,” her mother groaned.

“But what do we believe?”

“Shh!” Her father said.

ALL.

*(Singing.)*

Sire the night is darker now,  
And the wind blows stronger  
Fails my heart, I know not how  
I can go no longer ...

*(All hum underneath.)*

MAN.

“Oh Sheila. My love. My Sheila. When?”

WOMAN.

“I am getting old. He does not love me.”

MAN.

*(As Rebecca.)*

“Catholic boys are hot.”

WOMAN.

*(As Stephen.)*

“You look beautiful tonight, Mama.”

MAN.

*(As Claire.)*

“But What Do We Believe?”

*(The minister beckons the congregation to sit. The minister shows slides. There is a slide show — or not.)*

MINISTER.

Please be seated. May I have the first slide?

Tonight I want to talk to you about the spirit and the flesh.

And to help us look at these questions of faith, I want to turn to  
The woodblock prints of Japan.

Sometimes using the distance and perspective  
Of a Far-off land, of another people

We can return and see our home more clearly.

MAN.

“Oi.”

MINISTER.

Buddha taught us that the world  
And all its joys are fleeting, too soon melted away.  
But rather than renounce the joys of this world:  
The pleasures of the flesh, the joy in watching  
The heat and motion of the flesh,

MAN.

— Where did they find this guy?

MINISTER.

The tastes and temptations of the flesh —  
These artists and courtesans, actors and merchants  
Determined to enjoy the flesh because it was ephemeral.  
Putting aside Western notions of guilt and shame about the  
body —

Why not embrace what will too soon be gone?

*(The Stephen puppet leans forward in his seat, listening intently.)*

These few slides represent the art of the Edo period  
In Japan. Artists who wrestled with this relationship of man  
And nature called this art: “Ukiyo-e”  
The Floating World.

WOMAN.

Quietly, so no one else would hear  
Stephen repeated to himself in a whisper:  
“Ukiyo-e”

MINISTER.

Ukiyo-e. The Floating World.

MAN.

“Christ! Is this a museum or a church?”

MINISTER.

It is not only Joy To The World! It is Joy In the World!

MAN.

Oi!

MINISTER.

In the same way we, on this Christmas Eve, embrace  
Our hearth and our home, share the pleasures of the table

WOMAN.

— “Please God, and the bed — ”

MINISTER.

Celebrate the eternal made flesh! In a lowly manger —  
Savor the image of the mother and child because of  
His brief stay with us on earth —  
— More slides please —

MAN.

And the minister showed paintings of Mount Fuji  
Encrusted with snow — dwarfing the tiny figures of man.  
Brush strokes of Cherry Blossoms, lovely for a day.  
He talked about the weather and the winds  
And how we as mortals bow to these tides of the earth

MINISTER.

— All reflected in the pen and the brush of the floating world.

WOMAN.

And Stephen whispered: “Ukiyo-e”

MINISTER.

The minister continued, unmindful of the rustling snickers  
Of the Washingtonians in his pews.  
He showed fantastic things! —

WOMAN.

— parallel lines that

Recede and draw us into the canvas of the floating world:  
Artists celebrating the everyday world of commoners,  
The beauty in the commonplace —

*(Suddenly a slide flashes of a Japanese Prostitute.)*

MINISTER.

— Ooops.

Sorry. This wasn't supposed to be — well. No harm done.  
As you can see, this is a picture of a lady of the ... um,  
Theater district of Edo. A working lady.

And on top a very nice gentleman, possibly of the warrior class.  
In our culture, we revere Mary Magdalene in a similar way.  
Although Mary Magdalene, um, renounced her line of work.

MAN.

The snickers of the adults grew into breaths of laughter.

WOMAN.

And Claire asked: “Why are we laughing?”

*(As Mother.)*

— Shhh!