

The Boys of Kenneth Street

We played mumbletypeg with jackknives.
We stole Playboys from the first
7/11. We played corkball and kickball
and football in the street. Cars
interrupting a game were given a
raspberry. We weren't really hoodlums—
we were too timorous—but we liked
the new rock music and, given the chance,
we snarled like Mick Jagger. Kenneth
Street was base and our peregrinations
took us to the drugstore or the woods.
We strutted and talked about girls as if
we knew the secret thing. Our world
spun only one way. The 60s passed and
we moved around more. The connection
remained. I still count on these boys,
who taught me nascent masculinity,
and what the world was like beyond our
neighborhood. Those times we ran
together, so long ago now, took place in
an America that is gone. Gone too our
innocence. And the need, which burned in
us like holy fire, to be more than what we were.

BIO

Corey Mesler has been published in numerous anthologies and journals including *POETRY*, *Gargoyle*, *Five Points*, *Good Poems*, *American Places*, and *New Stories from the South*. With his wife he runs Burke's Book Store (est. 1875) in Memphis, TN.