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Instress



Spring 2001



Instress

Instress has been published by the students of College Misericordia since December of 1966. The word *instress* was invented by the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. It signifies the moment the reader achieves complete understanding of the written word. The author, through *instress*, conveys to and shares with the reader an emotionally moving experience.

The 2001 Dharma Awards for Outstanding Creations

The Pollock goes to...Rekha Sharma

The Snyder goes to...Ellen Rita Heidrick

The Ferlinghetti goes to...Leighann C. Williams

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Instress accepts short stories, poetry, essays, art, photography, music, and other creative work from the students and faculty of College Misericordia and the surrounding community. All works are judged anonymously by the editorial staff. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the staff or the college administration

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I Don't Understand
in loving memory of Jeffrey Knight

There are things in life that I can understand and then there are things that I know I never will
I understand that we live
I understand that we die
But what I can't understand and what I think I'll never understand is why Jeff had to
No one will ever be able to tell me why someone so filled with joy and a love for life lost his,
never to be found again

I am told that life isn't fair and that sometimes bad things happen to good people
That I can understand
But tell me, why did the good person have to be Jeff, and why did the bad thing have to be death?
I don't understand

I know that death is when our bodies shut down and are no longer able to sustain life
This I understand
But tell me, what does it mean when it's Jeff's body that can't sustain life?
I don't understand

I feel like a little child who does not know what death means
You tell me, "Jeffrey has gone away."
And I ask you, "But he'll be back later, won't he?"
I don't understand

I know that when you go to college and meet new people, you become close with some of them
But you tell me, who's gonna' get the party started when we go dancing?
Who's gonna' wake up in the bed above me next year and talk to me late at night when everyone else
is in bed?
It won't be Jeffrey, and that's not okay with me

I understand that there are very good people in this world who make huge differences in
peoples' lives
But you tell me why God took one away before he got to touch and help so many other people
I don't understand

I understand that mommies and daddies make babies, and that those babies and mommies and daddies
make families
But you tell me why this family lost one of their babies way before they should have
I don't understand

I understand that two people can fall in love with each other and spend the rest of their lives together
But you tell me why Jeff found the love of his life, only to leave her
I don't understand

I thought I knew how life was supposed to work
Now I see that I don't
I don't understand why Jeff had to leave
And to be honest, I feel like punching a hole in the wall because I'm pretty pissed off about it
I wish I could have a nice face to face chat with God so he could explain all of the answers to all of
the things I don't understand

Although I know I will never understand why Jeff left this world before his time,
I also know that there is a lot to be said about the life and the time Jeff did spend on this earth
I know that Jeff lived his life
He lived it
He didn't just sit back and let it pass him by
He was taking full advantage of every opportunity and moment in his life
He got so excited about the little things--the things we all take for granted
For Jeff, life was just one big ride to experience, and I know he lived his life to the fullest

I also know Jeff knew what love was
I saw it in his eyes, and he saw it in his family and in friends and in Katie
The only comfort that I can take from this is that I know Jeff would say that he lived his life
And that he found love
And somehow I think that those two things were at the core of everything he did

So Jeffrey, if you're looking down on us now,
Thanks for the memories
Thanks for the laughs
And thanks for the love

And buddy, if you're not too busy playing in heaven, could you take time out of your day to lay
down above my bed at school and make that annoying noise you used to make that kept me
awake at night?
And then in the morning, when the sun kisses the earth with its light, wake me up and tell me to go
to my window
Tell me to look outside and appreciate life, like I know you did
That would be enough for me now
I won't ask for more
Goodbye, Jeffrey

-Brad Kresge-

Strong Man, Strong Man

Pounding the cracks
of sidewalks, heavily worn by
fathers hustling strollers
 through late afternoon heat,
mothers jostling packages
 of detergent and tonight's supper,
middle-schooled boppers pondering
 the latest hormonal conquest,
new-aged boomers balancing an act
 of nuclear, gun-free deterrence and BMWs,
elderly citizens catching a breath
 to provide them another night of life

I become the strong man--
 a creature whose livelihood
is to become solid enough
 to stand in time, in the midst
 of the reality of his life,
at peace with being a creation
of God,
a byproduct of familial ties,
a person of unambiguous,
sexual and relational integrity.

The chant is pure and precise--
"Strong man, strong man,"

Spoken by a passer-by prepared
to add cheers of motivation
into this panting puff of humanity.

The finger of proof is definitively
 pointed at my center and
I must walk the race,
 cross the line of choice,
 declare the victory,
 accept the trophy won in liberation.

If, indeed,
I be born the strong man.

-Michael Bryant-

Father's Day: Jim



-Ellen Rita Heidrick-

With Standing Room Only

With standing room only

A crowd cheers.

Youthful souls are delivered their cause.

“Fight with me! I shall lead you

To freedom, liberty, equality,

Victory!”

Follow the leader.

A face never seen; never in battle

Where soldiers live out leaders' dreams.

Living nightmares just for that cause...although

It is a message now muffled by

Metals especially designed to

Mutilate, maim, murder.

Ten solid soldiers all in a row...

BANG!

Tag you're it...run and hide

crack...click...snap...whispers...

“oh god please...

i promise...i promise if you let me live...

please don't let him see...”

BANG!

Eight solid soldiers all in a row...

SLAM!

You are hereby convicted of treasonous acts

Against your country and sovereign...”

The ropes tighten

Freeing eight treasonous souls.

With standing room only

A crowd cheers.

-Leighann C. Williams-

September 6, 2000

The flowers you
gave me get cold
at night. The wind
freezes them and
their beauty is hidden
in the dark. The
night is long and the
color cannot show
through. But wait,
my daisies--the sun
will come up soon &
your purple & yellow &
white will be brilliant
in the sun. The cold
water will drip off the
window and your
beauty will make the
long, cold night disappear.

-Lindsay Kravits-

The Lost Library

It has been almost a week since we arrived on Old Earth for the archeological dig. I could never forget seeing the planet after we came out of the wormhole tunnel. It was so beautiful--a blue and white marble that spun silently amongst the stars. It was hard to believe that an asteroid had devastated this peaceful world. Nearly all the animal life, including humans, were wiped out, though some of the plant life and insects did survive. The human race still exists only because colonists left for the Alpha Centauri star system just prior to the destruction of the Old Earth. Many tales have been told of our ancestors who landed on the only inhabitable planet and braved the conditions while they terraformed it. It took around a thousand years or so for our great civilization to get to the point where it is right now. But none of it was easy. My mother told me that we both are descendants of the great Dr. Julia Vargas who had arrived at the world they called "New Earth." Tales were told of the vast knowledge of all of the human civilization, which was all erased during a huge magnetic storm that they passed through. Using nothing but their own wits, the colonists recovered from their own memories the technology they once knew. In fact, humans literally had to reinvent the wheel! It took many centuries, but we Centaurians made some amazing discoveries, like mapping the entire human DNA sequence and mastering quantum technology. Thus having the means to go anywhere we wanted in the galaxy, we chose to return to Old Earth. It is there that the answers to our forgotten past are held. I became an archeologist so that I could uncover the world that was passed on in stories through many generations. And now I am here on Old Earth!

I was with Professor Klein, who pulled some strings so that I could come on this expedition, and his other assistants who were eager students like myself. Klein explained that in the past five Earth years, scientists had been slowly uncovering the ruins of cities by using sentient robot probes. Our satellites that orbited Old Earth had uncovered buried cities, roads, houses, and everything else. Klein told us that we are going to a site where most of a city had been uncovered. One of the students piped up that he hoped it was New York, after hearing some tales about it from his great-grandmother.

"No," chuckled Klein, "this is a city that the locals once called Wilkes-Barre. It resides in a valley amongst many other small cities and towns. We thought it was one gigantic city at first but after some initial studies we found out that we were wrong."

I remember our transport shuttle flying over the "Valley of Ruins," as Klein called it. It was amazing to see hundreds of old buildings and roads still standing. There were also houses, but they were made from wood and thus barely survived the rest of time. The shuttle landed at our campsite, which used to be a park. It was now overgrown with tall grass, weeds, and more trees than it had when it was used by earlier humans. A small field had been cleared out for the camp and the landing site. The area was peaceful and silent with only the sound of crickets chirping. After the tediousness of getting settled in and the lectures from Professor Klein, we had set off to see the heart of this Wilkes-Barre. We crossed a huge bridge with gaping holes in the middle of it. It was very imposing with its four large arches on the walkway, which were topped with giant bird statues that looked out into the horizon. Just behind them were two large buildings surrounded by smaller ones. On them were words that none of us could understand. Parts of the words were missing, and besides, our Centaurian language had changed so much over the years that the old English spoken by the colonists is completely different from our language. To translate the English we used the datapad devices that each of us carried. Walking down the street in the cool shadow, we were surrounded by even more giant buildings. Klein told us that they were known as "banks," and they kept the currency of this civilization.

"What kind of currency?" one girl asked.

Klein stopped and said, "Well, it used to be printed on these special types of paper. But in the late 20th and early 21st century, they transferred most of the currency over to devices known as computers that did the transaction amongst other machines. That's all we know since, as you are all aware, it was during the early 21st century that the asteroid came crashing down here."

"Did it really make life here extinct?" asked another student.

"For the most part, yes. We believe they tried to stop the asteroid with the powerful weapons they developed, but it was no use. However, the asteroid split up into even more projectiles that landed all over the world. Not only that, but we discovered that it was made up of a special element which had altered the magnetic field in the lower atmosphere that polarized the entire planet. The Ancient Americans used many electrical devices which no longer worked. Hence their chances of survival were very slim, if not downright impossible."

Our group continued to walk down the dusty road covered with cracks and faded white lines and marks, which must have had some meaning at one time. We had reached the central town square that surprisingly still had growing trees. Cherry blossoms surrounded the square, and I know this because some were imported to New Earth and thrived there. But the ones here are very beautiful and are a more interesting shade of white. During the week, we looked around the square at the odd structures that were plentiful in the square. These people must have really enjoyed art. One thing that stuck out in my mind was a cage-like structure that had a green metal egg in it. It could have been the "art" of the Ancient Americans, but what did it mean? Did the Ancient Americans even know what it was? My favorite sculpture, however, was a strange looking arch which had metal blobs joined together smoothly. The name of it was attached and said, in old English, "NO PLACE LIKE HOME." The faceplate also had the artist's name and the phrase "To The People Of Wyoming Valley." So this place hadn't always been called Valley of Ruins after all.

Many buildings and other ruins encompassed the public square. Some of them were joined together and others were separate. One of them had been a theater and we all had a wild time trying to figure out what sort of entertainment the Ancient Americans amused themselves with. Everyone then split off into different groups to explore more of the buildings. Nearly all of them had locked doors and boarded up windows. We had tools called laser picks that disabled the simplistic mechanical devices with ease. Then we went inside holding a scanner in one hand and a datapad in the other. We scanned the object and then the datapad used quantum technology to compare it to the data previously gathered and stored on the central data banks on the orbiting starship. My group went through a large building where we believe people shopped for clothes and other things. In the back of it was a place where we found many of the metal vehicles they used. They were strewn throughout the streets when the first archeologists arrived on Old Earth, and recently they discovered that the metal wheels had some kind of covering that had rotted away over the years. My friend Raynor and his group explored the adjacent building where they found some primitive electronics. They called it the "TV" building since those two letters were all over the place. Apparently, the electronic devices were used to transmit something, but we do not know the means by which they did so. No one could figure out how to use any electric Old Earth device because the source of power they used no longer exists. The scientists and technicians tried to use Centaurian power sources, but without knowing what the things exactly did, it was no use.

One day, early in the morning, I decided to go for a walk down one of the streets. Professor Klein gave me the okay, provided that I carried a comm set that I wore around my head. It kept me in touch with the rest of the group. I also assured him that I would let him know immediately if I discovered anything. I had never seen a man smile as brightly as he did when I said that. So I walked on the street behind the shopping complex and "TV" building, where I noticed something on the other side of the street. There were older buildings with triangular steeples and other cross-like shapes on them. I recognized them from my studies as "churches" which the Ancient Americans used for religious rituals. There were two great churches with a smaller one between them. With my curiosity piqued, I went over to investigate. There was a banner over the doors with faded lettering on it. Using my scanner, I discovered that the first word was unrecognizable, but the other two were translated as "Free Library."

"A library!" I said out loud. I heard of these places where there were lots of books filled with stories and facts about everything. The libraries are quiet and solemn places which only existed in the mind of my mother. I always wanted to visit these places, and now this "Free Library" stands before me, calling me in. I tapped the button on the side of my comm set to tell Professor Klein of my discovery.

"That is interesting," he said. "Now why don't you go in and explore it yourself." Let me tell you, he didn't need to tell me to do that!

After opening the heavy, locked door with the laser pick, I went inside. What I saw is beyond descrip-

tion. What was once a cathedral had become a quiet library that has not seen a single person walk in for around a thousand years. The walls and columns were all painted white with only three words painted in fancy lettering. I scanned that and it was the same as the outdoor banner: "Free Library." With the comm set on, Professor Klein could see and record exactly what I saw. I even heard him sigh in admiration. But then I noticed something very odd. There were no books--not a single one in the middle of the huge cavernous room. I asked Klein about it, and he said that I should start looking for them. I went over to the nearest shelves, and found small boxes of a crackling material known as "plastic." I opened one of them and found a black faded object with bits of rotted tape inside it. Not really of much use, I put it back. Advancing toward the center of the room, I found some very strange devices. There were square objects with glass screens on the front covered with the yellowing hard plastic. I knew what these things were; they were called computers. Computers had been all over Old Earth, and were made with very primitive electronics. We believed that somehow small electrical currents flowed through etched lines on green boards that were populated with very small, archaic metal things. Obviously they were nothing like the quantum databank devices we use on Centauri.

"What are these things here, Professor Klein? I thought libraries had books in them, not these computers," I blankly explained.

"In a way, at one point in time you were correct. However, during the time just before the asteroid, the Ancient Americans moved all of their records from printed media into these computers."

"But wasn't the data stored on the computers erased by the magnetic field that surrounded the planet?"

"Yes. We believe that some of the data may be retrieved, but--"

"How?"

"We do not know how to use the devices at all."

This was a problem when studying the Ancient Americans. Virtually all the records that were stored on plastic discs and rotted tapes needed special devices. But even if we could power the devices, we had no way of using them. Dejected with this thought, I went to an opening on the side that had three floors full of books. Surely they must have something about how to operate these computers.

"Wouldn't one of these books have anything on how to use a computer, Professor Klein?"

"I'm sure it would," he said, "but how would you find the right book?"

"Well, how did they find a reference on a particular subject?"

"Probably on a computer," Klein said with sardonic wit.

I spent the next hour trying to go through as many books as I could. It was very difficult because I had to use the scanner and datapad to translate the English into Centaurian. I found one book with the word "computer," but after carefully going through it, I found it was hopeless. There was nothing about how computers were powered, operated, or even how to retrieve the data stored on them. And, meaningless words and capitalized letters threw the datapad for a loop. What on Old Earth did "Internet" and "URL" mean? We Centaurians learned not to depend on electronic devices for storing data. Everything we recorded is copied on hard printouts that the human eye can read without the need for a machine to intercede. But the Ancient Americans of the 21st century did not see it that way. Everything they recorded was exclusively on their computer data banks--everything that had been wiped out of existence by the global magnetic field. It was around that time when the databanks of the colonizing ship were subjected to the same types of hazards. Didn't they prepare for or foresee such an event happening? The fact that they stored every piece of information on a machine with a relatively short life span and no way for future generations to access it was pure folly and utter nonsense.

Exhausted, I went downstairs and tried a room in the back. There were no books, but beautiful furnishings. This must have been a reading room. The walls were paneled with wood that managed to survive the aging process. There were artistic saucers and teapots made of fine china in glass displays. How lovely they must have been to the people who viewed them in days past. In the back of the room, I saw some ripped and faded papers with some color on them. I ran the scanner and the datapad identified them as "magazines." Magazines and "newspapers" never survived the dusting of the asteroid collisions. One of the buildings we explored had lots of these newspapers along with other items we could not identify. But there wasn't one that had been intact, and so we couldn't find out about the last days leading up to the asteroid's landing. The magazines in the library were

intact enough to use a scanner on, and I found that this magazine was about science. Reading the rest of the magazine in translated Centaurian, I was shocked by what I saw. The people of the 21st century had mapped every single genome in the human body. It was the very thing that took our people 200 years since our arrival on New Earth to discover. But nothing could have prepared me for discovering that the Ancient Americans did know something about quantum physics. They were on the verge of quantum computers and teleportation along with the opening of wormholes to other parts of outer space. This proved that they were not stupid, primitive people who knew less than the children on New Earth. They had knowledge of theories that we would not have had to discover on our own. I still wonder if we could have been more advanced today if it hadn't been for computers!

Later that day, I went through other magazines to learn how the Ancient Americans lived. Then, after going into another room, I found what I had been searching for since entering the library: books! Not just ones filled with meaningless knowledge, like the ones I found before, but books filled with rich and detailed stories. I've always loved reading fictional novels, much to the dismay of my friends and family who were more scientific minded, like all Centaureans. The chamber felt so homey with its musty smell of ancient books and the carpeting on the floor. The shelves were so closely packed and filled with books that I could hide in here without anyone discovering me. I picked up one of the books with the cracking resin cover and briefly ran the scanner over a page. I read the story despite not knowing how it began. How I wish I could spend the rest of my days here reading every single book, and how I wish I could read English fluently without the need of the datapad translator. Somehow some of the meaning gets lost in the more technical Centaurian language.

"Hey, you still there?" asked Professor Klein, startling me. "The sun will go down in a couple of hours and we don't want you lost in the dark."

"Okay, Professor, just one more hour and I'll be back at the camp," I pleaded.

He grunted and said okay. I went back to the reading room and found something that I hadn't noticed before. It was a yellowed newspaper on a wooden spool. I did not think that there would be any printed newspapers in a 21st century library, as all the "newspapers" are stored on rotted tape that only machines can read. I suppose there would have been a librarian to help me back then, but then again, the librarian was probably another computer. Using the scanner to carefully read the newspaper, I discovered that it must have been printed a few years before the asteroid came. It was a local newspaper that mentioned Wilkes-Barre many times, along with the names of the surrounding towns. It even described the names of the places and buildings that we did not know about, including the center of the city, which the native people called "Public Square." The newspaper, however, also described horrible things like violent acts and hate towards other people--things we Centaureans only knew about through stories of Old Earth. We thought they were fairy tales meant to frighten young children. Deeper into the newspaper, I found a small article about a discovery made by the ancient scientists of an asteroid some distance away from Earth. According to the predictions of a "computer," it wasn't supposed to get any closer to the Earth and then get pulled in by its gravity. If they were only here to read this...

Reading further, I saw a photo that caught my attention. Even though the photo was greatly aged, I could recognize the face of Dr. Julia Vargas, a face that every Centaurian knows in school. Only, she looked younger and very much like my mother did when I was a boy. She is smiling and is very beautiful. From the article, I learned a very important part of human history. Dr. Vargas had grown up in Wilkes-Barre all her life. She graduated from Meyers High School and College Misericordia. She had been accepted by NASA and trained to be an astronaut. Julia told the reporter about how she was a part of a project that would send the first human colonists to a newly discovered inhabitable world in the Alpha Centauri system. There were accounts of all her achievements up to that time in her life, and there was also information about her personal life, and her hopes and dreams. The one thing that struck me most was that she said even if she went out into the stars, Wilkes-Barre would always be her home; she said she would love to return to spend the rest of her life here. My ancestor started the journey to Centauri from here, and now, after so many centuries, her descendant has returned to the place of her origin. I took out a bag and carefully placed the newspaper in it. This artifact will be a major contribution to linking our Centaurian past to Old Earth. As I returned to the camp at sunset, crossing the huge bridge spanning the river, I could not help but think of the bronze arch sculpture at Public Square. Somehow I felt that through me, Dr. Julia Vargas had finally come back to the city that she loved. For the remainder of my life, I

became an expert of this now famous archeological site. And in my spare time, I read the books in the Osterhout Free Library after having learned to read English on my own. I may be a respected professor in the University of Centauri, but my home will always be in Wilkes-Barre and the little library.

-Eric Noss-

This Time

There was silence and the room was still.
The only sound was of the girl's heavy sighs.
The bed acted as her throne where she sat to think;
her thoughts flickered as quickly as the flame of her candle.
Her eyes often wandered toward the phone;
she wrenched her face, showing her refusal to call him.
Her head was spinning, she needed relief.
With her hand shaking, she executed her therapy beautifully
on the white canvas-like world she could call her own.
She spoke out loud as she wrote the words:

Go away. Please do not come back.
This time is worse than before.
You broke the trust I made you earn;
all you could say was 'I'm sorry.'
It's not good enough--not this time.
I cannot think, and I will not cry.
You probably wouldn't hear me anyway.
You are gone, and I am alone.
She has your shoulder to cry on.
I hope your words were able to stop her tears.
They only encouraged mine.
I hope you feel better about yourself now...she is happy with another.
As for you...I hope you are miserable without me.

She smiled faintly with a sense of security
she had not felt in months.
She laid her head on the pillow
and fell asleep.

-Jennifer McCall-

I Am

I am a child, born from a love,
a hope for the future, a playmate,
a Dove.

I am a bird, sent from afar,
an object of wonder, a messenger,
a Star.

I am a body, delivered in space,
a mass of movement, a wisdom,
a Face.

I am a song, born on the page,
a melody and harmony, a meaning,
a Stage.

I am a hunger, a knowledge to feed,
a desire to nourish, a sensation,
a Need.

I am a dream, a haunting stare,
a mysterious image, a vision,
a Prayer.

I am an artist, a tale to be told,
a creative insight, a sculpture,
a Goal.

I am a flame, a spark to ignite,
a soul that is willing, a stranger,
a Light.

I am a life, a personal bind,
a creature of many, a character,
a Mind.

-Cari Anne Rose-

Portraits:
Parliament's Rose
Garden, Queensland,
Australia

-Laurel A. Berecky-
Robinson



Endless

See me bloody before you?
See my hands full of tears?
These are the sufferings of my mother
My grandmother, forever.
Maybe you don't notice the veins beneath my skin
Stretched like road maps or spider webs
They weave
Thoughtful patterns across my arms
My legs my knees
Dirty and unraveled with the dangers of girlhood
I lie, my body, myself
A vessel to hold only uncertainty
And endlessness
These depths
Deeper than anything you've ever seen
Darker than anything you could ever imagine.
See my mouth. The sweetness of it
Gives birth to generations and voices to
My children, endless forever.
Maybe you don't like the way my hair collides
Upon itself like sand or ocean waves
A never-ending story
Of life and death and power
It disgusts escapes releases
Only endlessness.
My blood willingly sacrificed
For my future
My children's future
The generations that will carry on
This gift
This burden
I give to you my body to eat
My blood to drink.
Take it in as your own, children.
It will be yours.
I am your mother,
Your grandmother,
Forever.

-Leigh Dodson-

Winner of the English Department Prize for Poetry by a High School Student

Usual Days in and away from Quebec
(for Mailis Roy Lessard)

I. *a list before black water*

Before the morning we met,
Mailis, your only aunt and I, two weeks,
two summers ago, in your own home
without you-- middle of August,
your bedroom, the other end of the upstairs
study, fresh, the top bunk left spread,

crayons, paper, too low, slid stacks
of books around your empty place,
a little sheep, a soft bear,
and below, no railing, darker and tighter
where you rest-- we met in your garden,
your third return from France,

your father's family, you not yet
three years old, brambles, a leafy weave
of vines, the slotted lattice,
a low brown fence too low for privacy,
your inflatable pool your aunt
and I filled for sun and soaking

earlier in our two weeks, and through
the porch screen, opened backdoor,
I could see the table and chairs
in the heavy kitchen shade-- we met
in your garden, the morning
after the moon like a fin cut the black water

above your home, *rue Franklin*, the streets
toward *St. Jean*, the building where
your aunt works, and I stood beneath
the black water that night, two weeks gone,
the trumpeter's scales quiet across
the block, the echo, my memory,

a dog's scream and hit by a car,
in those two weeks, quiet now beneath
your parents' bedroom window,
the middle of your street.

II. *to breath finally with a phrase*

I reread these first lines for you,
too easy, almost hopeful,
almost a letter to where I left-- but longer

than a year now, Mailis, I've slowly
noticed and have been living a slow change,
a word arrives-- a secret, another side
of the way I feel this slow change's
mostly nothing-- a rare phrase forms
and I breathe while the words stay,

the rest of me forming reasons
against a long wait and I'm unable
to give in-- a hope, Mailis, that you in your
motion and my slow change's full stillness
leave enough language by the end-- more
than my notes I don't know underneath,

only doubts and soft speech: *I feel what
I want to tell you almost always,
and I can say almost nothing--* the rest of me,
reasons against a long wait and I'm unable
to give in-- maybe I'll forget details
that come clear only after a long absence,

maybe, if I wait, you'll outgrow the age
you'd welcome any of my ideas-- I'd like
to write until I can say nothing's wrong,
until there's no more pressure I can get rid of,
until I can resist my superstitions even when
the writing's finished-- to sleep with shoes

in the same room, to believe the stove stays
cool after the first check, to be able to stop
reading anything on an even page.

III. *empty means water*

It's the second week of December,
you're nearly four now, in early spring
I will turn thirty-- we met in your garden

middle of August, two summers ago,
you were collecting worker ants and beetles
with a stick-- ants climbing your hands
and arms under your three-fourth sleeves,
turning away from me, you twisted, serious
and studying

to drop them

into separate glass jars--
the beetles scared me and before you were
ready to talk our first time, I held myself
from warning you
against the insects I didn't really know--

finally: *Come with me, Carmen--*
then tea for us in the grass,
toy cups of water
you poured meant tea,
the empty ones
meant water.

IV. *sweat, a broken fever, sleep*
My fever peaked
yesterday afternoon. The sky
had been blotching open in shapes thick
with light thick enough to climb the grayish,
powder-blue, whitish rim of clouds. My fever
broke in the dark this morning, awake, stiff
shooting chills, sweat, without any sleep
until only more light was left.

I wanted to dream of your aunt,
Ile d'Orleans, the near-morning sleep
I've had there with her at your grandmother's
chalet-- instead, old, old scenes dreamt blurry
came in mostly shades of green-- my home
as a boy up on bricks, no basement,
mostly my mother and I alone
behind thin, fake-wood walls,

the drafts, green rugs bubbled up
from the floor, her anger, and almost
always my fear. In daylight, in my fever-
broken dream, my mother and I prayed
together, the first time, both of us,
I'm sure, in separate ways,
without safety, without knowing
anything underneath those prayers.

Under a sheet, sometimes a thick
blanket, the dulled curved-glass light case,
under weakness driving an open absence
of pressure through my muscles, I drank
less water than I should have, I felt details
of my body-- a usual ease in my arms
gone, my head turning with my thoughts

turning, slow breaths, no reading,

remembering usual days after only two days
with weak muscles and a fever, bringing what
I don't always remember nearly present-- I felt
tight details of my tightening body, the tops
of my lungs, my left shoulder high, my ankles,
almost everywhere more prone to struggle.
In daylight, alone, awake in my bed, awkward,
my body wanting to stand, to walk a little,

I pretended we were playing hide-and-seek
again, the game last Christmas I taught
you to call *where are you?* in English,
you sang it like one word, from memory
against French-- your own first home, we
couldn't find your aunt until your
grandmother helped-- *Mailis, say: where*
are you? Mailis, where are you?

V. *an empty flower pot*

I went to a prison with my father last fall--
not a caught criminal that day, I waited on the steps
for the meeting with his client to end--
the Susquehanna River turning yards away,
afternoon, a woman younger than I stood
on a corner beyond the prison fences. She swung
her arms and legs into shapes, patterns of shapes--
cutting, angling, bending, balancing-- I couldn't

see in the shade the face she spoke towards
behind his barred window. Maybe their son,
the boy she had with her, about four, a little taller
than you, Mailis, squirted the last weak pressure,
the little water left warming in the unraveled,
prison-neighbor's hose. Longer than a year,

Mailis, a slow pressure opening into words,
my muscles, everywhere more prone, a rim of motion,
as if I'm trying to overcome what it feels

like a false betrayal
of myself, fifteen years,
maybe more I can't remember,

phrases
longer than a year that have stayed together,

difficult,
my first time less uneasy,
most days,

correspondences, years, only what I felt of them
melted in my stomach, the way I've known people--

this poem,
if it makes a poem, a shirt over
only knowing a little of what it's trying
to tell you. Christmas Eve,

your aunt
and I took you and your parents to Dorval last night--
your father's family, maybe you've landed by now--

but longer than a year for me, these few pages,
and I know already I should stop writing--

each year a big percentage of your age,
you've nearly doubled since we met in your garden--
I know already I should stop, but I'm sure

you don't remember what I've kept so far
from almost nothing of change-- the sound
of water you made pouring an empty flower pot
over my head-- I stole it

and did the same to you laughing,
the end of last winter on your sofa, kangaroo-hopping
dog-shaking away fake water until you fell
onto the wooden floor, on your knees,

and cried long enough to say
why you fell-- you were wet all over--
then finally: *I need a towel, Mama, my hands
are wet from my tears.*

-Carmen Latona-

The Rope



-Meghan Dwyer-

Victim of the Pretender

The sunlight stings my eyes.
Darkness is all I desire.
I was robbed today,
deceived and beaten.

I don't know who did this to me.
It couldn't have been you.

I try to pick up the pieces,
but pain is all I find.
It cuts me like shattered glass,
causing me to cry.

Why would anyone do this to me?
Where are you?

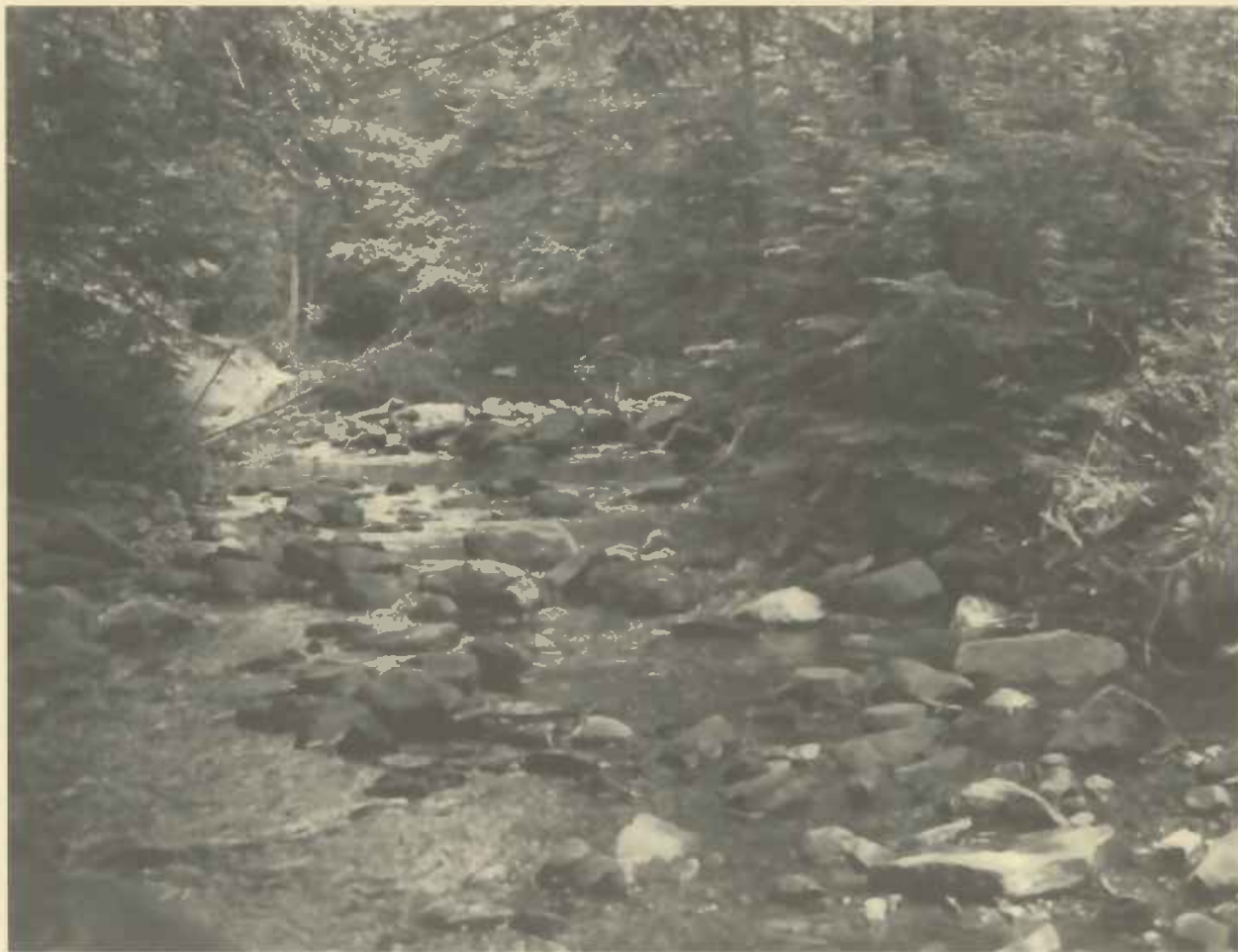
I act as if in a play,
forcing smiles,
pretending to be brave.
Hoping they will return my life, my heart.

I want to know who did this to me.
I want to find you.

Friends commend me for my recovery.
They know not the actress that I am.
I have no heart to heal,
I have no heart at all.

I will never find the person who did this to me.
He was pretending to be you.

-Tara Coletti-



-Jack Dessoye-

Cascades

The sun's haze glides over the frontier
 Poking between billowy leaves
And winds uplift dust from rest.
The countryside is alive in awe,
 As a soft chill trickles through it.
The newly trodden landscape,
 Never seen by man,
And in years to come
 Will be seen no more.

The mighty sequoia falls to the dirt with a thud
 To rest with its many sisters before.
Spring runs putrid with a hint of orange.
The towering mountains--bombed with rails--
 Reduced to nothingness.
No one can see
 The terror we have caused,
 The death we have inflicted.

-Kristen M. Stewart-

My Glasses are Muddy

I've tried everything to get it off.
But the more I wipe,
The more they smear,
The less I can see.

When I was a child,
I wore rose-colored glasses.
The sky was the brightest blue,
The grass was the greenest green.
I could see clear as day.

When I was a teen,
I wore dark blue glasses.
Everything was intense,
My feelings deep like the ocean.
Adolescent "strum und drang" they said.
But I could see well enough--
I could even see things they couldn't.

When I was married,
I wore red glasses.
My relationship with my husband was
passionate,
The birth of my children was bloody,
But good,
And I could see just fine.

When I was middle-aged,
My glasses were brown.
My life, though muted,
Was grounded in the firm earth.
I came, I saw, I conquered.

Now my glasses are muddy.
I see only bits and pieces.
The bits and pieces move and change,
And I can't tell what or who they are,
And I can't remember what they looked like
Yesterday.

The bits and pieces move and change,
And I can't tell what or who they are,
And I can't remember what they looked like
Yesterday.

My glasses are muddy.
I can't see a damn thing!
I've tried everything to get them clean,
Clear.

But the more I wipe,
The more they smear,
The less I can see.
Sometimes I just sit and cry and hope
The tears will wash the mud away.

My husband tried to get the mud off.
It didn't work.
He's frustrated because I can't see.
He said, "Why can't you wear an old pair
Of glasses? At least then you could see."
"But," I said, "they don't fit anymore."

My kids tried, too.
They thought maybe if they scrubbed
Really hard I'd be able to see them again,
Tell them apart.

We even went to the doctor to see if
He could get the mud off.
But he said, "It's not going to come off.
And, if anything, they'll get muddier."
I said, "What? Muddier?
You don't understand!
I can't even see clearly now!
These damn glasses are ruining my life."

When I was a child,
I wore rose-colored glasses.
The sky was the bluest blue,
The grass was the greenest green.
I could see clear as day.

Now,
I wear muddy glasses.
And every day is night.
And I'm always bumping into things
In the dark.

Release

Water bursts forth,
Hitting my body and rolling down,
Washing away my imperfections.

Leaning my head against the wall,
Cold tiles contrast the steam-filled room.

Tears, camouflaged in the downpour,
Make their bitter presence known.

Sobs wrack my body,
Disturbing the steady rhythm of the water.

This day has ended;
Preparation for the next has begun.

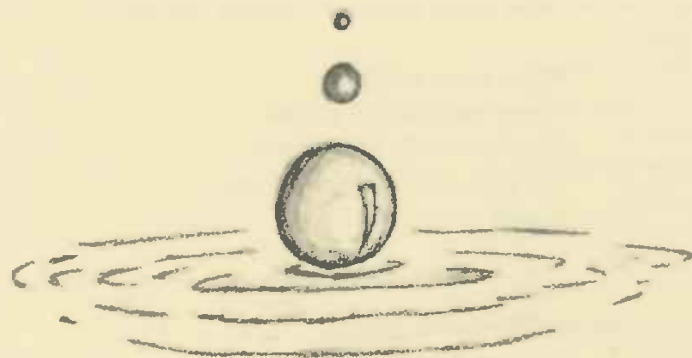
-Meghan Dwyer-

Teardrops in the Afternoon

Watch as the tear runs down my flesh,
Gliding down my cheek,
Passing through my breast;
Sliding down my belly,
Running down my thigh,
Dripping off my knee,
Resting in a puddle,
Settling at my feet.

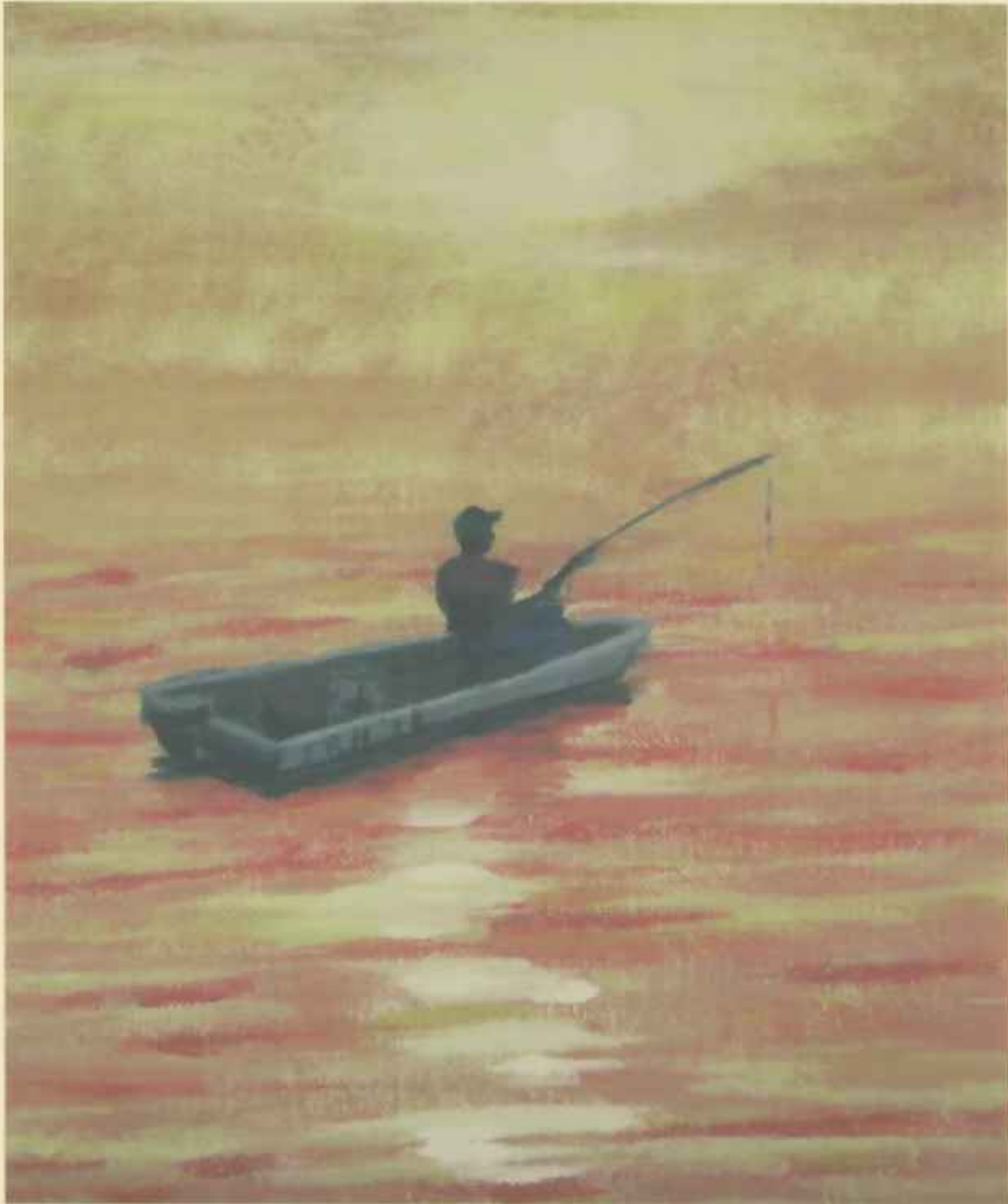
Another starts the path once more,
Balancing the other side;
Caressing the pain within
Such a lifeless being.
An angel left to suffer
In a world of constant fight.

-Jessica Quintans-



Rebound
-Meghan Dwyer-

Fishing 1: At Sunset



-Ellen Rita Heidrick-

Ignorant Man?

Within the body of a man rests the mind of a child
His manner of walk is awkward yet mild
A fixture of the busy main street
Tattered shoes on shuffling feet

Pauses a moment to look at the sky
Gaining the interest of curious eyes
In awe of the beauty of distant stars
Unmindful of blaring horns of passing cars

Is he aware of what he has missed?
Perhaps content with ignorant bliss
Yet I am the one who walks with regret
Consumed with obligations that need to be met

-Cory Rubino-

Missing You

Stillness in the middle of the night,
A quiet breeze blows through my window,
Thoughts fly in like robins to their nests,
And visions of you are clear to my eyes.

The walls around me are old, and creak,
Visions get shattered like the mirror down the hall,
The refrigerator gives company for short,
And soon you are here, clear to my eyes.

Butternut leaves will soon fall from their limbs,
Tomorrow becomes yesterday, like all days before,
Shingles begin to curl, soon rain will come through,
And still, you will be there, so clear to my eyes.

The roses have died, withered and limp,
And old rusted chains still clang in the wind.
The flag is still raised, but faded and torn,
Yet you're always here and clear to my eyes.

-Siglinde-

untitled



-Sarah Race-

Polishing Me

I am the rough stone
picked up
thrown
tossed with violent speed
to the waters below
hitting the water
yet
not becoming immersed
I see the truth.
I see the path I took.
I see the road which I will follow.
I look back
the rough edges
of my being
slowly eroding away
allowing me to become
a whole person
to see through the darkness
I glance back
see the ripples in
the water
I left behind
see them reaching
spreading
out to oblivion
touching each other
dancing as only
the people who
hear the music can
dancing to the song of hope
faith in the Heavens above
finding as I wander my path
I cross the paths of others
and see
strengths and weaknesses
in myself and other ripples
yet I know
there is good in all of us

-Jennifer Stires

Day of Reflection

Marie Valjean was walking home from a brutal day at school. She had a lot on her mind as of late. First, finals were creeping up on her, and then there was graduation from Cape City Catholic High School. But those weren't the only things bothering her. She was also coming to grips with her dual nature as both human and angel. She felt a little overwhelmed at times because of her responsibilities of protecting the city and keeping order in the high school band. *Boy, I could use a little time off,* thought Marie.

Then she saw it. A swing in the municipal park. It looked so inviting to her that Marie ran over to it and started swinging on it. The sheer exhilaration she felt as she swung higher and higher made her feel like a child again. She started to remember the good times with her mother when they would walk to the park just to go on the swing set. She remembered how she would ask her mom to push her harder so she could go higher. *Oh, the memories,* thought Marie as she started to swing higher and higher.

Suddenly, Marie felt a raindrop on her cheek. She realized that the rain that had been predicted this morning had finally come. Marie slowed herself down and walked home.

The rain was coming down harder by the time she reached her house.

"Mom?" called Marie as she walked into the house. When she heard no answer, she realized that her mother wasn't back from the clinic yet.

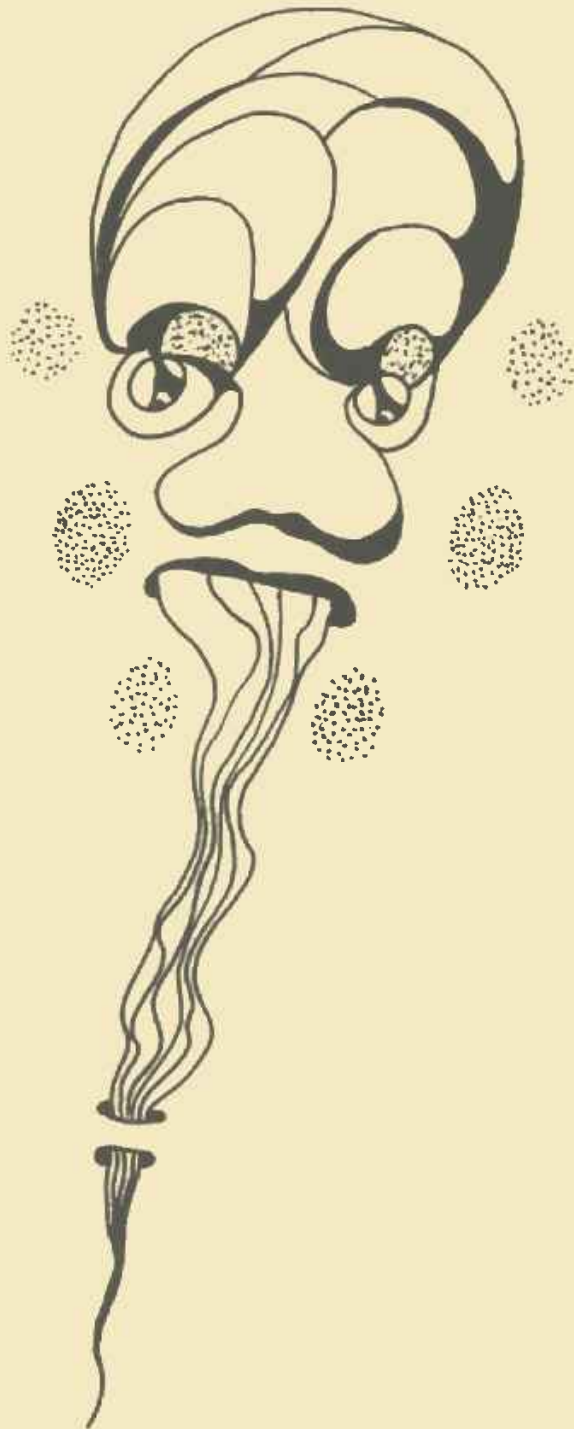
Marie felt a little soaked from walking home in the rain. She decided it was the perfect time to try the bubble bath that her friend Jennifer had given her. She walked up to her bathroom and started to fill the tub with warm water. She then put a capful of the bubble bath into the water. The smell of the perfumes in the soap was so pleasant that Marie couldn't wait to jump in. She put some dry clothes on the hamper so she could put them on later.

Marie peeled off her wet clothes and sat in the tub. The smell of the jasmine in the soap was the most refreshing thing she had smelled in a long time. She closed her eyes and let her mind wander. She thought of the day she received her sword and how it ultimately changed her life forever with power that was almost beyond imagination. She also started to recall the day her world was turned upside down when her wings grew in and the truth of her family origins was revealed. She remembered all of the adventures she had with her friends and all of the good times they had. Then she recalled the events of the last few weeks. Reality was totally torn apart by the mad god Ares and she had to battle to return everything to its proper place. *Oh, I wish I could forget everything that happened, but I guess that's not possible,* thought Marie. *I guess it's the good times and the bad times that make you a stronger person.*

Feeling refreshed from the bath, Marie pulled the plug in the tub and let the water drain. She dried off and threw on her favorite, comfy jeans and a Dead t-shirt. She looked back at the tub and sighed. *Sometimes it's good to have a day of reflection and relaxation. I just wish I could experience them more often,* thought Marie.

-Jeremy Shrawder-

Confucius' Ghost



-Stevan Davies-

Space-

nothing until defined...molded.

Space-

S P R E A D I N G

I V D N

N A I G

like an invisible intruder.

Space-

A stress FRACT

URE corrupting stability.

Space-

S

E

P

A

something, R nothing.

A

T

E

S

-Leighann C. Williams-

Blinding Darkness

PART I: Crystal

The road ahead forced me to remember.
A year ago the family had been whole;
Laughter was Life--
You interrupted the Laughter--
You tore us apart.
Laughter and then sadness

Today I will confront yesterday.
I drive fast
Decreasing the miles between us.
Yet the distance remains.
Six months of highway stands between us.
The broken yellow line stretches for miles ahead of me
Allowing those who desire to speed to pass.
I had always wanted the speed.
You were the slowest among us.
I left you behind when the solid line had broken.
Were you angry at the younger ones for passing?
Was it me who neglected you?

The glare of the sun hits my eyes,
I am blinded.
I cannot see the road ahead.

PART II: Storms

Darkness surrounds us.
A bleak glow from the headlights
Tries to cut through the white blanket;
Thick fog stands in front of us.
Nothing is clear.

Rain falls lightly at first as if trying to hold out.
Then it pours.
The rain is unstoppable as it pounds at my heart.
I had seen the lightning,
Heard the thunder;
Nothing prepared me for the storm.

I look to the clock for comfort.
It is late, much too late.
The hours will pass quickly.
I will not make this journey again.
She will travel this road of disappointment once more
To bring you home.

-Tara Coletti-

Reaching



-Meghan Dwyer-

Hazardous Entry

Heralded by arm-stretched trees
the street invites
spirit-seekers in need of oasis.
A no-trespassing post
only welcomes
those afraid of touching God.

Cocooned away, the beds of rest
give solitary comfort
to an array of sainted sinners.
A long abandoned Babel
simply watches over
sleepers in beatific vision.

Dreamers of deities mix
with sanctuaried storks
and tattered turkeys
around a pond of lilies.
Each thirsting
passionately quenched.

Yet who dares to approach
such a place of peace?
Only those willing to risk
siliconed souls
to the flame ignited,
never extinguished.

-Michael Bryant-

No Entry



-Dave Kasmark-

Kalika



-Carla Cognigni-

Explication of Sonnet 116

Setting

The things that are present around him when he begins to write

It is night

The speaker, while searching for his next line, glances up at the sky
And notices the stars

He is struck

With the words and music of his next line
Halfway through the poem the weather outside his house warps
Into a stormy atmosphere
The poet links this change to love

Positioned on the poet's desk is a calendar

He remembers an impending event
Time becomes a factor
He must make a decision
He will or will not marry the one he loves

The fierce storm's wind

Blows the poet's pages off the table
He catches the paper before it falls
But sees the foreshadowing of doom
Trying to write his final lines, the bottle of ink runs dry

-Steve Filipiak-

The Symphony of Life

The rise and fall of emotion
In timing with the tune
Silencing, almost deadening.
Suddenly rising to a crashing crescendo
Drowning out the somber stillness.
Trumpets blare like a madman's scream.
The drums pound like a horse-drawn team.
Suddenly the chaos stops and the oboe plays a solo.

Mournfully, Sadly reflecting...

The loss strains your ears to hear any tune at all.
Without warning, life rushes in,
Spinning wildly about you.
You feel a loss in your control until
The finale begins.
The orchestral piece dies and
The audience sadly mourns the loss.

-Jennifer Sency-

Shadow Life

Prickled panic throughout the night,
Stomping in my chest.
Madness whirling throughout my brain,
And in seeded passageways to the core.
The world flies by like a dream.
Yet I'm encased in my own nightmare.
Sit in the shadows,
Wait for the dawn,
Call out to mere strangers,
And get shunned again.

-Kristen M. Stewart-

Blaze



-Laurel A. Berecky-Robinson-

Fishing 3: Tackle



-Ellen Rita Heidrick-

Water-- A Poem For May
(for Justina Butera)

I. I go deeper
into the woods,

the edge
of a lagoon,

back out again
towards Watress Lake,

miles from our work,
the hallways

where we meet
by chance.

II. A black-blue,
then a deep blue turning a color
I'd name fish-food rich green,

then the clearness of stones
over the brown bottom,

the current roll-bounces low
from left to right--

my eyes, like two loose
bobbers, force back against
the drift, fighting

its ease, as if they've
been caught trying to read
backwards a language
of the water.

III. Your voice
going soft this morning
in the hallway--

the small gift
I held in my hand--

I can't, you said,
and turned away without
taking it.

IV. Winds knocked down
a crooked line of pines--

each tree,
raw earth and tentacles,

up like the high shoulder
of an animal

I've imagined
reaching to drink.

I'm sure it was wind--
its scream, soft roar,

never turning away,

almost opposite
of applause

in the high branches
of standing pines.

Not fast at all
I move over dry bark
of a fallen tree
 into water.

V. Current still nudging low
and you come out

of the worn blankets
of shade into the corner

of my eye as long,
I know, as I don't fully look,

your skin still the color
from winter,

you turn up each leg

of your shorts

and are gone-- my eyes
caught trying to catch

you in their middle
and the water.

VI. There's more quick sun-fire
in the cracks of the drift

the more I let my eyes go
away from focus.

An old web flaps and turns
a hard smoke over an old campfire

making me think of a cigarette
with you under pines.

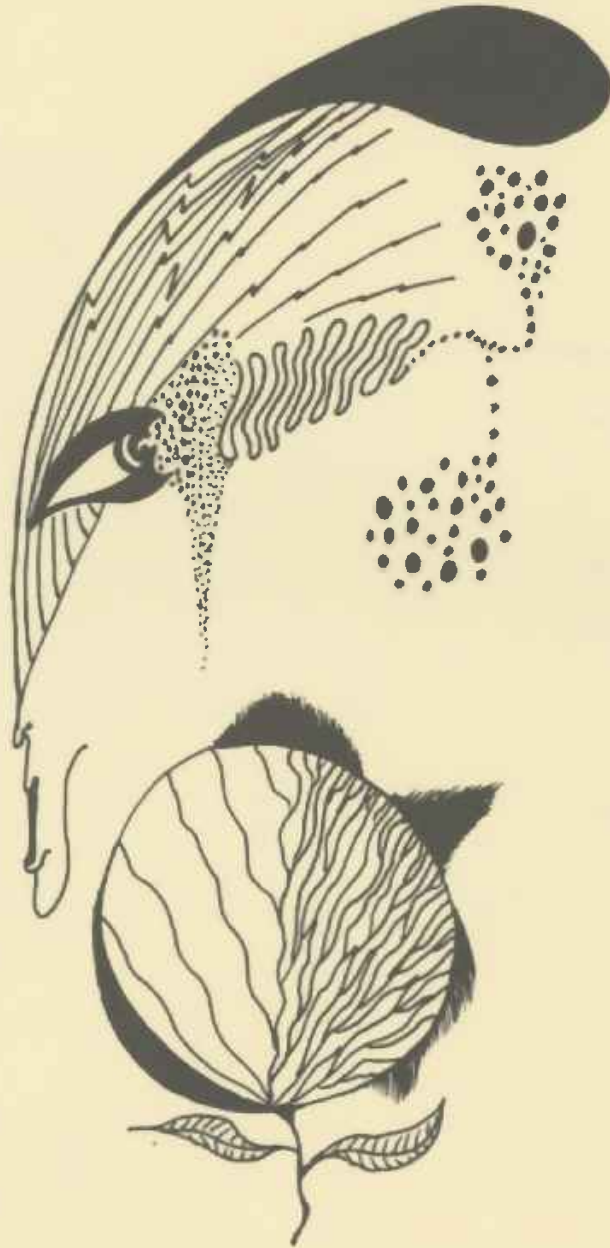
There's never been
the slightest touch between us,

but I'll carry you in these lines,
out of here, up to the road,

until I'm able, somehow,
to have you take these lines
safely from my hands.

-Carmen Latona-

No Oysters for Me



-Stevan Davies-

Beehive 6-30-00
for Dharma Bums everywhere
may you always have cheap beer and songs about plastic

Blue eyes, mysterious solace
Solemn Beauty
Is she hiding behind her tears?
Can darkness see her heart?
She dreams, she lusts, she loves.

-Peddler Paul-
(written for a cup of coffee in Pittsburgh's strip district)

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