

Lindy's Sorrow and Other Poems

by

Stephanie Jernigan

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## INTRODUCTION

The following poems are essentially excerpts from a journal I kept Spring Quarter, 1981. These selected poems have been revised with the help of Dr. Thomas Koontz and are a sample of the poetry I have written this quarter. The poems are in chronological order. I chose to keep them in this order to illustrate my growth and progression as a poet.

With Dr. Koontz's cooperation, I have come to a greater understanding and appreciation of poetry and I feel this is illustrated in my work. I can see myself writing, what I call, "superficial" poetry and then gradually descending into a more emotional, in-depth, unconscious level of expression. Instead of carefully crafting the poem, choosing the language that I feel sounds "poetic," and consciously trying to capture an idea or thought, I have begun to respect my inner emotions and allow them to "write" my poetry. I have begun to write from within myself. I feel this is partially due to the fact that I have read the works of many established poets this quarter, such as Robert Bly, Adrienne Rich, Ezra Pound and William Stafford. In attempting to understand their poetry, I have come in contact with my own inner feelings, desires, fears, and motivations. My poetry has finally begun to take the "dive" into my own psyche and, I feel it will continue to do so as long as I keep struggling to understand and integrate those inner feelings with myself.

This project has been extremely beneficial in terms of the knowledge and insight writing my own poetry and reading other's poetry has offered me. Keeping a poetic journal has enabled me to become more aware of my inner self and this awareness has allowed me to begin to write meaningful poetry. At the beginning of Spring Quarter, I felt like an English major who wrote poetry. Now, I feel like a poet.

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Images

1.

Lustful eyes glaze upon the glittering Stone  
Clenching her finger.  
Her frigid heart is satisfied.

2.

Soft eyes and tawny hair,  
He glows to greet me;  
A gentle lion.

3.

Outside my thick-paned window  
Coated with geometrically-patterned ice,  
A sugar-frosted world.

4.

The long, lanky student spurts and sputters  
A jerky niagara of words.  
Air bubbles in a waterline.

Scandal

Scandal, whispers Mama.  
White whore married a nigger.  
Damn near killed her folks.  
Weren't nothin they wouldn't do for that girl.

Whore's already carryin checkerboard  
Seed inside her.  
Whoo-ee! squeals Uncle.  
Them nigger-boys sure is potent.

Hey Daughter, chuckles Papa,  
How would you like some of that black lovin?

Daughter smiles,  
Legs Clenched,  
Remembering.

## Spring First

Spring first: chilled winds blow  
Icing bones.  
People, arms folded tight over their jackets  
Shivering wishful thinking, scurry  
Over piebald earth: gray snow on  
Mud-hard ground,  
Grass tufts sparse yellow, reedy.  
Watercolor sky washed white above.  
Shriveled brown leaf buds cling  
Desperately to trees frozen,  
Murdered.  
All survivors wait for the Messiah.

While I sit gazing out the window,

A jet writes white lines  
across the water-color  
washed sky.

Below, the windy trees  
bend back and forwards  
whipping premature buds,  
aborted

To the green-yellow grass,  
crushed by the weight of  
bared bodies, shades of  
cream and bronze.

Tinted sky, sun-dyed,  
heated by the warm-cold  
fickle spring breeze.

A bird darts upward  
towards the clouds  
flying higher and higher,  
a black speck in the sky.

All this and more,  
While I sit gazing out the window.

Between Us

It is the dreadful lack of voices  
In our future  
That frightens me.  
All of the unspoken thoughts  
That fester and swell.  
Hearts bursting with thickened pus.  
It invades our systems and is  
Silently absorbed.  
The suppressed disease lies dormant  
Between us.  
Like Adam, you think you have grown wise  
To women.  
My mother waits up on  
Her husband each night.  
Stumbling drunkenly,  
He curses and beats her.  
With each blow  
They are aware  
They are alive.  
There is no exchange of life  
Between us.  
Our hours are loud with silence.  
The noise here is deafening.  
This is not what I expected.

Sister, Sister

I watched you grow  
Unprotected from the tornados and  
Storms and fires  
You whimpered about as a child.  
Lying in your youth bed, alone,  
Your four-year old mind  
Dreamed constantly of disasters.  
Even then, you were afraid of the skeletons  
Among the clothes in the dark closet.  
I told you of the witches in the bathroom,  
New dreaming you would  
Always believe me.  
You are fourteen.  
Your body has developed a thickly-insulated  
Layer of defense  
Against those external predators.  
The wise men in white coats  
Tell you of your hostile brain.  
Your defenses are not strong enough  
To fight them.  
Lying awake at night, you  
Cry and beg and plead for help.  
I, in the other bed,  
Scream at you for peace.  
We are crying for the same thing.  
You lived five years,  
Helpless.  
The neon sign above your head  
Gaily blinked terminology at different phases of your  
Insanity.  
You have been manic-depressive Electra and  
Schizophrenic Oedipus-  
Such a full life you have led!  
At nineteen, they discovered,  
(To their immense relief)  
The source of your madness.  
"It is only your soul," they said.  
Simple, just rip it out and call it  
"Hysterectomy."  
You are like a child.  
Fear is branded upon your forehead forever.  
Now I am aware you are weak.  
Now I am aware you needed my help  
To grow strong and fearless.  
Now, I can only watch you bleed  
Silently, open to the world.

The Crazy Lady

She paces and smokes,  
Smokes and paces  
And drinks a jar of instant tea  
Every three days.  
She is the crazy lady and  
She's come to live at my house.

She stands in a cloud of nicotine:  
Uncombed and unwashed  
Hair clings to her sunken cheeks-  
Except for ragged cowlicks.  
She is the crazy lady and  
She's come to live at my house.

They say she used to fix her hair  
And wear new, stylish clothes,  
And write children's stories about elephants,  
And listen to my first-grade reading,  
And I called her "Aunt,"  
And I would sit on the couch listening expectantly for  
The sound of her car tires crunching gravel,  
But,  
Now she's the crazy lady and  
She's come to live at my house.

On a Weekday in Tampa, Florida

The people crawl slowly over the  
scorched pavement of the city.  
Black and white and yellow,  
Squashed by the heat of the sun.  
Lazy ants with nowhere to go and  
No job to do.  
No air-conditioned homes and  
the restaurants are filled with dopey  
Flies and people.  
The air is hot and sweaty.  
A beggar woman wrapped in a  
brown, nubby sweater fans  
herself with an old newspaper.  
Her mottled tin cup tries to catch  
the sun on its surface.  
A midwestern girl hurries by,  
running from the heat.  
A polyester filled jacket is flung  
over her shoulder, concealing  
the purse clutched to her sticky  
wet sweater.  
A small Oriental man  
wants to show her the way to  
spiritual happiness-  
Only \$10.00.  
It is daylight everywhere.  
The bus station seems miles away.

To a Lost Friend

There was a time when your hair was  
Butched and your sex  
Undetermined.

I loved you then and thought you  
Beautiful.

We sang old songs and  
Cried into our faded Florida shirts and  
Ran shrieking, our tennis shoes  
Crunching gravel, rolled up blue jeans  
Tight upon our bodies.

I met a girl this year with  
Makeup on, her hair  
Feathered expensively around her  
Paint-by-number face.  
She wore a perfect ensemble:  
Cream-colored, three piece suit with  
Matching jewelry and heels.  
Her fingers looked like fat matchsticks-  
Red-tipped.

I searched everywhere for you,  
Lonely in my dirty tennis shoes.  
If, by chance, you feel the need to  
Run shrieking into the Mucnie rain,  
Please come to me.  
I long to sing old songs with you  
Again.

## Lindy's Sorrow

You search in every room  
For something,  
Whimpering and crying,  
Shoulders raised, asking  
"Why?"  
For over an hour you wonder,  
It is the day after the funeral  
And you cannot find it anywhere.  
Your two-year old legs grow weary.  
Soon, you fall asleep on the big bed  
With the multi-colored spread  
Thrown over it.  
Bottle-sucking, you are soothed by an  
Elusive, almost remembered scent.

I watch you sleep  
Butt-up in a mock fetal position,  
Your arms thrown loosely  
By your sides.  
The bottle slips from your mouth.  
Your lips make grasping motions  
Sucking on air.  
I can hear you breathe  
And dream...

A woman with knotted hands and  
Cracked fingernails shoves a chocolate  
Onto your teeth.  
The taste is sweet and good.  
You are crushed against a pink towel  
Jacket, strong arms support the weight  
Of your hot, sweaty body.  
The moment your back hits the bed,  
You wail.  
Immediately, you are snatched up  
Into the air and pressed against a  
Sagging chest, dried up, yet soft  
For you.  
Immediately, you are snatched up  
Into the air and pressed against a  
Sagging chest, dried up, yet soft  
For you.  
She leans toward you excitedly,  
Arms reaching and  
You run as she topples from her  
Chair, writhing on the ground.  
It is a funny game and you cry  
"Gam, gam, gam" and laugh and clap.  
You touch the soft pink silk around  
Her hair.  
A yellow rose is placed in the cold hand  
Especially from you.  
You know that she is feigning sleep,  
So, you, too, play "possum."  
With one eye cracked, you wait for her  
To shout "peek-a-boo, Lindy!"

No sound comes.  
When you open your eyes,  
She is gone.

I watch you moan and cry in your sleep  
As your visions grow blurry.  
Your hands rub fiercely at your eyes,  
Then rest calmly.  
I wait until I can hear you  
Breathing again before I leave you  
To your child's dream  
Of lolly-dolls, and Teddy bears, and  
Forbidden sweets.

## A Legacy for our Future

This is the legacy left us  
By our ancestors:

They crossed the barren desert  
Together.  
A man, a woman,  
Bound by the promise of a future  
Rich with fertile fields,  
Teeming with acres of wavering wheat,  
Tilled by the power of four strong boys.  
Standing tall and proud,  
Their shoulders  
Bulge broadly beneath  
Their faded cotton shirts.  
Four gingham-frocked girls  
Bring them lunch:  
Plucked fat chickens, new from the skillet.  
Still sweating from the heat of the kitchen,  
Their fresh, young cheeks glow red in the sun.  
Four pairs of modest blue eyes  
Glance down, seemingly unaware of the  
Love-lust gaze from  
Four pairs of hungry brown eyes.  
It is a self-perpetuating game.  
The sun is hot and smoldering.  
The ground sends distorting waves of heat  
Up to greet it.  
Somewhere, a cow dissents,  
It's "moooo" muffled by the sound  
Of the approaching train.

We are born  
To a world of high-velocity transportation  
And scorched pavement.  
We plow and till our  
Rain-starved brains,  
Sucked dry by a century of light.  
Miles of emptiness between us-  
The gap is widened every year,  
Every day.  
Our children lie in the middle,  
Their faces burnt and cracked and  
Seared by the sun.  
We know of no salve to heal them.  
Their body fluids drain and  
Evaporate on the concrete earth.  
Soon, they will disintegrate into  
The fever of our knowledge,  
Into the ever-growing heat  
Of a thousand generations.