

Geoffrey M. Latham

Writing Portfolio: Contents & Synopsis

I. **Southern Summer** – free verse poem p.1

Recalling sensations and memories of my days growing up in the rural hills of Grenada County, Mississippi

II. **Heather** – free verse poem p.1

Ode to Heather Henderson, a girlfriend of mine who tragically died of a sudden pulmonary embolism in 2009

III. **Putting Neil to Bed** – non-fiction narrative (from diary) p.2

Excerpt from my personal diary recalling a disturbing visit to the house of an ailing friend of my father's

IV. **Love's Music** – free verse poem p.3

Poem that compares the love of two people to the uplifting and magical nature of harmony in music

V. **What Happens** – free verse poem p.3

Poem that poses philosophical questions about the nature of lost love and unfulfilled dreams

"Southern Summer"

Long shadows linger on the hillside.
 I sit on the hilltop with Bo in my lap
 The sounds of Crickets and tree-frogs
 of my dog panting, of my own heart beating

The smell of freshly cut grass
 of honeysuckle, pine sap,
 and dust from the gravel road

The feeling of grass prickling my legs
 of the warm setting sun on my back
 of the cool evening's breeze

The tastes of Mississippi
 summer on my lips

Blackberries and Lemonade
 Bologna and cheese crackers
 Southern life is never boring,
 it is, even in the most innocent
 and simple of moments,
 Sensual and Sublime.

-Geoffrey M. Latham 1-6-02

"Heather"

Sprung from the rich dark soil of the alluvial plane

With a heart both tender and strong

Roots that sink deep through time immortal

Branches reach out agile and sturdy

No flowers adorn, no leaves enshroud, no bark shields

It is fauna not flora of which I speak

Grace and beauty enough to make a doe green

But she is more goddess than creature

Amber locks soft lips sweetly entangle me like muscadine

Soft and gentle her hands touch mine

Glances betraying the fires burning beneath manners

Her eyes a balm of wounds and a spark of joy

Rapture spun like wool and woven into the tapestry of my life

Laughter that makes my heart glow

Beneficent and magnanimous ruler of all that I am and shall be

I am yours you are mine and we are ours forever

**3-23-09
 Geoffrey M. Latham**

“Putting Neil to Bed”**From the Diary of Geoffrey M. Latham****November 11, 2007**

I have been very concerned about my dad. He has an elderly friend, named Neil, who has been in bad shape for some time and Dad has been bending over backwards to try and do everything he can to help him. Dad is the executor of his estate and after Neil lost consciousness for about seventy-two hours, the reality that Neil may be near the end set in. Neil begs for death because of the constant pain he is in. Seeing his friend in agony, seeing that he is cared for, and the looming thought of having to deal with his friend's family, should Neil pass on, has taken a terrible toll on Dad, and he has not been able to work for a week because he has been dealing with the issues of his friend's health.

I went to help Dad move a couple of beds at Neil's house the other day. As I walked in, the first thing I heard was Neil calling out for help. Dad responded and I entered the back part of the house to get a look at what was going on. Neil was lying on his side with a pillow between his knees and his legs half drawn up towards his torso. He jerked involuntarily as a wave of pain shot through his body and I saw such agony in his face that it made me step back and take pause. I could see the sorrowful frustration that it caused Dad to know that there was nothing he could do for Neil. Every few seconds his friend would shriek out in agony, “Aahh!” and at times he would yell out “Mike!” (my dad's name) in desperate panic.

The hospice worker buzzed about, mostly getting in our way, as we disassembled a mechanical hospital bed in the living room and moved it into the bedroom to replace the regular bed on which Neil was lying. After fighting with the heavy bed frame and getting it into place, we had to move Neil and negotiate with the bag and tube tied into his bladder. Dad slid his arms under Neil's shoulders and I grasped his legs under the knees. We lifted and moved him like a sack of flour from one bed to the other as quickly and gingerly as we could. Neil shrieked out in pain as we moved him and began to cry out “Geoff! Oh Geoff! Oh God, Geoff!” My heart broke and I prayed for him silently as I attempted to maneuver him and get his urinary tubing out from under his legs.

“Mike, why didn't this kill me?” he asked Dad several times, referring to his most recent lapse in consciousness. Then Neil asked for a cigarette. Dad said he could, “have one later,” to appease him, but had no intentions of letting him smoke in his condition. Dad and I then disassembled the regular bed, all the while plagued with Neil's screams of tortured pain. We moved the mattress, box springs, headboard, and frame out of the room and repositioned the hospital bed. I walked out of the house and got into my car and sat there silently for a few minutes as the echoes of Neil's pleas and cries resonated in my mind.

I wondered why his children weren't there for him. They were in town, or so I had heard. Were they just waiting idly for him to perish, more concerned with claiming their inheritance than Neil's comfort and care? And what kind of life was this for their father? This man had been robbed of his dignity; every second was a torturous spasm of wracking anguish. He was forced to be a burden to those paid to attend to his needs as well as to those that loved and cared for him. Would I not crave death I was lying there? If there was no real hope for his improvement, then was prolonging this hell on earth really the humane and loving thing to do?

It is one of the things that I have witnessed in my life that I wish I could forget. The thought of wasting away in a hospital bed is not how I wish to envision my departure from this world. The stress on Dad has been terrible and I hope that he will find the strength to bear the burden for as long as he must.

“Love’s Music”

Resonating together in harmonious vibration
 Point and counterpoint strolling hand in hand
 Loving and loved as heaven first intended
 Adam and Eve with innocence regained
 Dancing cheek to cheek and soul to soul
 Longing fearing fretting yearning no more
 Fulfilled completed perfected together
 Two hearts beat in synchronized rhythm
 For life and love in this world and beyond

-Geoffrey M. Latham 3.8.11

“WHAT HAPPENS”

What happens when the goddess falls?
 What for the poet when the muse fades away?
 Who will hear his prayers of adoration?
 Who will inspire his lyric verse?
 What happens when the lover leaves?
 What for the knight when the maiden is lost?
 Who will cherish his tender affections?
 Who will invigorate his manly valor?
 Where do the broken pieces of love go?
 Where to store the fragments of shattered dreams?
 Will they fit neatly on a shelf in our memory?
 Will they fill a forgotten corner of our heart?
 What happens when the beauty departs?
 What for the man when his mate says farewell?
 Who will he gaze upon in enraptured awe?
 Who will fill the void left in his embrace?

Geoffrey M. Latham 5-27-08