

LITMED FINAL PROJECTS 2015

Kyle

Thank you for sharing your poems. I liked them both very much. "Two Months" has many powerful lines and phrases: "perfunctory midnight kindness" (and even that can be pretty hard to generate); "that cruelest of hopes, to see a patient again" (this captures well one of the ironies of medicine – if patients return so you can enjoy their company, it means they're doing worse); "her father's bum hip paying for our friendship" (another turn of the ironic screw); "I fall through a trapdoor in his mind/feel the fear greasing the white tile walls" (evocative; if I allow his experience to touch me, am I lost?); "another night of acrid chemical prayers" (are cleaning/antibacterial substances our modern prayers?); "we are numb ships drifting on a windless sea" (good contrast to previous sense of connection); "cyan armor" (both a great description of the protective aura of scrubs and also a sense of stifling/smothering in the face of patient's and daughter's suffering).

I like the way the poem engages faith, madness, and societal control of deviance. It seems to me that it is also an extended wrestling with the whole issue of connection and detachment. You both "know each other better" and are still "numb ships." This is how it often is: we both know and can never know the other. Perhaps it is the best we can do. Through your encounter with this man and his daughter, you seek meaning and relationship, your heart breaks for their circumstances, yet you remain barely more than strangers. The contradictions and frustrations of this poem move me.

"Midnight on Polk Street" is also a very strong poem. It took me awhile (and some googling) to figure out it is probably about a needle exchange program (?) (you can live a long time and still be pretty naïve). I loved the terse short lines, which seemed at first to be simply a cataloguing; but then are masterfully transformed in the third stanza and final couplet, infused with humanity, connection, and hope.