

Returning the Stone to the River

[Jesse Cline, in memory]

{To celebrate the life of their friend, fifty and more people jumped into the cold waters below Fayette Station Rapid, of the New River, expressing their regard for Jessie's love of the river. They gathered small stones to take with them and return them to their favorite river as a symbolic gesture of the ecology of sadness and celebration.}

It is an unfair and unjust equation of pain

thrust upon us to balance our lives through
the dark and light as we measure ourselves
by the love we give with the loss we receive.

It is not fair. It is not just. It is what
it means to be human. Someone
well meaning but hurtful and meaning
less than we who stay silent
brings some god into the equation
and upsets the balance to rid our painful
and pity full selves of the ache that rips in to
muscle and sinew and bone
as if we should be made less, feel less
these very things that make us
that made him who we grieve
into what he was. He was a man.

We don't allow anyone to make us into children
to have him stand above us as a man. We
stand beside him. We ride with him.
He was, after all is said and sad and undone,
a river guide. We must let him take us
and balance the inevitable force of rock and wave
in the journey to some near or distant grave
a give and take, to and fro, a rock a roll
with the will that lets us go
into that true cliché
that we give ourselves up to the river flow.

Fears and tears are what we are.
Anything less makes us less makes us unworthy.
We all are in the same boat.
We are steady and true.
We know who we must be.
We know where we must go.

