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From the Editor

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FROM THE EDITOR

The theme for this issue, (Un)Natural Disasters did not elicit as many submissions as we had hoped. Is it because we can't face disaster easily? Is it that we don't know what to say? Probably. We have learned aversion; we merely turn away.

But what else can we do? How else do we cope? Open the paper, turn on the TV, listen to the radio—it's everywhere. This past year, more than ever it seemed, we read/watched/heard daily about disasters, both natural and unnatural: nearly 3000 us soldiers have been killed in Iraq, nearly 17,000 injured, and between 29,000-33,000 Iraqi civilians dead. In addition, we saw terrorist bombings in Jordan and Lebanon, hurricanes devastating Mississippi and Louisiana, horrendous earthquakes in Kashmir, a sunken ferry in Egypt, a deadly Tsunami in Asia, 200,000 dead in the Sudan, etc.

I was struck by a picture in the *New York Times* of homeless people in a Philippine school room after a landslide. Above the blackboard was a quotation by Socrates: "The unexamined life was (sic) not worth living."

Facing us, we know, are disasters that will inevitably come: civil war in Iraq, Avian flu, Iran going nuclear, more hurricanes, deaths of our friends and family members, and more. Fear sits in our bellies because we only have the illusion of control.

At the end of the novel, *Saturday*, by Ian McEwan, the protagonist muses about the horrible events of the previous day: "All he feels now is fear. He's weak and ignorant, scared of the way consequences of an action leap away from your control and breed new events, new consequences, until you're led to a place you never dreamed of and would never choose—a knife at your throat."¹

What do we do? We can't control the moment, certainly not the future. Kipling said that "If you meet with triumph and disaster, treat these two imposters just the same."²

What is an appropriate response? To turn toward these disasters, to send money, to think of those who suffer and send our energy to them, even for just a few moments? Perhaps.

Shakespeare tells us to name it:

Give Sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er fraught heart and bids it break.³

The Buddhists say that we should open the door as wide for sorrow as we do to joy because it's from sorrow that we learn our great lessons, not from joy.

All great ideas, but how do we do that when our hearts are pounding and tears are impossible to quell? One response is to put our shoulder to the door.

Perhaps the answer is before us, in the aesthetic: in visual art, music, poetry, fiction, non-fiction. Perhaps. 

Mary Kay Harrington, Managing Editor

Moebius

Notes

1. McEwan, Ian, *Saturday*, New York: Random House, 2005.
2. Kipling, Rudyard, "Rewards and Fairies," St.4
3. Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, IV, iii, 209.