

## **SUSPENDED IN TIME: A JOURNEY THROUGH NOSTALGIA AND POETIC LONGING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the rich interplay between nostalgia, memory, and poetic expression, as encapsulated in a collection of four evocative poems. Each piece delves into the universal human experience of longing—for moments that were, for encounters that could have been, and for the simplicity of presence. The poems, accompanied by reflective introductions, serve as windows into the fragile beauty of suspended time and the echoes of the past. Benedetto Ghielmi's *Non-Meeting* captures the aching absence of an unrealized encounter, transforming a missed appointment into a metaphor for life's fleeting connections. Lucia Cristiana Cesarano's *Sea* uses the rhythmic ebb and flow of ocean waves to evoke the impermanence and allure of memory, blending vivid imagery with a sense of wistful yearning.

Immacolata Rosso's *At the River's Mouth* employs the metaphor of a slow-moving river to examine the weight of the past and the catharsis of letting go. Sofiya Samoylenko's *Standing by* reflects on the tension between authenticity and performative connection, offering a tender plea for the quiet beauty of genuine presence. Together, these poems and their reflections form a meditation on the enduring power of nostalgia. They remind us that while the past remains elusive; its shadows enrich our understanding of the present and shape our longing for connection. This collection invites readers to pause, reflect, and

embrace the profound emotional resonance that poetry uniquely conveys.

**KEYWORDS:** Bittersweet Reminiscence, Unspoken Longing, Ephemeral Bonds, Melancholic Echoes, Fleeting Encounters, Poetry, Nostalgia.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Nostalgia, a profound longing for the past, often carries an emotional connection to times or places associated with happiness. Its origin lies in the Greek words *nóstos* (homecoming) and *álgos* (pain), reflecting its dual nature of joy and melancholy. The term was first introduced in the 17th century to describe homesickness experienced by Swiss mercenaries (Hofer, 1688) and was initially treated as a medical condition, even classified as a form of melancholia (Dahl, 2016). By the Romantic era, nostalgia had evolved into a symbolic yearning for idealized pasts, becoming a prominent theme in art and literature as a response to the alienation brought on by modernity (Boym, 2002). In modern psychology, nostalgia is recognized as a complex and multifaceted emotion with significant benefits. It has been found to boost mood, strengthen social bonds, and enhance self-esteem and a sense of purpose (Sedikides et al., 2008). Studies show that recalling nostalgic memories can counteract feelings of loneliness and provide emotional support during challenging times (Zhou et al., 2008). Furthermore, nostalgia serves as a coping tool, enabling individuals to reinterpret difficulties in a more positive light and adopt strategies that promote well-being (Batcho, 2013).

Nostalgia can be triggered by a variety of stimuli, including cultural elements such as music, films, and books, which often evoke vivid recollections of past experiences (Wildschut et al., 2006). Environmental factors, such as specific locations or even weather conditions, also contribute. For example, colder weather has been shown to heighten nostalgia, which subsequently fosters feelings of physical warmth (Zhou et al., 2012). Beyond personal experiences, nostalgia connects individuals to broader collective histories, inspiring activities like historical reenactments and the preservation of cultural heritage sites (Tanselle, 1998; Farmer, 2005). This article examines the role of nostalgia in contemporary poetry, analyzing how it shapes poetic expression and connects with readers through its rich emotional depth and cultural significance.

## II. WHISPERS OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN: POEMS OF NOSTALGIA AND REFLECTION

Poetry often serves as a vessel for emotion, a space where the boundaries of time blur and the unsaid finds its voice. This collection of poems explores the deeply human experience of nostalgia—a longing not just for what was, but also for what could have been. These works are united by their ability to evoke a sense of suspended moments, where time lingers, emotions ripple, and memories echo. Through their distinct imagery and voices, the poems form a tapestry of reflection on the fleeting, the unattainable, and the enduring connection between presence and absence. Benedetto Ghielmi's *Non-Meeting* plunges the reader into the poignant tension of an encounter that never occurs. The poem captures the ache of expectation unfulfilled, the resonance of a voice that lingers like an echo among the timid branches of a park. The imagery of a scheduled appointment that remains unrealized becomes a powerful metaphor for the many suspended moments in our lives—those intersections of time and space that seem so close yet forever beyond our grasp. It speaks to the universality of longing and the quiet spaces where anticipation turns into memory. In *Sea*, Lucia Cristiana Cesarano shifts the focus to the timeless ebb and flow of the ocean as a mirror for the human heart. Here, the sea's rhythmic motion reflects the pull of nostalgia, carrying fragments of distant thoughts and fleeting emotions.

The gentle cry of a seagull and the vivid spray of waves evoke the beauty and impermanence of memory, which, like the sea, comes and goes in tides. The thousand seagulls taking flight invite the reader to linger in this wistful reverie, to find solace in the delicate dance of holding on and letting go. Cesarano masterfully captures how the sea becomes a metaphor for our inner lives—always in motion, never static, yet eternally present. Immacolata Rosso's *At the River's Mouth* continues this exploration of time and longing through the metaphor of a river. The slow, deliberate flow of water becomes a reflection of life's journey, carrying with it the colorful yet weighty fragments of memory. The river's vulnerable waves, brushing against rocky edges, echo the fragile balance between clinging to the past and the need to release its hold. From a still point above, the speaker contemplates the passing current, eventually choosing to let go of unnecessary burdens. This act of surrender becomes a profound meditation on the transformative power of nostalgia—an acknowledgment of the past that frees the heart to move forward. Rosso's imagery and themes resonate deeply, inviting readers to reflect on their own rivers of memory and the emotions they carry.

In *Standing By*, Sofiya Samoylenko offers a poignant reflection on the nature of human connection in a world that often demands performance over authenticity. The poem juxtaposes the lightness of presence with the weight of social expectations, questioning the need for constant engagement and superficial interaction. Through an aching, understated voice, Samoylenko yearns for a return to simplicity—moments when being together required nothing more than quiet, shared presence. The verses peel away the layers of artifice, asking what remains when we strip ourselves of masks and pretense. This exploration of vulnerability and intimacy is a love letter to the lost art of simply being, a wistful remembrance of a time when silence spoke louder than words and presence carried the essence of connection. Together, these poems form a symphony of nostalgia, a journey through the landscapes of longing and reflection. They invite us to pause amidst the relentless rhythm of life and listen to the whispers of what might have been what was, and what still lingers. The collection does not merely dwell in the past but illuminates the beauty of its shadows, offering a delicate balance between yearning and acceptance. In the suspended moments these poems create, we find not only echoes of our own lives but also a reminder of the fragile, enduring power of poetry to connect us across time, space, and emotion.

### III. SUSPENDED ENCOUNTERS: “NON-MEETING”

Nostalgia is not just a feeling; it is a subtle dance with time, a poignant reminder of what once was and what never came to be. It evokes a voice—a voice that, even when distant, pierces through the fog of memory, reaching us like a familiar melody on the other end of a receiver. This voice lingers, suspended in the quiet spaces of our minds, echoing between the branches of forgotten places, like the timid branches of a park in the past, swaying gently in the wind. In the relentless storm of our daily lives, filled with the endless coming and going, we schedule appointments, mark moments, and try to fix time into manageable pieces. Yet, there are encounters we long for that never happen, moments that remain eternally scheduled but unrealized. These are the moments that sit heavy in our hearts, somewhere between expectation and memory, forming a non-meeting that lingers indefinitely, haunting us with what might have been. On the mount of beatitudes, a place symbolic of peace and hope, I prepared my gaze—ready to meet, to connect, to capture the essence of poetry that seemed just within reach. But like many such moments, it remained elusive, a secret never revealed, suspended in the air, forever out of grasp. This poem captures that ache that suspended longing, where time seems to pause, holding the possibility of a meeting that will never be, yet is infinitely present in its absence. Here, in this space between anticipation and reality, nostalgia finds

its voice, singing through the cracks of our daily rush, reminding us of the delicate beauty of what never was and never will be.

#### **A. Non-Meeting by Benedetto Ghielmi**

the voice - through the receiver  
remained embedded - pierced  
among the timid branches - of the park.  
the appointment was scheduled  
in the agenda. like many,  
in the relentless daily storm  
of coming - going  
typical of time.  
you were there - on the mount of beatitudes -  
I prepared my gaze to brush against you  
to steal the secret of poetry  
it never happened. it remained  
suspended -  
non-meeting

#### **B. Non-Incontro Di Benedetto Ghielmi**

la voce - tramite cornetta  
è rimasta incastonata - trafitta  
tra le fronde timide - del parco.  
l'appuntamento è stato fissato  
sull'agenda. come tanti,  
nell'inesorabile tempesta  
quotidiana dell'andare - rivieni  
tipica del tempo.  
eri lì - sul monte delle beatitudini -  
ho preparato lo sguardo a sfiorarti  
per rubarti il segreto della poesia  
non c'è mai stato. è rimasto

**sospeso -**

**non-incontro**

#### **IV. THE SEA'S REVERIE**

The sea, with its timeless ebb and flow, often serves as a vessel for nostalgia—a longing for something just out of reach, yet eternally present. In "Sea," Lucia Cristiana Cesarano evokes this sense of wistful yearning, painting a scene where the speaker is drawn into the muted greyness of the sky, slipping into thoughts that feel distant yet familiar. These thoughts, like memories, drift in and out, carried by the rhythmic pull of the tides. The gentle cry of a seagull, light and ephemeral, echoes the voice of the past, a sound that calls out to forgotten times and places. The waves crashing against the rocks, spraying droplets that momentarily glisten before vanishing, serve as a metaphor for memories—vivid, beautiful, but fleeting. The sea's eternal motion mirrors the way nostalgia sweeps over us, bringing moments of clarity and emotion that wash over the heart, only to recede and leave us longing once more. Each wave carries with it a fragment of the past, a hint of something once cherished, now distant, but never entirely gone.

This movement reflects the way memories come and go, like the tide, sometimes overwhelming and at other times a gentle whisper. The thousand seagulls rising into flight are more than a symbol of freedom; they are an invitation to linger in this nostalgic reverie, to stay a while with these echoes of the past. They beckon the reader to embrace the delicate balance between holding on and letting go, to find beauty in the way memories, like the sea, are never static but constantly shifting, changing, and returning. Through this imagery, Cesarano captures the essence of nostalgia—not as a longing for a specific moment, but as a deep, pervasive feeling of connection to something that exists in the spaces between memory and presence, like the waves that forever reach out, touch, and retreat.

##### **A. Sea by Lucia Cristiana Cesarano**

**In the sky tinted with a mute greyness**

**I slip into strange thoughts**

**Or perhaps not strange but just distant**

**And I hear the gentle cry of a sweet seagull**

**That rests its light body**

**On rocks dipped in the sea**

and distant waves crash against the rocks, wetting my face  
and they go... and return... breaking into a thousand colors,  
and a thousand seagulls rise into flight  
inviting me to stay with them.

**B. Mare Di Lucia Cristiana Cesarano**

Nel cielo tinto di un muto grigiore  
Scivolo in strani pensieri  
O forse non strani ma solo lontani  
E sento il grido gentile di un dolce gabbiano  
Che poggia il suo corpo leggero  
Su scogli calati nel mare  
e onde lontane si infrangono contro gli scogli, mi bagnano il viso  
e vanno... e ritornano... rompendosi in mille colori,  
e mille gabbiani si elevano in volo  
mi invitano a stare con loro.

**V. THE TIMELESS FLOW OF BEING – INTRODUCTION TO “AT THE RIVER’S MOUTH”**

In *At the River’s Mouth*, Immacolata Rosso explores the deep currents of nostalgia, using the metaphor of a river to reflect on the passage of time and the lingering weight of memories. The poem evokes a sense of longing, where the river’s slow, steady flow becomes a symbol for life’s journey—one that carries with it fragments of the past, splashes of emotions, and memories tinged with a bittersweet glow. Nostalgia permeates the verses, as the speaker observes the river from a still point, allowing the currents to reveal the colorful, yet elusive, moments that have shaped their journey.

Rosso’s imagery of waves swelling against rocky edges mirrors the delicate balance between holding on to the past and the need to move forward. Each drop of water, imbued with memories, hints at a deeper yearning for times gone by, for emotions once felt but never fully understood. This nostalgia is not merely a longing for the past, but a complex reflection on how these memories continue to weigh on the present, like a pouch of ballast carried on the shoulders—heavy, yet essential. As the poem unfolds, there is a subtle shift from longing to release. The



speaker, grounded on a metaphorical hill, chooses to let go of what no longer serves, emptying the burdens into the river's current.

This act of surrender speaks to the transformative power of nostalgia: not just as a means to reminisce, but as a way to reconcile with the past, finding peace in the flow of time. Through this gentle, yet profound, meditation, Rosso captures the enduring human desire to connect with the past, even as life continues its inexorable journey forward.

#### **A. At The River's Mouth by Immacolata Rosso**

**The time of our life.**

**Like a river that flows slowly,  
reflecting a foreign sky.**

**Sitting on the banks,  
watching the slow swelling of a wave,  
vulnerable against the rocky edges.  
And every drop travels,  
carrying with it colorful memories,  
and splashes of emotions never understood.**

**I observe it, from the height of a day  
without a clock:  
everything passes before me,  
the ballast of the pouch I carry  
on my shoulders.**

**Weight that bends the body,  
but not the will.**

**I remain still on this hill,  
to empty into the water  
all the useless things that loom.**



**B. Alle Foci Del Fiume Di Immacolata Rosso**

**Il tempo della nostra vita.**

**Come fiume che scorre lento,  
rispecchiando un cielo straniero.**

**Sedersi sulle rive,  
a spiare il lento gonfiarsi di un'onda,  
vulnerabile contro i bordi di roccia.  
E viaggia ogni goccia,  
portandosi dietro ricordi a colori,  
e spruzzi di emozioni mai comprese.**

**L'osservo, dall'alto di un giorno  
senza orologio:  
tutto mi passa davanti,  
zavorra della bisaccia che porto  
sulle spalle.**

**Peso che piega il corpo,  
non la volontà.**

**Resto ancora su questo poggio,  
a svuotare nell'acqua  
tutto l'inutile che incombe.**

**VI. THE QUIET BETWEEN – INTRODUCTION TO “STANDING BY”**

In a time when connection seemed effortless, when conversations drifted like clouds and silences spoke volumes, what does it mean to simply *be*? Sofiya Samoylenko's "Standing By" takes us back to a quieter, softer place — a nostalgic retreat from the relentless demands of modern engagement. Through a cadence that echoes like a memory, Samoylenko weaves a delicate

exploration of longing for a world where presence was simple, unadorned, and true. The poem opens with a gentle irony, reminding us of the days when being *interesting, entertaining* felt more natural, when social rituals were less forced, less frantic. There's a bittersweet playfulness to the lines, a recognition that we've drifted far from those moments of ease. Why do we now find ourselves locked into patterns of forced engagement, *caged and staged*? The poet's questions drift through the verses like a breeze through an open window, bringing with them a quiet yearning for a time when interactions were less burdened, less contrived. There's a sense of nostalgia in her invitation to stillness, a longing for those rare, tender moments when two people could just sit together in silence, *merely breathing in each other's presence*. In this simplicity, Samoylenko finds a profound beauty — a glimpse of a world where words were not needed to communicate, where the essence of connection was felt, not forced. It recalls a time when being with someone didn't require constant activity or conversation, but rather a shared understanding, an unspoken bond that could be felt in the quiet spaces between breaths.

Yet, this gentle vision of presence is tinged with an ache, a reminder of what has been lost. The layers of makeup, the carefully constructed masks, they are not just part of modern life but artifacts of an older fear — the fear of being seen for what one truly is. There's a nostalgia here, too, for a time when perhaps we were less guarded, when we didn't feel the need to shield ourselves so completely. The poem reflects a tender, almost wistful self-awareness, capturing the anxiety of wondering if, when all the layers are peeled away, what remains is still *too much* — or, heartbreakingly, *not enough*. "Standing By" is, at its heart, a love letter to a simpler, more honest way of being. It carries the weight of nostalgia, a yearning for a return to moments when connection did not demand grand gestures or elaborate performances, but rather the quiet courage to simply exist with one another. In Samoylenko's vision, there is a profound beauty in the unspoken, in the stillness of just *standing by*, side by side, letting the essence of who we are speak for itself. It's a gentle reminder that sometimes, the deepest connections are those that require nothing but presence, a whisper of the past beckoning us to return to the grace of simplicity.

## A. Standing by Sofiya Samoylenko

**Being interesting, entertaining**

**We're constructing a fresh painting**

**Going above and beyond**

**Always so fond**

**This blonde, that pond**

**A superficial bond.**

**All things in constant flow**

**Yet I remain here**

**Having to seem interested, entertained.**

**Now asking many more a question**

**Can you at least give a suggestion**

**Why is it me who is engaging and engaged**

**It all feels way too caged and staged**

**All of this conversation, ‘friendly’ banter**

**I kind of wish to crawl into an antre.**

**But really, does any of it have any meaning?**

**Here’s a suggestion**

**What if we just sat there in stillness**

**Merely breathing in each other’s presence**

**There really doesn’t need to be a chillness**

**In all that silence you will feel the essence**

**Of what it is I feel**

**Of what it is I think**

**Of what it is I am.**

**All without me having to produce a single breath, a single sound**

**All without me having to feel drowned**

**All without me having to put on an intrusive act**

**Merely sticking to the fact–**

**Of being.**

**Really, I wish to be stripped away**

The epitome of an ashtray  
 My makeup, then hair  
 Look at me bare  
 Notice layer after layer  
 Of thoughts, ideas and feelings  
 How they consume me.

You know  
 I think I am too much  
 But what if even that is not enough...

## VII. THE PHILOSOPHY OF NOSTALGIA: REFLECTIONS ON POETIC LONGING AND AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

This collection of poems intricately explores the human experience of nostalgia, intertwining its themes with profound philosophical reflections that amplify both its emotional depth and intellectual impact. Aristotle's notion of *catharsis* comes to life in Benedetto Ghielmi's *Non-Meeting*, where the bittersweet longing for an unrealized encounter transforms into a universal meditation on life's missed opportunities. The poem allows readers to confront the ache of the unfulfilled, releasing it through the beauty of poetic expression. Heidegger's philosophy of *being-in-the-world* resonates with Lucia Cristiana Cesarano's *Sea*, where the rhythmic tides evoke the fluid nature of memory and the tension between the fleeting and the eternal. The sea, much like Heidegger's conception of time, becomes a medium through which presence and absence coexist, shaping human existence. Henri Bergson's idea of *durée*—time as lived experience rather than a measurable entity—finds a vivid parallel in Immacolata Rosso's *At the River's Mouth*.

The poem's depiction of the slow, deliberate flow of the river mirrors the continuous interplay of memory and emotion, where each drop carries fragments of a life lived. Through its meditative release of burdens into the water, the poem echoes Bergson's belief in the transformative power of embracing life's temporal flow. Nietzsche's concept of the *eternal return* is subtly reflected in the imagery of recurring waves and seagulls in Cesarano's *Sea*, as well as in Rosso's river, suggesting the cyclical nature of memory and the inevitability of revisiting the past. These natural metaphors invite readers to reinterpret their longing not as a weight but as a vital element of their

existence. Sartre’s existentialist idea of *mauvaise foi* (bad faith)—the tension between authenticity and societal expectations—emerges powerfully in Sofiya Samoylenko’s *Standing By*. The poem critiques the superficial performativity of modern relationships and offers a poignant yearning for genuine presence and connection. The speaker’s plea for stillness and stripped-down authenticity echoes Sartre’s call to reject societal roles in favor of true self-awareness.

Similarly, Simone Weil’s belief in beauty as a reflection of universal truth is woven into the delicate imagery of all the poems, particularly in the interplay of light, water, and movement in *Sea* and *At the River’s Mouth*. These visual elements serve as portals to a transcendent understanding of memory and time. Finally, Gaston Bachelard’s *poetics of space* is evoked through the vivid settings that shape these poems. The park in *Non-Meeting*, the seascape in *Sea*, and the riverbank in *At the River’s Mouth* become symbolic landscapes where memory and imagination intertwine. These spaces invite readers to dwell within their own emotional geographies, blending the physical and the metaphysical in a profound act of reflection. Together, these philosophical connections deepen the poems’ exploration of nostalgia, transforming it into a multidimensional dialogue between past and present, longing and acceptance. The collection invites readers to linger in this interplay, embracing nostalgia not merely as a sentiment but as a lens through which to understand the essence of human experience.

## VIII. NON-MEETING AND PHILOSOPHY

Benedetto Ghielmi’s *Non-Meeting* captures the aching poignancy of an encounter that never materialized, transforming it into a universal meditation on life’s missed connections. The poem’s imagery—“the voice...pierced among the timid branches of the park” and “the appointment was scheduled”—evokes a delicate tension between anticipation and absence, encapsulating the fragile beauty of moments suspended in time. The park becomes a liminal space where expectation lingers but fulfillment remains elusive, mirroring the emotional landscape of longing.

This reflection aligns with Aristotle’s concept of *catharsis*, as the poem allows readers to process the bittersweet pain of unfulfilled potential through the transformative power of poetic expression. Moreover, the idea of a “non-meeting” echoes Heidegger’s philosophy of *being-towards-possibility*, where human existence is defined not only by what is but also by what could have been. The missed encounter becomes more than a singular event; it embodies the universal human experience of navigating the interplay between presence and absence, connection and isolation. In this way, Ghielmi’s work invites readers to contemplate the deeper significance of the spaces left

empty in our lives, and how they shape the texture of our memories and desires.

## IX. CESARANO AND PHILOSOPHY

Lucia Cristiana Cesarano's *Sea* unfolds as a lyrical meditation on the fluid and ephemeral nature of memory, using the timeless ebb and flow of the ocean to explore the delicate interplay between presence and absence. The poem's vivid imagery—"waves crash against the rocks, wetting my face" and "a thousand seagulls rise into flight"—evokes the cyclical rhythm of nostalgia, where fleeting moments resurface like tides, only to retreat again into the vast expanse of time. This connection to the sea mirrors Henri Bergson's concept of *durée*, where time is experienced as a continuous flow rather than discrete, measurable units. Each wave carries fragments of the past, blending the transient beauty of memory with the inevitability of its impermanence. The poem's seascape also resonates with Heidegger's notion of *being-in-the-world*, as the speaker's quiet reflection becomes an existential dialogue with the environment, where the sea acts as both a mirror and a metaphor for the inner self. Furthermore, the rising seagulls, inviting the speaker to linger, embody Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the *eternal return*, suggesting the repetitive yet transformative nature of memories revisited over time. Through its tender and evocative language, *Sea* captures the universal yearning for connection with a past that is both distant and ever-present, inviting readers to embrace the impermanence of memory as a profound and enriching element of human experience.

## X. IMMACOLATA ROSSO AND PHILOSOPHY

Immacolata Rosso's *At the River's Mouth* is a poignant meditation on the passage of time and the emotional weight of memory, using the river as a central metaphor for life's continuous flow. The imagery of "vulnerable waves brushing against rocky edges" and "colorful memories carried by every drop" captures the fragile interplay between holding onto the past and the necessity of letting go. The poem's deliberate pace reflects Henri Bergson's idea of *durée*, where time is not a series of fixed moments but a continuous and fluid experience that shapes our perception of life. As the speaker observes the river "from the height of a day without a clock," the act of surrendering "all the useless things that loom" into the water resonates with Nietzsche's philosophy of embracing the transformative power of letting go, as well as with Heidegger's notion of release (*Gelassenheit*)—a serene acceptance of the flow of existence. The river, mirroring the currents of memory and emotion, also speaks to Simone Weil's idea of beauty as a reflection of universal

truth, as its ceaseless movement embodies the intricate balance of clinging and release. Ultimately, Rosso's poem becomes a profound exploration of how nostalgia can serve not as a weight to bear but as a means of reconciliation, offering readers a vision of freedom through the cathartic act of emptying burdens into the stream of time. Sofiya Samoylenko's *Standing By* is a heartfelt reflection on the tension between authenticity and performativity in modern relationships, offering a poignant plea for simplicity and genuine presence.

The poem's speaker critiques the superficiality of constant engagement, describing it as "caged and staged," and yearns for a return to a time when connection required no artifice, only quiet presence. The invitation to "just sit there in stillness, merely breathing in each other's presence" embodies an existential longing that aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of *mauvaise foi* (bad faith), where societal expectations compel individuals to act inauthentically, masking their true selves. Through the imagery of being "stripped away," revealing "layer after layer" of thoughts and feelings, the poem also resonates with Heidegger's exploration of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), suggesting that true connection arises when one abandons pretense and embraces vulnerability. At the same time, Samoylenko's nostalgic tone recalls Simone Weil's belief in the quiet, universal beauty of presence—an unspoken bond untainted by the noise of modern life. By contrasting the heaviness of societal roles with the lightness of genuine being, *Standing By* invites readers to reconsider the essence of connection, urging them to find courage in the shared silence that speaks louder than words. This tender exploration of vulnerability and intimacy becomes a call to rediscover the profound simplicity of just *being*.

## XI. SOFIYA SAMOYLENKO: THE QUIET ESSENCE OF BEING

Sofiya Samoylenko's *Standing by* is a poignant exploration of the existential tension between the demands of societal interaction and the yearning for authenticity.

The speaker's reflections resonate deeply with the ideas of philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger, all of whom grappled with questions of identity, existence, and the pressures of conformity. The poem's vivid imagery and emotional intensity invite the reader to consider what it means to truly exist in the presence of others without succumbing to the masks and performances that society often demands. At the heart of the poem lies a struggle with authenticity. The speaker describes feeling compelled to appear "interested" and "entertained," engaging in what she perceives as shallow and performative conversations. This tension aligns closely with Kierkegaard's notion of despair, particularly his idea of the despair of



not being oneself. Kierkegaard believed that individuals often adopt personas to fit societal norms, suppressing their true identities in the process. The speaker's longing to escape these superficial interactions and her plea for stillness—“What if we just sat there in stillness / merely breathing in each other's presence”—captures the essence of this existential despair.

It is not merely a wish to avoid conversation but a deeper yearning to connect in a way that transcends words and appearances. The poem also echoes Sartre's concept of *mauvaise foi*, or bad faith. Sartre argued that people often deceive themselves by conforming to societal expectations, denying their own freedom and authenticity. The writer's acknowledgment of feeling “caged and staged” reflects this state of bad faith. She recognizes that her interactions are constrained by invisible boundaries, dictated by social norms and expectations. Her desire to strip away these layers—“Notice layer after layer / of thoughts, ideas, and feelings”—is a cry for liberation from these self-imposed limitations. Sartre would argue that this recognition is a critical step toward reclaiming one's freedom and embracing authenticity. Heidegger's philosophy also provides a rich framework for understanding the poem. His concept of *Mitsein* (being-with) emphasizes that human existence is inherently relational, yet he warns against losing oneself in the anonymity of the crowd.

The speaker's frustration with the performative nature of her interactions reflects this tension. Her longing to connect without the artifice of conversation or performance suggests a desire to encounter others in their most genuine form. Heidegger's idea of authentic being-with emphasizes presence and mutual recognition, where individuals are not merely roles or functions but beings sharing an existential space. This aspiration is beautifully captured in the speaker's wish for silence and stillness, where “you will feel the essence / of what it is I feel / of what it is I think / of what it is I am.” The poem's existential depth is perhaps most evident in the lines, “I think I am too much / But what if even that is not enough?” This paradox encapsulates the human condition as described by existentialist thinkers: the simultaneous fear of overwhelming others and the dread of inadequacy. It reflects the tension between striving to be seen and understood and the fear that one's true self may never be fully sufficient. This dual burden mirrors the broader existential struggle to find meaning and purpose in a world that often feels indifferent to individual desires and needs. The imagery of being “stripped away” speaks to a desire for vulnerability and authenticity, free from the layers of performance and societal expectations. This stripping away is not a rejection of self but rather an attempt to reveal the core of one's being. The speaker's wish to be seen “bare” is reminiscent of Heidegger's call to return to the essence of being, peeling back

the layers of constructs that obscure one's true nature. The act of being fully present, without pretense or performance, becomes an act of defiance against the pressures of modern life.

The poem ultimately challenges readers to reconsider the nature of their interactions and the weight of societal expectations. It asks whether true connection requires words or whether presence alone can suffice. By rejecting the performative and embracing stillness, the speaker offers a vision of authenticity that transcends superficial bonds. This reflection, steeped in existential philosophy, invites us to strip away our own layers and confront the essence of what it means to be. Through its meditative and deeply personal tone, Samoylenko's work draws us into an existential inquiry that is as universal as it is intimate. It is a call to embrace authenticity, to connect without artifice, and to recognize that the essence of being lies not in what we do or say, but in the quiet and profound act of simply existing.

## **XII. CONCLUSION: THE ECHOES OF NOSTALGIA AND THE POETIC THREAD**

As we journey through the poems in this collection, we are reminded that nostalgia is not merely a longing for the past but a profound engagement with the spaces between presence and absence, reality and memory. Each poem offers a unique perspective on the human condition, weaving together imagery and emotion to create a tapestry of reflections that transcend time. Benedetto Ghelmi's *Non-Meeting* leaves us suspended in the bittersweet ache of encounters that never materialized, while Lucia Cristiana Cesarano's *Sea* draws us into the rhythmic tides of memory, both fleeting and eternal. Immacolata Rosso's *At the River's Mouth* provides a poignant meditation on release, teaching us that letting go of the weight of the past is as much an act of love as it is of freedom. Finally, Sofiya Samoylenko's *Standing By* invites us to rediscover the quiet beauty of authentic presence, challenging us to strip away the layers of artifice that distance us from ourselves and others.

Together, these poems remind us that nostalgia is not static; it is a living, breathing force that shapes our understanding of who we are. It allows us to revisit the moments that define us, not to dwell in them but to learn from their echoes. The suspended encounters, the ebb and flow of time, the steady current of memory, and the stillness of shared presence—all come together to form a rich exploration of human emotion and experience. In the end, the collection does not seek to resolve the tensions it presents but instead embraces them, leaving us with a quiet understanding of the paradoxes that define life. The longing for what never was and the celebration of what

remains are not contradictions but complementary threads in the fabric of our existence. Through their words, these poets invite us to linger in the in-between, to find beauty in the unresolved, and to carry the weight of nostalgia not as a burden but as a gentle reminder of our shared humanity.

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