

2015

The Swift River

Francis Blessington

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Recommended Citation

Blessington, Francis (2015) "The Swift River," *Appalachia*: Vol. 66 : No. 2 , Article 19.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol66/iss2/19>

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The Swift River

In the sun-punctured stream
water dances to gold cups and vases,
dazzled over by mobbed mayflies,
the adult spinners living
only minutes, at best, days.

But I search for fish,
the unseen darkneses,
guarding themselves under the shelving,

resting from old competitions,
or bullying insults nosing the surface
beyond their zone. The flash
in air of a mermaid trout free
of the landing net. Furtive marches
perhaps too deep to identify,
shifting plates of the dead leaf bottom.

These whitecaps the rocks endure
will stream when I am not, I who
could stumble off this rock into
the Swift River and fall deeper than thought,
only the cork rod handle twisting
above this peaceful eddy.

No one near. Not the friend
who left me the fly box, nor the beloved
who bid me, "Great Birthday, *so* useless!"
The child waiting at home with the present.

Where the Swift River slides swifter, swifter,
I cast the water-heavy line,
gliding down at pools
and dams and eddies and oceans.
I reel for the leap of the strike.

Francis Blessington

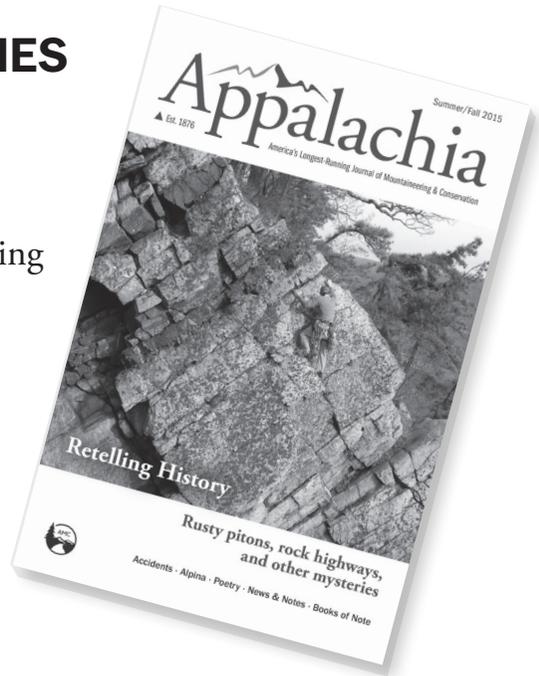
FRANCIS BLESSINGTON'S poems have appeared in *Arion*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Harvard Magazine*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Yale Literary Review*, and *Yankee*, among many others.

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