

## Psoriasis

The bronze plaque  
on Lake Champlain's bridge  
is missing a nail. The empty pit in  
the top left corner is  
the only indication that it has seen  
countless cycles of pouring  
rain and flaring sun.

On this dry afternoon it sits proudly  
above a school of mooneye fish  
swimming upstream toward clearer,  
cooler waters in early April.

In their haste they scrape  
their flattened bellies  
along rock-lined riverbanks.

To swim so fast is rash;  
beneath those silvery scales  
lie hundreds of miniscule eggs,  
pinpoints of new blood waiting  
to be born.

The mooneye head toward  
a quiet inlet where  
patches of watermilfoil float  
in the gently swaying current.  
Exhausted from their pilgrimage,  
the fish twist through  
the plant's feathery whorls  
before reaching stones washed in  
streams of healing sunlight.  
Here, they pause to release  
the eggs, marking out sharp margins  
between crowds of their  
delicate offspring.

A face leans against the window  
of a 1997 Honda as it rumbles  
down the freeway.  
The face turns in the direction

of these tiny clustered globes  
huddled together, waiting for life.  
But all it sees in the water  
is a setting sun reflected on  
its rippled surface,  
and it turns away.

**Bio:** Mara is a third year medical student at Alpert Medical School of Brown University. She is completing a scholarly concentration in the medical humanities, writing a collection of poetry that explores medical language and its intersection with the patient experience. She writes, “ ‘Psoriasis’ has references to different aspects of the disease, which I used as jumping off points for the imagery of the poem. I thought of psoriatic ‘plaques’ and pitting of ‘nails’, which are both manifestations of the disease, so I imagined a plaque and a nail ‘pit’. I also looked at pictures of Lake Champlain Bridge plaques. The rest of the imagery from the poem (‘silvery scales’ of the mooneye fish, ‘healing sunlight,’ etc.) are also similarly based on signs and symptoms as well as treatments for psoriasis.