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Agora

*"Birthplace of Democracy,
the Agora dozes at the foot of the Acropolis.
Athenians thronged here to discuss,
harangue, litigate, philosophize."*

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Cover Photo

Photograph by Gloria Pittella, taken in 1997 at
Belmont Abbey College
which she entitles, "Opportunity."

Contributors

Daniel Blackhorse is a junior Sociology/Psychology major from Iron Station, NC. He enjoys simplicity, intelligence, and sincerity.

Steven DeLong is a sophomore Political Science major from Savannah, GA. He dedicates *Life* to his brother, John.

Jessica Ethridge is a 5'8" tall sophomore here at the Abbey. One will frequently spot her for lunch at the Haid, wearing a cool yellow rain jacket on stormy days.

Russell Fowler teaches English at the Abbey and is the English department chairperson. He has been published in the *Agora* and other journals.

Holly Grimes is a junior from Jamestown, NC.

Wendy Gullege is a freshman at Belmont Abbey College who divides her time between the *Abbey Voice* and playing her trumpet. She attributes her poetry to her musical background and the beauty that surrounds her.

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Mary Hennessey is a freshman Secondary Education major from Savannah, GA.

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Michael Lillard attended the Abbey between 1990-1991 and now works at Rizzoli Bookstore in the SoHo Section of Manhattan. He says he has plenty of time to read and write while riding on the subway.

Linda Owensby works in the Abbey's Office of Administration and Finance at the Abbey along with being enrolled in the ADP program. She feels passionate about nature, animals, and her two children. She loves working at the Abbey and "being in school again."

Matthew McSorely is a Belmont Abbey monk who tried to teach English at the Abbey for 34 years. He won 26 chess matches against the Albanian Junior Chess Champion, last year, on campus. Deep Blue? No way.

Angela Placona is a sophomore Biology major from Tempe, Arizona. In addition to making balloon animals, she plays soccer at the Abbey.

Gloria Pittella attended the Abbey in 1996-7 and now attends Florida International University. She enjoys painting and photography.

Carson Poe attends Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. He frequently performs his work at coffeehouses.

Jessica Roberts is a junior Theology major from Charlotte, NC.

Rachel Sanders is a freshman Biology major from Jacksonville, NC. She enjoys writing in her spare time.

Robert Simms is a junior Philosophy major who transferred to the Abbey this year from the University of Kansas. He attributes his influences to Edward Dahlberg, Arthur Rimbaud, and A.C. Swinburne.

Mary Sharp is a hapless dreamer in search of endless freefalls, soaring heights, and level eye contact. She is a senior from Atlanta, too.

Denis Stokes graduated from the Abbey in 1982 and now serves as the Vice President for Enrollment. He enjoys travel and yard work, spending time with his family, reading modern fiction, and playing golf.

Consuela Tryon is a junior from Goldsboro, NC. She is involved with the College Union Board.

Russell Fowler

Lesson No. 1

Success, after all, is boring.
Nobody writes about it.
The patient relaxes into deep sleep,
smiling the smile of the blest 'til doomsday.
Where's the human interest in that?
The ship run aground in fine weather,
the battle lost, then won, then lost,
the bear coming through the kitchen window,
now there you have something.
Life, after all, is a losing proposition.
If you want to get close to it,
to feel its hoary breath on your face,
best put your money on tragedy, boy.
The next time you encounter some
blind old Greek raving his way up
the mountain, fall in line and follow him.
He knows where he's going.

In Deep Woods

This afternoon, the sun turns formalistic
and mimics the dying arc of time,
the brute world beneath it unsubdued
by metaphor or human comprehension,
except in our minds, when they,
now and again, bump against it.
How to find the dark pines
we call white without looking,
every foot out the door a mis-step,
an unimproved intention. They
will not meet me on my terms,
my efforts to make more of them
than they are, which is some kind
of mundane miracle of unceasing
deliverance locked away in the
deep dark woods where no people are.
The pines sit still and stark,
like old people at a dance
who know no one wants to listen.

Jessica Ethridge

A Week at the Abbey

It's Thursday - classes over
Break out the drinks, Break out the drugs
Shit faced, actin' all shitty
Friday morning hangover in classes
What happened to all my alcohol?
Friday night pimped out, break out
Trashed again, when will this cycle ever end?
Saturday well what can I say?
Sunday afternoon; it's sunny outside
and I've got the homework blues
Now its just Manic Monday
And I'm flyin' straight as an arrow
Doing work, homework and the idiots keep calling
Tuesday same as Monday, but procrastinatin'
That paper due on Wednesday
Tuesday over Abefore it's begun
Late with the paper on Wednesday
I don't care it's in, teacher's angry
Oh well it's Thursday Tomorrow.

Jessica Ethridge

Grim Test

I have an appointment with death
He is to suck my esteemed marrow
His grim sockets will stare, leaving without breath
I sit needing time to borrow

Finality is always unpredictable
Yet other warned seeing my un-signaled signs
His actions, honestly are justifiable
The three point eight hypocrite in the front whines

Death enters the room the air is 35 degrees Centigrade
With a crackle he reveals his sharpened sickle
The deadhead loser walks in late
He thinks that most knowledge is nickel

The rest sit with this test already bequeathed
And my questionable existence will be reaped?
Arm after arm pass my funeral sheathe
I'm ready to flunk, sometimes I wish I was a cheat

I am not a sellout
I have morals to my detriment
Absent students report stricken with the gout
Among this crew my academic career just went

This time I should have opened the book
Because now I hang here like a fish on a hook

*First honorable mention for the 1998 Jean S. Moore Award **

Matthew McSorley

Who me?

Each of us, like all other living things, undergoes daily change,
so that the Matthew of yesterday is gone.

Ergo, I'm a wholly different person today; I'm a new me.

All is flux, movement into something else.

Thus, the word stereotype is a misnomer; we cannot label.

What was is no longer.

Every wave in the ocean is an increase,

a growth into something quite different.

To identify anything is hopeless.

You are you are you are you.

Dachau (1943)

"Your God will not abandon you." Deuteronomy 4:31

I'm only seven years old. Why am I standing here, in the
snow, in my bare feet, with not clothes on? Brr.

And Momma and Papa and Jacob (my nine-year old brother)
and Naomi (my little five-year old sister) all have no clothes on. Why?

It's so cold, and my feet are freezing.

And why are all these people in the line not wearing any
clothes? What's going on?

I look up at Mommy, who's gripping my hand tightly, and
ask, "Why are you crying?"

"Mommy, there's all that smoke up there. Will we soon be warm?"

If only I were old enough to understand. It's all so very
strange, and I'm very hungry."

"Mommy, will we be eating soon?"

Why is she crying so much?

I need to pee. When I ask Momma about it, she says: "Just
do it in the snow." Well, I did but it was not like at home.

We're getting nearer the smoke. And, oh, I can't wait to get
warm. Brr.

Mommy suddenly leans down and says, "Aaron, I love you,
very, very, much."

"And I love you, too, Mommy."

She touched me, lightly, on my cheek. (I wanted to hug her.)

Now, finally, we're next to go into where it's warm.

8 Yahweh is good.

Stephen Iacovo

Remembrance

Do you remember the day we climbed that tree?
The one where we talked about our dreams and what we aspired
to be.

Till this day I still don't know what to say,
Since you are gone and have passed away.

We used to run and play without cease,
Until the neighbors telephoned the police.

I wish you were still here to climb that tree,
But you had a bad day and now you're far away.

How can you leave without warning?
We were too close to be pulled so far apart.

Although I was left to mourn,
Your memories will carry on.

You left an irreplaceable image on me,
And that's how a man ought to be.

Holly Grimes

society

as I gaze
into the starless
night
the wind blows
gently over my face
jazz plays in the
background of my
thoughts.
the street lamp
lights the night
such a crass backwards
world. The
miles pass
like time
my life passes...
Simplicity is within
reach but
confusion
blocks my hand
from grasping it.
The trees tremble
naked for father
christmas in the
runway lights.

The finger of God
you take me wholly
into your arms
your simplicity and grace
enrapture my being
stunningly powerful
you stand like no other
all light shines
through your eyes
as you stare at my soul

It awakens to your dawn
you are fire water
God and passion
you control my heart
like the tide that
glows with candle light
shimmering alone
in the endless sky
you hold my being
and willingly I am obedient
to the soft loving call
of your heart
Gaze into the recesses
of my future
black, unsteady as
the crow's stare;
shivering like an autumn leaf
i stand facing the wind.
It blows my hair and soul
into twisting, contrasting abysses
of dark unknowing.
I falter; unsure.
My claws, like the
eagle's talons, desperately
craving to stay in
the shadow box
that presently encompasses
my being.
and yet the seed of tomorrows
grows and becomes a giant,
constant need to taste the bittersweet fruit of
my attempt to exist....

Cafe du Monde

5 a.m. Sunday

Three city policemen,
hats and radios off,
end their shift with an order of cafe au lait and beignets.

Outside, as the Quarter's streets are hosed,
purged once and for all,
it's almost time for another day of *laissez le bon temps rouler*.

Yet the patrons end their night of wanton ways,
as is coffee and doughnuts will clear their heads,
but their eyes tell the story,
and then some.

Next to me is a girl with a man no doubt three times her age;
she's barely seventeen.

She considers him kind,
as he just paid the two-dollar-and-twenty-cent tab,
while her companion carries on with the waiter—
someone he obviously knows.

They agree it's been a while and the waiter admits
that he's been busy doing *sbit*,
including sometime in jail, he says.

While the girl excuses herself,
an indication of her upbringing and perhaps a sign of how lost she
is,

the waiter takes her chair to sit with his customer—
to catch up.

In the girl's absence,
the waiter gives his friend a nod, a smile,
and a few teenage words of approval.

She returns, the laughter stops,
and the three continue talking about important things—
life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And so another night ends and a day begins in the Crescent City.
Soon,

not far away in St. Louis Cathedral,
Sunday Masses will begin.

The faithful and the wanna-be-faithful will gather for their weekly
dose of peace

and a renewed promise of eternal happiness.

I suppose most of the cafe patrons will be there,
but not until the noon mass.

Glen Hayman

Metamorphosis

I sit in my room, each cough brings new pain, tears fill my eyes. Every time I inhale a thousand knives cut me deep within my chest. In the dark I listen to my breathing, ragged and labored. I wonder what I have done to deserve this. I have lost weight, I look pale and haggard. My life feels like a struggle, each breath is a fight, like breathing in a wet paper bag. Is the fight worth it?

I look into the mirror, but I have no idea who is looking back. Long gone is the 270 lb. man, who had the whole world ahead of him, now all there is, is a 148 lb. shade or shadow too weak to move very much, too frail to be anything.

There is a tube entering into my hand pushing into me what I need to live. The stand it sits on looms behind me like the reaper coming after me. I have put on a bathrobe because nothing I own fits me.

Friends come and go in this room. They look at me with eyes large. They try to speak to me happily and optimistically, but no amount of optimism can hide pure shock.

I am dying. Wasting away physically. Scared is what I am! Lost is how I feel. I have been here about two weeks. The nurses know me by my first name. They smile when they enter, because they know that I will always have a joke or a story for them, it is the only way that I can escape the fear that I might die!

Death is something I have lived with all of my life, with my parents being funeral directors and all. Death is our business, but now I loom over the cliff that separates life from death.

Now God seems all too real. In church, he seemed to be more an abstract. A concept more than a reality, but now, in the dark, I can see why some men turn to him right before they die. Not because they just hope there is a heaven, but because right here, right now, he is real. No, I can't see him or hear him, but I can sense him. A calm in the conflict of my mind, only a second but in that blink of an eye, or that time between the beats of the heart, I felt him! Calm is the only way I can describe it, as if for that brief second the war being waged in my body stopped. Nothing moved, yet at that time, I felt as if I could touch everything at

once. Maybe that is why men of God die with smiles on their faces. They feel this brush with the infinite, this touch of the divine.

After what was both a lifetime and the passing of a heartbeat it was over, yet, in its wake it left me with a gift, a will. A will to fight for the next breath, for the next second. The tears roll down my face, I let them go. I begin to think about something that has not crossed my mind in years, it begins with "Our Father which art in heaven..."

Linda Owensby

Tenderly Calling

God whispers in the gentle breeze,
smiling with sunlight through lacy leaves,
soothing our spirits with morning mist,
guarding frail hopes by peaks soft-snowy kissed.

With starlight He dusts the dim, dewy nights,
creating a palette of myriad sights,
cleansing our hearts with remnants of rain,
sealing His pact, removing our pain.

In moments of peace He repairs our souls,
defending, protecting, making us whole,
allowing us time to come to know Him,
forgiving forever our innermost sin.

In pools of still water he cradles our cares,
quietly, patiently remembering our prayers,
answering each need before it is known,
leading so tenderly His timid ones home.

Robert Simms

Aegis for Air

"Intolerance is the work of ravaged souls whose faith comes down to a more or less deliberate torment they would like to see generalized, instituted."
- Emile Cioran

The sun has wept at violent grammars
Lachrymal sores, black woebegone rings.
She knots the breath of her eloquent strings
And peals of beauty are frustrated stammers.

We are each this matter; Progeny
Of Angel's breath, sonnets trussed in vowels,
We disarmed whispers, we fierce red howls,
We restless embers of geography.

Ah, what hearts, shackled from nascence
To yellow tongues in a Nazi chorus,
Would break grammars goose-step cadence
For new breath: inflamed, inspired, sonorous?

So allow those minds their words to cherish
Lest the range of ours decay and perish.

** Second honorable mention for the 1998 Jean S. Moore Award **

Carnation

Against silk red petals her nose is pressed.
She swells in the strong air of blooms.
Her timid eyes fall like unstrung moons.
As she inhales the floral drunkenness.

A burgundy flame overcomes my sense.
Desire sounds the boom of my heart.
Her soft full lips slowly come apart.
As she inhales the breath of her presence.

And I burn
To press her in some failing light!
Know her shape bent against the night!

But no,
I will take no more than this.
No smiles, no snares, no trembling kiss,
No be eaten with grief
As the penitent thief
Of her bodies first warm panting.

Sunflower

"No knowledge rightly understood can deprive
us of the mirth of flowers."- Edward Dahlberg

Sunflower, our bloom is a purplish-red,
An inflamed complexion of love.
Your warmth has smeared me with colors and mirth,
My limbs glow bronze near your sex!

In my fevers of solitude
You are a harmony of vowels and flowers.
Your radiant hair is washed in marigolds,
Your pink-pale hips with rose.

I dream of your amplexical petals
Giggling around a delirious root
As I kiss, mad and happy,
At the pit of your peach-tender throat.

You are, in my heartache, a perennial flame.
Were there only more than these lily-white sighs
To fill this time apart.



"The Watchful Twins"

Mary Hennessy

STOMA

there's a hole in the ceiling and I watch it well
when it opens I run like Pavlov's dog to a bell
metal hatch doors swing open wide
curious face peeks in to see who's inside
there I stand before the mechanical tongue
the gate acts as mouth and anus in one
inside - I labor, prepare, and complete
above me flows the activity of the street
deliveries will come, shipments will go
without concern for the individuals below
yet it's safer down here away from the street's actions
frantic blitz of beings with their illegal transactions
I know my duties, where my responsibilities lie
and choose to play the game called 'demand and supply'

** Winner of the 1998 Jean S. Moore Award **

Dutch Masters

I

bearded rogues, orange-faced from candlelight
huddled around the table
toking their pipes
warm expressions surround their toothless orifices
as the dark-clad gentlemen
discuss the Winter's distress

II

vile drunkard in the doorway stirs from his sleep
as the silent hag passes
her purse he hopes to reap
a stare like burning ice meets him in the eye
as her curse disables him
in the gutter he shall die

III

children swarm like rodents from the alleyways
scamming and pilfering from
the marketplace is crawling with commercial activity
as participants all argue for bargains
with selfish energy

Angela Placona

My Underbrush

I crept in and observed the world around me
the sun beat down
and my curious, little eyes glistened

I was safe in my underbrush
I could see the world
but it couldn't see me

A young, ten year old's game
like a spy
silently investigating a new case

I peak out between the curling leaves
of the underbrush
I see a strong, protective, perfect man

My father spraying down the car
a typical Sunday thing to do
in the hot of June

I blink from the light streaming in my underbrush
out comes my mom, a stern look on her face
we need to talk she says, glancing around

My body itched with anticipation
I'll get to hear an adult conversation
hiding in the underbrush

So they talked, as voices rose
and I watched carefully
safely hidden in my underbrush

In a flash my father dashed into the wet car
I remember him yelling
How could you do this to me and the kids

My mother fell to her knees
she yelled out, It's over, there is no more
then she drugged inside so no one would hear her cries

My eyes now glistened for a different reason
in shock, I had heard the adult conversation
When were they planning on telling my sister and me

My perfect childhood of fun and safety
ended in one day
as I hid way down in the underbrush

I stayed there for hours, letting the tear drops fall
the sun is setting as I realize I did a lot of growing that day I saw
the world from my underbrush

Carson Poe

Boomerang

Two small boys in thick woods stumble upon train tracks
The younger places penny on left track -
right depending on your orientation.
The other, older and more adventuresome,
Carefully extracts picture of family from kangaroo hide wallet
And lays it beside penny.
"But Johnny, my penny isn't worth anything," the younger says.

The sun is low when train comes
The two small boys hide in thick wood and watch
Two relics get hit.
The younger rushes to find penny flat and in tact.
The other, slower and more reluctant,
Picks up photo to find his face blemished and torn from the other three.
"See Johnny," says the younger noticing the tear,
"told you mine wasn't worth anything."

Wendy Gullede

I am?

I am unknown to light; I am the cell that holds you. I am the chains that raps around your limbs. I am the silencer and the murderer of minds. I appear in life, death and in your eyes. I am known by many names, but I am mostly known as the destroyer. I am ignorance.

Who's the Music Maker?

Welcome to my world, a place of sharps and flats; a place of harmony and melodies a place of music. Let me open the gates so you may enter my field of dreams. You can see the pure beauty of nature and hear its sounds. But if you listen closely you can hear my sound, the sound of music. Here in my field, music harmonies, every note rather sharp or flat fits perfectly. And it is here where the beats lead the rhythm to a magical creation of a song. And here nature plays all the instruments in an orchestra, all but one. The trumpet: an instrument of high and low octaves, an instrument that plays as smooth as it looks. The sound of music being acted out, it's alive. And the trumpet is played by a person, sitting under a tree. A person so like myself, but yet so unlike myself. And I sit and listen as the music plays, and I don't think, but yet I do. I think how the wind moves the grass and the leaves and how it looks like they are dancing to the music, I see how it sways to the rhythm, and beats. And how everything fits like a work of art. And I learn how a masterpiece is created naturally. And then it ends or does it, although the trumpeter is no long playing I look and see that the grass is still swaying, the wind is still blowing and the waves are still crashing against the shores. And I look under the tree and the trumpeter is gone as fast as it appeared. And I notice that an object is in my hand, a work of craftsmanship, a work of silver, a pure work of art. Behold it is the trumpet.

Consuela Tryon

Notes Dancing

swaying, rocking, side to side
her head
to the rhythm of the
notes dancing,
dancing around the room,
bouncing off walls,
slinking through the open window.
Music pounding,
Shaking photo frames from their
resting places
the clicking of knick knacks
rattles, mingles, with the notes
mingling, winding, twisting
together
wrapping the room in a euphoria of sound
swaying, rocking, side to side
her head
to the rhythm of the
notes dancing,
dancing out the window
into the garden
tickling the lilies
waltzing with the pansies and
frog jumping the daisies.
Notes dancing
across the field catapulted by the grass blades
one by one
into the icy blue
water
dipping, diving, drowning,
Silent.

Mary Sharp

Untitled

The games my mind play are my ruin.
I live in a world of make-believe.
in a relentless pursuit for someone to hold me.
Once again I create a world that was never to be.
I need to regain my strength.
For a momentary time,
emotion invaded my heart.
Grazing the surface,
the innocence of my life sent me soaring.
I floated on mythical feelings,
allowing myself to get lost in the moment.
I let you inside.
you saw nothing.
Blinded by your fear
what I realized how cold I had become.
In all my nakedness,
you never sought to warm me, touch me.
I have closed the door to you.
pad locking my fate of nothingness.
As before, I lose the keys to my fortress.
Branding my soul so I will never forget what I am
A solitary drifter, scarred and deformed,
breathing a world of rejection.

Dan Blackhorse

Passion

It's the warm, electrical response of
bodies communicating through touch:
the chaotic feeling of surrendering
one's inhibitions; the harmonious
repetition of motion; the surprise
sensation of reaction; exercising the
desire to share; mutually satisfying
curiosity with physical experience;
the reverse beauty of being recumbent.

Jessica Roberts *Awaiting His Arrival*



Christina Arsena
My Sights of Ireland

Endless hills and pastures of green shiny grass.

Clear blue Irish skies with cottonball clouds.

Sheep with their color identification sprayed on their creamy tangled fleece.

The clearest of sea water.

Friendly seals who love performing for the locals.

The endless miles of flat stone walls that fit together like puzzles

Interesting sea creatures gripping the rock monuments by the water's edge.

Cases of Rainbows

Friendly cows who console the happy Irish and foreign drunks.

The crisp scents of the peat that warm us in the June and July evenings.

The family oriented pubs that line the streets of every little town in Ireland.

Those who dance in the middle of the pub to the traditional Irish folk music.

Embarrassed tourists who are drawn to the center to learn a little Irish dancing
by the masters.

The energetic and slightly intoxicated musicians who play a half dozen instru-
ments in one short tune.

The speedy yet careful artistic bartenders who pour black and white gold

Cows that roam the golf courses with the dedicated golfers.

Beautiful flowers the cover the countrysides.

The thatched cottages with wild flowers growing from thatched roofs.

Thick sweaters that swallowed their wearer up with one gulp.

A boat resting on the Aaron Island beach inlet that bares the name "Christeen."

Cheerful German tourists combing the beaches for their shellfish dinner.

Old men arguing in the Gaelic language.

The roof tops of Ireland.

Lovers walking through the streets embracing each other.

Couples hitchhiking, with suitcases at their ankles, taking a break to give each
other a passionate kiss on the side of the highway.

Soccer games being played of all ages in the church courtyard.

Mothers calling their young ones for dinner.

The sun not resting until late in the hours.

Green eyes and fiery red hair.

Finally, the gentle sound of an Irish accent.

Rachel Sanders

The Innocence of Youth

You stare with innocent and loving eyes.
In time I'll teach you to be strong and wise
To fight the battles in this world of yours,
Since life is like a chain of unplanned wars.

You can't do much yourself right now,
But I'll raise you and guide you and teach you how
So that when you are to life my gentle care,
Life's twists and turns won't create a scare.

For now that's all my sweet and precious child.
Sleep tight and let your dreams run wild.

Steven Delong

Life

not a white sand beach
nor larger than life tropical mansion
overlooking a lagoon
where perfectly content folks
swim nude and drink cocktails in the hot sun
served to them by the less fortunate,
less educated, the less worthy survivors

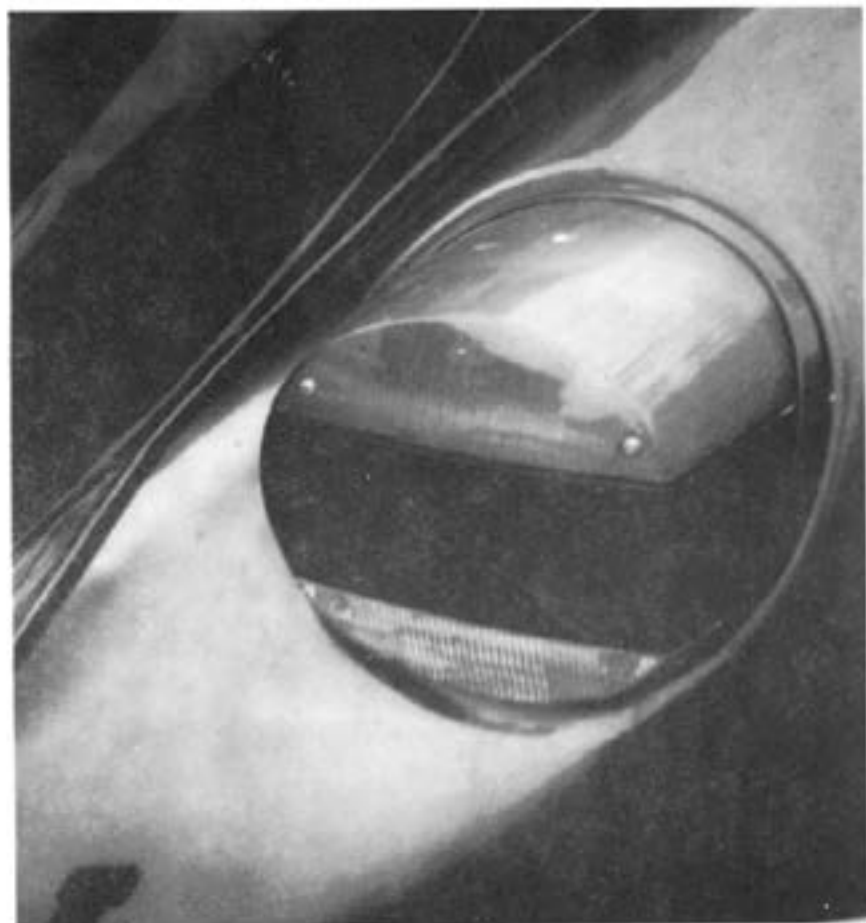
not even a shoreline on the horizon

and my arms are tired
I am fatigued
unable to carry on my shoulders
the dreams and expectations of others
I just want to float
to sleep in the sea

you're going down this path, I know
I've been there before
of course
you're not listening
I've heard it before
Then why do you continue like this
because, the path is not the same, times have changed
and I walk a new walk, I scamper and prance down
your alley of despair

the white sand beach has no lagoon
nor larger than life tropical mansion
no one lives there
but the man in tattered clothes and the manual typewriter
with a bottle of vodka in his left hand
and he doesn't care about much
but the words
that flow on the sea of white
elegant and poignant and usually drunken

but always always
selfless.



Rearview

Mary Hennessy

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Beth Barger

Lynn Varn

Nancy Duffner

Jett Parsley

International Minute Press, Gastonia

Agora is published by students every spring at Belmont Abbey College. Next year, submissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, plays, photos, and pen-and-ink drawings can be submitted during the year or formally during the submission round in January.

Submitted literary works must be typed duplicate. A cover sheet containing name, address, telephone number, and a brief biographical profile along with the names of your submissions must be included. Photographs and drawings must be submitted with copies and/or photos negatives. Submissions not meeting these requirements will not be accepted.

Annually, the Jean S. Moore Award will be awarded by the editorial board to the top literary submission. The winning entry will receive a cash prize of fifty dollars and be recognized in *Agora*. Notification of the award will be in April.

To submit work or to ask for more details, write to:

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