

AGORA

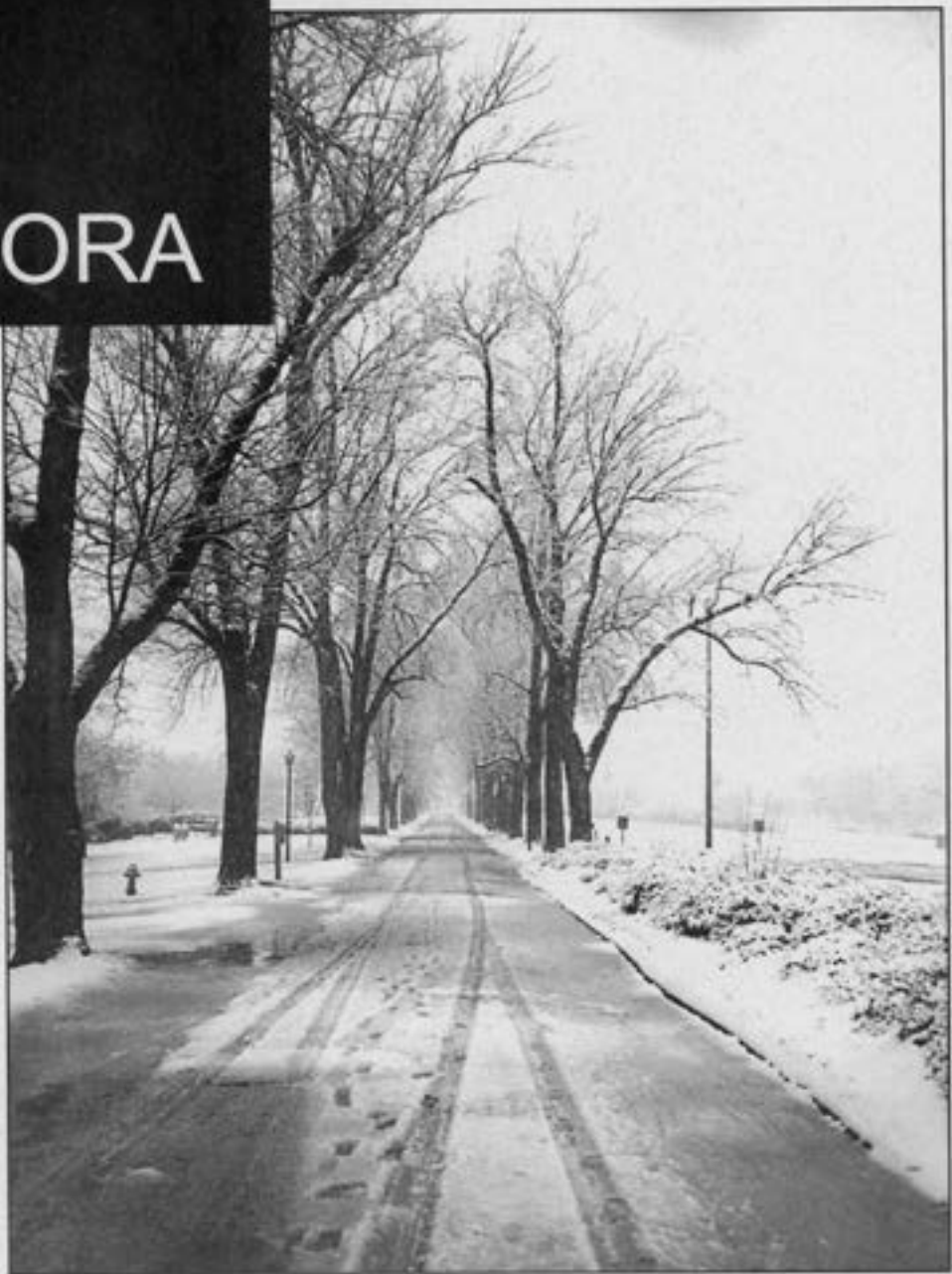


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Agora

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

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Editors

Matt Memrick
Jennifer Torpey

Production Editor

Miranda Lockey

Coffeehouse Coordinator

Sonia Breit

Moderator

Mary Ellen Weir, RSM

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Hannah Arel
Honey Azari
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Leo Fowler, OSB
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Cover Photo

Photograph by Jennifer Torpey, taken in 1999
at Belmont Abbey College which she entitles,
"Juxtaposition."

The Unheard Voice

Amid the multitude of children, the fatigued women worked.
Though they tried, it wasn't enough- there weren't enough hands.
Most children sat alone, stoic and listless,
Waiting for mommy and daddy to pick them up.

There was one child, however, who wished to be heard.
He tried so hard to get someone, anyone's attention.
But he couldn't speak, only cry.
He'd stop after getting hoarse and go to sleep.

Why can't anyone hear me? I'm cold.
I want to be hugged and cuddled.
Someone please listen.
I'm cold.

When will my mommy be back? I'm tired
I want to be rocked to sleep.
Is anyone there? Does anyone care?
I'm tired.

Why am I here? I'm hungry.
I want my bottle, warm this time.
I wish I could talk.
I'm hungry.

Amanda Walker

Nocturne

As the metaphor slips away
The image remains:
two still sleepers
sketched on cotton-white canvas.
The facing forms touch at
forehead
hands and knees.

As this image slips away
feeling remains:
those three human interfaces,
points of
quiet kinesis
magnetic stasis and
new God-bond.

Wordless, the sleepers' expression
is complete, for all of love's reasons.

Sonia Breit

Scivias

this evening drags its dying summer,
storms wait at the shore. the wide sky is mine
and mine,
for the bird on the rock to sing
the listen of my next note

and oh if all this is so

then why don't you
blend to the blue
that breathes me
through the sunsunk tree?

Mary Ellen Weir, RSM

Oilcan

In the end, I am not sure why I feel the way I do about this evening? I mean I just cannot place the emotions I am feeling right now! I am not sure if it is hurt, anger, or simple pain. It might possibly be a mixture of all of those things to varying degrees.

I mean, Matt and I, in my eyes, are best friends, but at this moment the feelings I am having towards him are not the best in the world. I am angry at him. I really happen to be pissed at him! The question is why? Why do I have this anger, and what purpose does it help?

I went to find Matt this afternoon. I was going shopping for some room items and I needed a friend to go along. Maybe it is simply because I do not like to be alone. Well, while looking for him at publix, I saw a girl that he introduced me to that he worked with named Kelly.

Kelly, in the world's eyes may not be a supermodel, but to me she had an exotic type of beauty. Dark eyes, dark hair, and a beautiful smile, topped off with a sharp wit and good intellect, a hard thing to find in many women, but all in one almost an impossibility.

Matt introduced us one night while at a coffeehouse. I let loose with my patented Bombast. Coming on as strong as I could. Playing both the fool and the genius, and serving, for the most part, as entertainment for the evening. I did it, I guess, because it is simply easier for me to deal with people like that, rather than to get to let them know anything about who I am dealing with while letting them know only what I want them to know about me.

I had them rolling in laughter. Everyone was smiles. I actually found myself very attracted to those dark brown eyes and that half-cocked smile, but I could tell that I overwhelmed her, that she really did not know how to deal with me.

Well the next time I met Kelly it was planned! We met at the same coffeehouse as before. I tried to level with her better as the man I truly am, less bombast and more of the actual me, but as I tried that I could sense that this made her uneasy. In fact I think it scared her. She had this one picture of me and then I show her the actual me and it did not impress her at all. So I slid back in the bombast and the jokes flowed. It looks like they were happy again so I let it go.

We went on a walk the four of us down to River Street. Yeah, I said four, but Kelly's friend does not matter in the overall telling of the story so I will only mention her as needed, and I noticed that Matt and Kelly walked closer than I really understood. Also Kelly's body language seemed to show that she was trying to get close to Matt.

I went to ask myself why, but I did not, Matt was a good guy having issues with his girl-

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friend, who he truly loves, and I saw this as at least fair too him because his girlfriend hurt him so badly. So I let it go.

When we got back to the car, I decided it was time to back off of the whole issue, I mean what harm was it doing, it was not like he was leading her on or anything.

Well, Matt's girlfriend came back, and it looked as if their issues were put to rest and so was the Kelly issue, I was wrong.

So tonight we all went out Kelly, Matt, and I, shopping. I noticed that there was something up when Matt asked her to sit in the back with him. An unusual request in my car. They sat in the back very close to one another. And as we went from store to store the causal contact became more and more deliberate. This began to bother me a little because I knew Kelly had not idea that there was someone else in Matt's life. As the night went on, I realised that I was not wanted much by either party, I guess I made them both nervous for different reasons. So nervous in fact that I believe that their going to the movies was going to be a secret until I overheard them talking about it. That hurt, not because I was not invited, but that they felt that I should not even know about their going.

My anger comes because I know Matt is playing with this girl, and I will not do anything to stop it. I cannot. I am not even sure why I give a damn about this girl at all, I mean she blew me off, she should get what she deserves, but then there is that little voice that had his heart broken so many so many times that it keeps me from saying a word. I mean Matt knows it is an illusion, as well as I do, but to her it is real and to destroy that for someone is more than I can do. Sometimes that unreal things are all life gives us, but should I be the one that destroys all those dreams. Could I do that, because I remember that fantasy sometimes is all you have.

So I sit here talking to my computer, not the first sign of sanity, but it is the only thing that I can talk to at them moment. Lamenting my own sense of morality. I just do not what I can do, anyway someone gets hurt and that is Kelly, I feel she has done nothing to deserve that. So I sit in silence, looking at the happiness in her eyes, and hope that in the end it is not my soul that takes the blame for this. The Tinman only wanted a heart. Well take it from me, dude. It is easier to live life without one, much easier.

Glen Hayman

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Fall Break

Here on this bench I sit watching
That Carolina Blue roll capriciously out of the sky
Blindly, it suffocates with annoying panic
Zombie like bodies careen around
Keeping to their schedules safe and sound
Unaware as flakes of skin are blown off the trees
By the warm stale breath of the fall breeze
Bees hammer by with their wings of lame
Sadly, as a remainder of my dehydrated brain
These eyes cannot shut and rest and rest from this climate
And it's too dry to shed any cathartic tears

Jessica Ethridge

Here

The rain comes, goes, no one's
the wiser. We imagine ourselves,
always, somewhere else. Doing
something. Moving on. Yet
here we are the very next day,
poised, once more, for flight,
full of far fetched destinies,
setting off splendidly somewhere
yet always in the same room.
And the rain comes, goes,
no one's the wiser.

Russell Fowler

She blows strawberry kisses

I lie and observe Bailey
Nursing on a blanket
Which will never be his mother.
I see a northern lad
In my mind's eye
Dancing his life away.
A walk downtown-
And a Jewish jig
With long haired girls in flowing skirts,
Friendly men with beards
Complimenting my last dance.
Coffee in a familiar shop
A voice from a body
That doesn't quite fit-
Though striking in sound.
Sleepless nights
Full of exhausted bodies
Pandemonium-
A word I used as a little girl
When spelling bees were top priority.
The wallpaper rotates with the seasons
Fall is a gorgeous time to be home.
I was in a collision today
With a country boy who offered me a joint
As compensation
"No damage done," I said
Continuing on my way
To pawn a violin of eight years
That never paid off.
A cracked barn, crack houses,

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Girls on crack, my cracked tooth...
Home is where the heart is
And he's absolutely lavender with jealousy
Because green can be so blase.
Missing my stars and wondering
How far my trust will reach.
Blessed with an indispensable amount
At the wrong times
Haphazardly compelling me into digression
Shortening my name to those first three letters
As I shortened my hair and
She blows strawberry kisses
To all those who pass by.

Angela Guess



Bird Feeder

Kristin Kiant

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Lost Chances

Fate bestowed a gift by chance;
It beckoned on the shore.
I know not whence it came-
It simply bolted through the door!
Within my grasp it slipped away;
Silently it tread.
Vanished ere I knew it came,
The chance, do tender, fled.

Upon my perch I see below
All semblance of a life.
So late I learned to just enjoy,
That time is always ripe.
Chances, oh so fleeting, must be
Held forever tight,
Else ownership forsaken and
Forfeit every right.

Beside me ever watching
Is the thing I cannot see,
and lack of recognition
Bemoans my destiny.
Too late! 'Tis passed-
The hour ceased to be;
For at the door, within the lock,
Time turns the stolen key.

Linda Owensby

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LN

(names changed to protect the innocent)

i once wrote for ellen.
i was five
and she lived in the bend around the corner
she lived in the bend where i told her my
daddy drinks and where i scraped
knees - clumsy on bikes the gravel we fall - too short
or too tall to stand again without
her hand mitten to mind
(i still lean on psychology reverse to the time)

her days interrupted in hopscotch vigor,
holding a bug lightening bolt, prying at splinters.
Impossibilities. Taking Turns. Tranquilities.
(familiar word(s) still unknown)

she was ellen.
her hair was ... and
her eyes were ... and
her birthday was ... and
her house was two stories. Stairs to climb.
a pinnacle to reach.
a point to being friends.
always the two stories.
so many bends. so many corners
to turn into.

The pigeons in her back yard,
bred on Mother's bread. Yet

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they fly away with sly confessions to make leaving our sidewalk chalk
simply dust behind.

Oh.
her hair.
and her eyes.
and her birthday must have been in May
when sullen showers bring Dutch flowers and me running to her
doorstep.

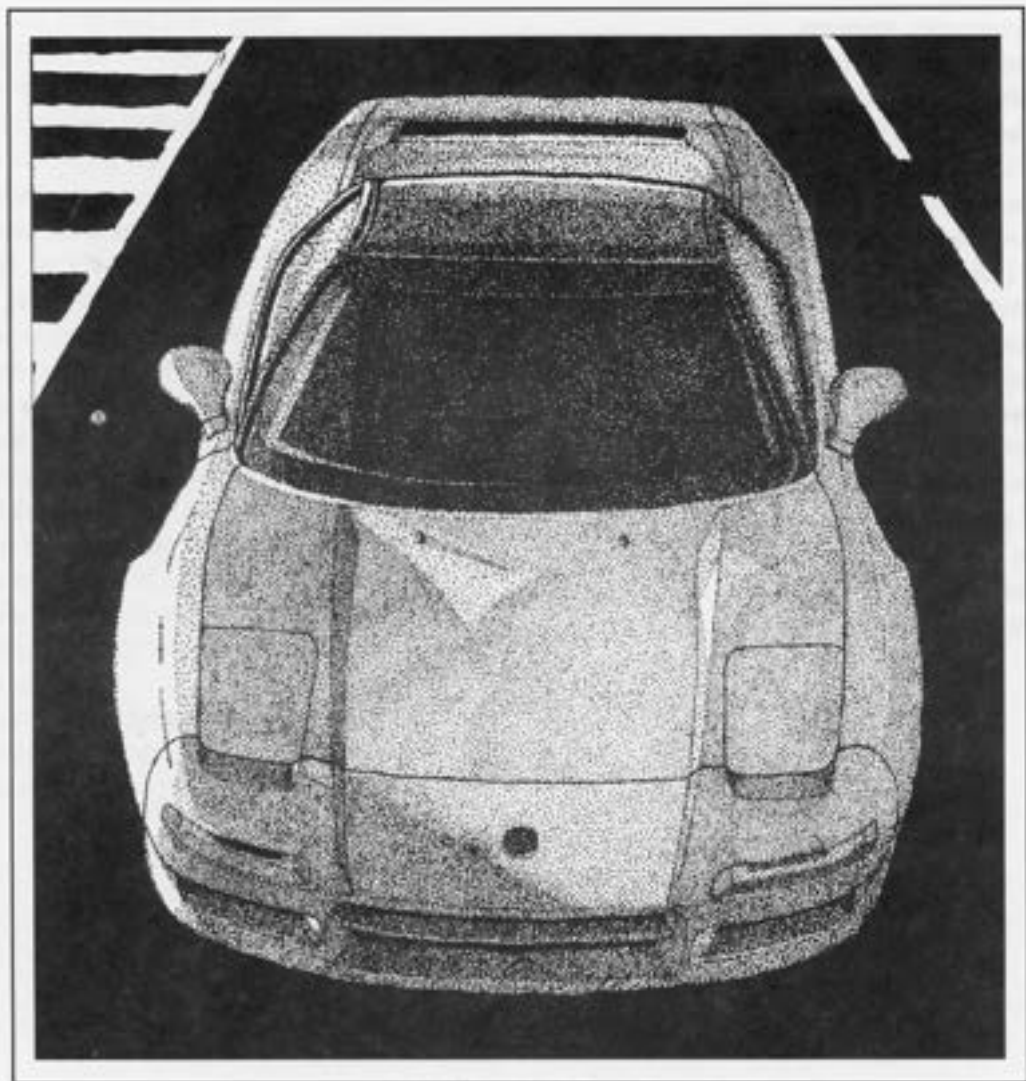
So years later,
with language long expired and
the streets bland the same,
I write, for another Ellen.

Carson Poe

Snowbirds

I want to walk naked in Antarctica
I want to freeze sleepily to death
Maybe then, my Romantic heart will numb
And my cynic, brutish brain will remain
I want to stop thinking- it only causes trouble
The quiet snow swirls in the yellow motion light
Its sight is temporary relief of an ostracizing burden
Crushing, suffocating me to death
Mozart drown the noise, relieve me
To an empirical plain, where we can dance
In a blizzard of empty emotion

Jessica Ethridge



Road Test

Rob Rodite

Honeysuckle Mornings

Honeysuckle mornings
And fiery red nights,
Silver moons fading into
The backdrop of a silver screen;
And I shall curtsy at the proper moment.
Hand my life to me on a platter
And watch me purge after the binge.
If I adorned myself in gold
Would I not be a fraud?
For silver is my preference
Lest consideration for others
Not be proven
I will balance myself
On this taught rope around my neck
If you then condemn me
So shall I be condemned
For apparently I hold not
My own life in my arms

But a lock
To which they hold the key-
and if by chance I am deemed worthy
to be given a copy
May I be presented with
An instruction manual also
For I would be at a loss
How to run my own life
And such great sorrow is seen
By those who view this scene
From the outside
For they know the anguish
Which I cannot yet comprehend
And know nothing of
Writing and simple pleasures
Are for naught
When it is deemed worth
To choose a profession
Suitable in a time where wealth
Is a standard
And that which is forthrightly desired
To maintain the respectable ranking

Angela Guess

Driving back from that Coker game

Driving back from that Coker game
Where a family mocked us
Because they couldn't handle being losers
And we're jammin' in the backseat
Until a curb breaks our ride,
And our tires on the right-hand side.
Hazards on and a polite cop
Who calls the wrecker,
And we pile 5 into the cab plus Bailey-
A tight squeeze, dropping 2 of us off
At a lonely gas station.
Traveling down empty roads, old roads, dirt roads
Losing my sense of direction
Wondering where he's taking us
Trusting this is an honest and decent guy
And thinking it wasn't the best idea
To separate the four of us.
And finally we're at this tiny mobile home
Soon inside to watch "wrestling"
With the old lady
Tired and in her bathrobe
Sweet but maybe a little ignorant,
Or just country...

And she's blunt, allergic to silver,
But there's something refreshing about her.
Hoping that T and Mellie are ok
Wishing he would hurry with those tires
Praying that it will be cheap enough to write a check
Only guessing at the time.
The satellite is changing stations and the static
Is an annoying, incessant sound
And this lady keeps talking and talking
about sex and smoking and her kids
With a few derogatory comments
So that I get the feeling that she may be
More than a little homophobic,
And how many times must we hear Beth's life story?
So we wait and then it's done
And the check I write is worth more than it says;
All of a sudden we're on our way home again
Driving back from that Coker game.

Angela Guess





Gary Bowers

Mind Walk I

Thoughts of John

Will I see you when I get there?

When it is all said and done, will I get to the place of final reward. The last thing I remember was the time I held you, the first and last time. I held you like I had nothing to lose in the world, I already knew where you were going. I wanted to hate you, you the object that had caused so many fights in our house.

The fact your mother had you out of spite toward our family. You were the wedge that had been driven into my life. You had made my life hell, between the fights at home, and the giggles and laughing at school, you destroyed my life with the creation of yours. At church I could not even face the pastor, because he knew, he knew that your mother had done this for an evil reason. "Remember it's not the child's fault," that is what he said to me, but then again it was all your fault. You were what began this whole slide down hill. And GOD I wanted to hate you, I needed too. It was the only way I could stay sane. If I could hate you maybe I could learn to heal, but the hurt will always be there. Maybe if I could hate you I could be redeemed, but then you came early, three months early in fact you weighed less than three pounds. You were not expected to live.

But then you were doing fine, great in fact! This little boy that could fit into the palm of my hand. I sang you to sleep. Now I am here holding you in my arms. The first and the last time I can ever touch you, because I know. The tubes that make you take breath are not to be here long. I hold you in both arms like some long lost treasure, the child I never wanted born, my second nephew. I was only seventeen, but I knew that it was close to the end. I knew that your little body was losing the fight and then you stopped moving in my arms. And I knew that it was over. I had seen death in all forms, but I never felt the sadness that was there like this time.

You were in my arms. You were there looking at me with those pale slate eyes now holding nothing. YOU DIED IN MY ARMS!!!! Why did you have to do that. God why did that have to happen to me. I still cry at times about it, I can't help but pick up a child with a certain fear that it will happen again, But my greatest hope is that if there is a heaven, that I will see you again, that I will be able to say to you that I rocked you to sleep, and to tell you that no matter how hard I tried to hate you, in the end we shared a bond that I can never lose, I love you in a way that I can never truly show, please let me sing to you another song, we have until the end of time, now!

Glen Hayman

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The Journey

1

One of the signs of relying on one's own deeds
is the loss of hope when a downfall occurs.

2

Your desire for isolation,
even though God has put you in the world to gain a living,
is a hidden passion.

Your desire to gain a living in the world,
even though God has put you in isolation,
is a comedown from a lofty aspiration.

3

Antecedent intentions
cannot pierce the walls of of predestined decrees.

4

Rest yourself from self-direction,
for what someone else has carried out on your behalf
you must not yourself undertake to do it.

5

Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you,
and your negligence of what's demanded of you,
are the signs of the blurring of your intellect.

6

If in spite of intense supplication,
there s a delay in the timing of the gift,
let that not be the cause of your despairing.
For He has guaranteed you a response
in what He chooses for you,
not in what you choose for yourself,
and at the time He desires, not the time you desire.

Robert Davis



Abbey on the Rocks

Miranda Lockey

I'll Fade

It's just an hour or so
since I walked away.
You went the other way.
There's no rain to blame
this time
for the attitude
you couldn't stifle
while I smiled at you
as we said we'd always remember.
But I'm sure that
as you move along
down the street
then stopping for a car to pass
if you'd close your eyes
I'd fade away.

But if not
then sometime
later that day
or another week
when you come across something
I might have liked...
But you can't quite get my smile right
and it no longer seems a worthy cause
So even as hard as you're thinking
close your eyes and
I'll fade away.

Miranda Lockey

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Changes

Changes and the unknown,
All the things that make us cringe.
Living life, blind to reality
Something is waiting for revenge.
Growing old, darkness overcomes
Fear dancing with death, takes hold.
Traveling to the setting sun
Death is becoming so bold.
Take charge of your life, live on the edge
Make the best of who you are.
Live each moment until you're dead
And leave as a shooting star!

Karla Wiggins

Absence

Staring at the absence of you,
made real by the stone that keeps you down,
I remember the smiles you threw at me
whenever you weren't listening.

My lazy smile comes back
and I forget
any argument
that could cloud the good
that rests in your memory;

the memory I keep accurate
with my healing,
hoping that
moving on does not mean moving away.

Miranda Lockey



Face Youth

Nehemiah Owen

improper's kiss

Were we ever properly introduced?
i don't recall it at least.
how i somehow wish we were.
perhaps through our own misfortune
this haphazard world would
never have entangled our lives.

But, oh, how i know you!
to remain improper is bliss.
would our eyes have ever
locked and our lips touched
if it had not been for improper's kiss?

so, come let us dance.
let us laugh out loud
at remorse proper
destiny is not in our
hearts. proper destiny
is only a myth!

David Beaumont

definition of snappers

Thursdays
late at night
piled in cars
borrowed from friends
stepping to and fro
as the music jamz an jamz
the night dwindles
so do we awaiting
the sweet delights
of drunken nights
consequences
in tommorows class

David Beaumont



There's a Bridge Down Yonder

Hollie Knowles

Jean S. Moore Award Recipient

The Jean S. Moore Award was established in 1998 in memory of the late Jean S. Moore, an Abbey English professor. Each year the recipient of this award receives publication in Agora and a cash prize of fifty dollars. This year's award was recieved by Mike Wade. This award represents the top submission as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity and originality.

Bound for the Trashbin

The sign on her back reads
"\$500 fine for tampering this."
Roger Day is playing in the
background of the Carolinas Plus
meeting and my friend Marshall
is Red Hot and Bothered and the
clones are after Dean Markly as
he strums his golden
guitar with bronze strings
on his back porch. The End is
coming and it's only 106.5
degrees to the left of center.
There's a six month jail sentence
waiting for the captain of the
Elizabeth II when she returns but

rumor has it she's lost at sea.
Purple faces and the Rock The Votes
are marching with Arizonians,
Californians, the Flat Duo Jets,
and the 3rd Inf. Division are after her.

Joe's not knocking on the
front door, which is good because
I'm in the middle of an outa '
Jamie experience. New Mongrals are
tripping daddies on her playground
as the voice of the D.J. says,
"Here's the most back to back
country on the radio," but I've
already changed the station.

Smiley faces, sad faces,
scared faces, some with no faces,
a guy named Bob, all chanting
"Faith No More."

Faith no more in what, I do ask?
God? Can't be for we are in the
middle of the Bible Belt.

In being so miserable with out
you it's like having you here?

Just maybe, just maybe not.
Who knows?

The guy in the back with the
funny haircut sitting next to
his date, which has too much
makeup on, who, in reality, is
thinking of the guy three tables
over and one up who just
happens to be thinking of
the woman to the left of
him and how much he wants
to bag her but yet
little does he know the she's
a sixteen year old runaway
who's been runnin' for a awhile
but is only half a block
from home and plans to go
back there when the guy
who's playing guitar with a
cigarette
hanging out of his mouth
while at the same time thinking
that his fingers hurt and
he wants to go home but

can't find his keys and
why bother going anyways because
all the Manson and Korn
burn outs wanna' be Beats
are throwing money at him in
a friendly way
for a change and puts his
guitar down, might know.

Then she'll go home.
What will she find there?
I don't know.

Maybe the doper sitting outside
the Pizza Hut knows but
he's to busy counting out
of state plates on an
empty highway overpass while,
to no one's surprise,
meandering bums trip acid and read
dirty magazines only three
hundred yards away while
wondering if the centerfold
really like puppies, ice cream,
poetry, and good backrubs,
and if she like doing it
all in the same positions she is
doing in the pictures while
wanting and aspiring to
finish college,
marrying a rich man,
and saving the world.
Maybe Alan and William
and Jack could tell me
but their at the big
complaint session in

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pill will make me wiser, I don't know
Right now I feel like the prom queen
at Attica.

Like Rocker Boy says, "Tact is only
needed when the person is too stupid
to understand blatant," or
something like that.
I'm not calling you stupid so I'll be blunt.
Can you just stop it all?
Was it all bound for the trashbin
since the very beginning? I don't
believe so, in fact, I know
it wasn't. Rather what is heading
out is any anger I feel towards you.
The only thing left really is what
was there in the very beginning which
you've seemed to push down
and forgotten about yet I think it seems
to burst forward when you drop your guard
and forget all that was said one month,
two weeks, three days, four hours, five
minutes, and six seconds four months ago
and let what was there and still
there and will still be there six
seconds, five minutes, four hours,
three days, two weeks one month from now
to the day we die shine through.
But Rocker Boy also often talks about this
thing called an after life and
I want you to know that I believe
that in the after life all the bad
things I've said to you will
come back to face me but the fact
they will be defeated by the fact

the sky talking of Bob,
Cindy, and all 13 Jason
movies, or maybe 14, I
don't know.
but I do care.

Not about the films,
bur rather, for some
reason, you. Do you
feel okay, what can I
do for you, do you
need anything, something,
do you love me still,
do you even think of me?
What can I say and what
can I do to make you
happy? You want to speak
your mind but yet still,
you expect me to read it.
Give a little, take all
of me...balance it our,
I don't care how it
ends but tell me where
I stand, if I stand at all.
Or am I like a blind man
who has a pet elephant,
who never knows what the
next step in his backyard will
bring. I don't care how it ends...

I just want to hold you right now.

Perhaps, perhaps this pill will
make me stronger, or maybe this

that I really do love you keeps me
warm the nights I don't sleep next
to you.

Maybe that's my weakness.
A lot of people have had weaknesses.
Sherman spared to homeland for a church,
Patton's dog was the leader of men
Monty was weak for being dumb,
Bill for Monica,
Monica for Linda,
that centerfold for puppies,
the puppies for pissing on the rug,
the rug for not being stain resistant,
and me for laying on that damn rug,
crying the day you left me.
Maybe I'll get up now and go
for a walk. A walk sounds good.
There's a chapel close by that
Melissia didn't know about.
James K. Polk love
sounds good right now but my
skate board won't make it.
Maybe a freshman or a new woman
could walk with me but
that's okay...
I'll stay here on this rug.

I'll follow his lead sometime later
and the flush the toilet but it would
be better to watch Red Dawn or listen
to Ani Dilate.

Now the blind prophet sits on
the couch sipping something
he's never seen before while
talking of time.

"Where does time come from," he asks.
Rocker Boy spouts something about
how everything is in a box
but all the prophet says is "the future."
When asked by all who sit near why,
he replies that was as far as he got.
I can't say where myself but I
wish I had more of it to
spend with you,
yet not the way
we've been spending it
like we have a lot of it
but I have a feeling we don't.
As time moves on the move,
lost in it I become.
Too many places I've seen
too many faces to remember
but I can't remember names.
Maybe that's why the personality
test came back madman
or mechanic when I was in
one of the
three high schools
I attended.

And if I were to get to
leave, start to sing it
one more time,
that old, familiar sympathy
in rhyme,
to make those old familiar
feelings start to rise.
My dreams have made me blind,
chasing visions and wasting time
leaving behind the one

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who cared and loved me so.
Weakening ties and crushing lies
made the tears rush to my eyes
and only then will I
realize that you are
the one who needs love,
not me.

The song I start to hear
when I lockout all
the noise, makes those sweet sour memories
of past promises and spent time
rush then shatter the silence
and the way I cry out
to you melts the walls
between our lives.

I know I have to get back
to what we were, my dear,
but something's holdin' me
from behind.

Too many regrets.
Too many false starts
I guess time is running out
for us.

Maybe I should go and
dance in the rain.
Maybe I'll go to
bed alone again.

There's just one positive
thing about all this.
I've never held her,
in fact, I never even meet her.
So, I guess it ain't so bad
that I went alone,
no one stayed over.

So what do you think, Doctor?
Do I have a problem?
Never mind.
How much time do I have left?
...
okay.
Another question, if you don't mind.

If humans desire to improve what they already have,
and we always attempt to do
this, no matter what the cost.
And since we are made,
according to most people,
are made in God's image,
have we become better than God?
I don't believe so but
I sense that some do think that.
So my next questions are:
Does God have to wear shoes?
If he doesn't, what makes you
feel you're filling them?

Answer me, Damnit, answer me!

...and the door slammed behind me as he sat there either
dumfounded, believing I was mad, or, well, I'll be nice.

James Zero

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CONTRIBUTORS

David Beaumont, from Huntersville, NC, is a member of College Union Board, WABY, Campus Ministry, and Greek Life.

Sonia Breit is a senior English major from Gastonia, NC. This is her first contribution to *Agora*.

Gary Bowers is a freshman Political Science major from Thomasville, NC. His artistic talent comes from the training of the great Janice Cooper and the NC Governor School. He also plays baseball at the Abbey.

Robert Davis is from Jacksonville, NC.

Jessica Ethridge is a junior Biology major from Anacortes, WA. She currently harasses people as a Resident Advisor.

Russell Fowler is the chairperson of the English Department. His works have been published in many numerous journals and other publications.

Angela Guess is a freshman from Hendersonville, NC. She plans to major in Theology and sings in the Belmont Abbey College Chorus.

William Glen Hayman from Savannah, GA, is involved with Greek Life and would like to dedicate his work to the memory of Ray Stinson.

Kristin Klant is a sophomore Elementary Education major from Washington, DC. She enjoys walks on the beach.

Hollie Knowles is a sophomore at the University of Houston who attended the Abbey.

Miranda Lockey is a freshman from Charlotte, NC. She sings in the Belmont Abbey College Chorus.

Nehemiah Owen, a sophomore from Birmingham, AL, studies Business and Communications at Belmont Abbey. He is interested in the many aspects of Ethics, has a wonderful sense of humor, and enjoys playing basketball.

Linda Owensby works in the Abbey's Office of Administration and Finance along with being enrolled in the ADP program.

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

Robert Rodite is a freshman CIS major from Charlotte, NC; he is involved with WABY and Greek Life and enjoys playing the guitar in his spare time.

Jennifer Torpey is a junior Sociology major from Asheville, NC.

Amanda Walker, currently a homeschooled high school senior, is a dual enrollment student at the Abbey.

Ellen Weir, RSM teaches English at Belmont Abbey College. Her dog Brighton and Gerard Manley Hopkins are her muses.

Karla Wiggins is an ADP student, majoring in Secondary Education with an emphasis in English. She is from Gastonia, NC.

James Zero Mr. Zero is in reality Michael Wade. He is a senior studying English, an Abbey player, and is involved in Greek Life. He would like to dedicate his work to Hollie Knowles.



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