

Agora



# 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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Spring 2001

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Belmont Abbey College, 100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road, Belmont, NC 28012

# Agora Staff

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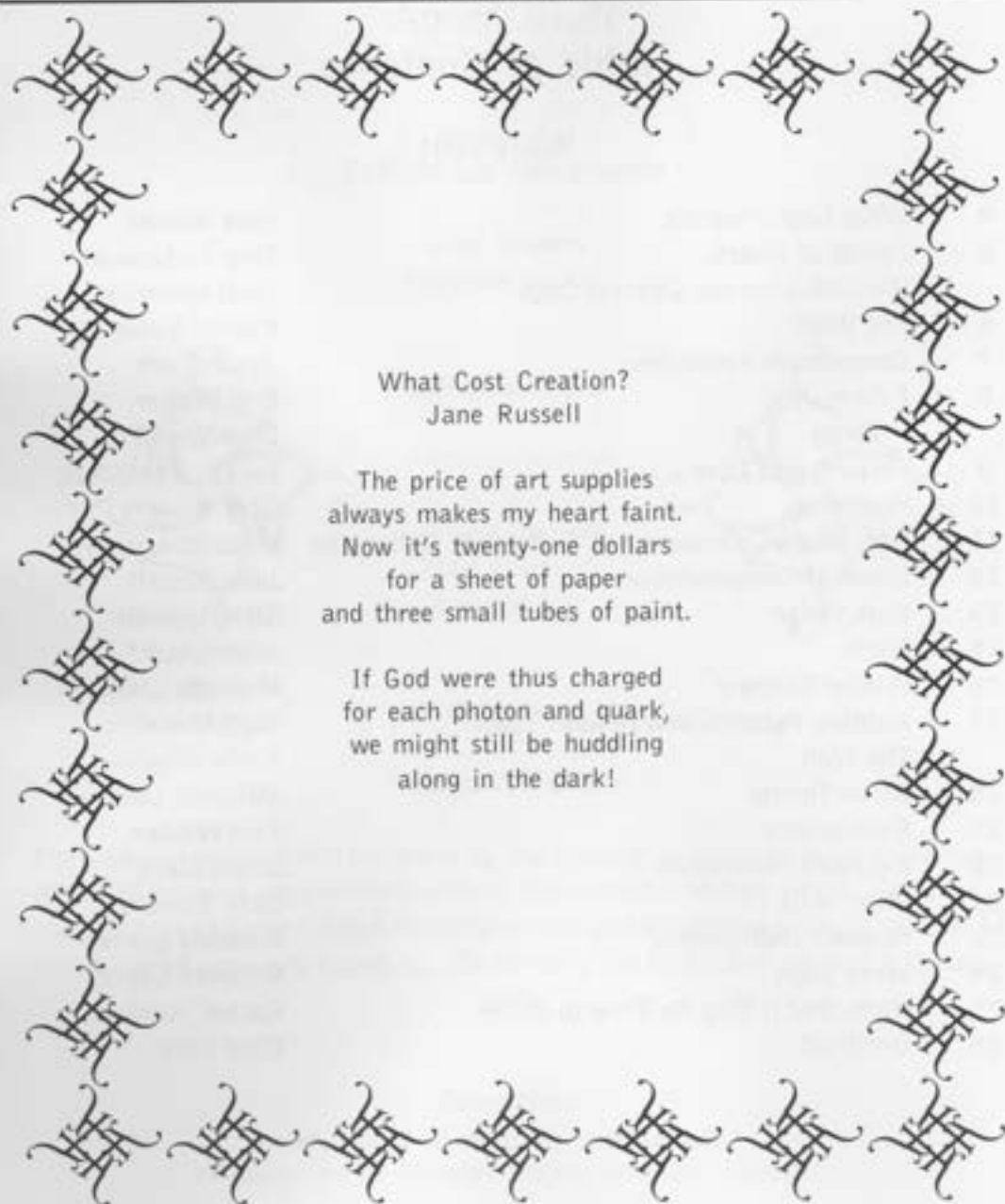
Photographed by Miranda Lockey, entitled "Stumpy".

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\* Recipient of the Jean S. Moore Award



What Cost Creation?

Jane Russell

The price of art supplies  
always makes my heart faint.  
Now it's twenty-one dollars  
for a sheet of paper  
and three small tubes of paint.

If God were thus charged  
for each photon and quark,  
we might still be huddling  
along in the dark!

## Agora 2001

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We still love the shiniest cogs  
Matt Memrick

We want action movies that show violence  
and heads being blown up for displacement purposes  
We want the best guns, the most beautiful cars and mates, everyone's playing a  
game and we don't ever get tired of these things as they rot our imaginations

And most important, we want everyone to play along - to get on the same page  
Someone doesn't get on that page and it's a tragedy  
And we stand in shock, unmoved and unchanged  
As death hovers in the air  
We love the normalcy

Denial of Heart  
Troy Piotrowski



...Must this still go on? How could I go this long  
And then deny my feelings?  
Why must I be silent  
About such things  
As my deepest feelings  
Must be heard  
But silence is not heard  
And not saying anything  
Has no feelings at all  
Silence is the biggest denial  
And that is what I have done  
Nothing but denying my  
Own feelings

Ethereality  
Erin Walker

Oh, to be invisible  
Some flowery figment of  
the imagination  
of a dream-filled child  
or a lonely lover

Revealing my visage only  
to a chosen few  
who will not reject  
or disappoint  
To be a ghost unseen -  
a spirit breathed  
in the words of poets

Oh, to be invisible -  
heard, but not seen  
Wearing a cloak of forgetfulness  
handmade by dreamers  
the howling winter winds my cry  
whispering summer breezes - my sigh



Praying  
Ellen Weir, RSM

in the moment  
I see how  
light dashes sudden to its stream

and how divine lies the green  
here

still, but not still

oh how dangerous  
it is with you, God



## Agora 2001

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Vespers and Love  
Sara H. Thornburg

I am but a breath.  
My life is fleeting.  
It passes before my eyes in just a second - a series of seconds.  
Breathe in - I am born  
Breathe out - I graduate  
Breathe in - I break my heart  
Breathe out - my heart is healed  
My life is fleeting  
I achieve a level of joy and peace.  
I breathe in and my peace is fleeting  
I breathe out and you appear  
My peace returns  
And joy becomes complete  
In as much as peace and joy may remain amidst the busy-ness of life.  
I stop breathing in an effort to hold this moment in the eye of my heart  
To savor the beauty about me  
To freeze the image and the sound  
Of you and your words  
Embracing me  
Creating me  
Breathing new life into my weary body  
Simple words  
Gorgeous words  
Powerful words  
And joy bursts forth  
I become beloved  
You become treasured  
We rejoice



Gary Bowers

weekends



GB

## Agora 2001

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The Late Night Communion of Coffee and Miller Lite  
Miranda Lockey

The man across the table  
dives deep into himself  
to listen to what may not be  
the most important thing  
he wants to hear.

There are so few chances  
to save  
what we want to remain  
concrete.  
He saw past an empty smile  
through eyes  
full of so much longing  
to retain some deeper meaning.

The unassuming conversation  
left behind  
the image of a floor plan.  
There's a bathroom in a field  
with two walls standing  
in support of an abandoned homestead.

What hope rests  
in seeing that room still standing?  
He depends, so consistently,  
on anything that's constant,  
to the point  
that he longs for familiarity.

What's important in the face of major change  
is not relying on empty rooms  
to keep us company.  
And he wants to be alone.  
Not to be forced to believe  
that someone so bright  
is afraid of losing a dream,  
but to get comfortable  
in a healthy routine,  
for a change.

How many times does it take  
For him to realize  
his goodness?  
But showering off yesterday's ill mood  
proves difficult  
when it's been lingering for some time,  
long enough to talk about it.

One resolution  
seems to suggest hiding  
from bad old memories.  
But he seems to want more  
from himself  
than bad memories.

The power of  
escape  
prompts outsiders  
to envy his longing to reminisce  
instead of hate  
so many things that were not his fault.

It's strange,  
we come across  
such beautiful men,  
who work to be real men,  
and realize,  
how easily we've missed  
or ignored  
so many chances to let them know...

it's important  
that I know him well  
because I appreciate  
the reality  
of him.

## Agora 2001

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Show of Independence  
S. Jane Russell

In one of the last homemade parades  
on the planet, Wonder Lake village stands up  
to salute the Fourth of July.  
Every patriot shows, either to march  
with their T-Ball team  
or to line the route and applaud.

Families stake out spaces  
with lawn chairs and coolers of Coke.  
Moms and kids fill water bazookas  
for what will become the sport du jour,  
soaking your friends.

Fire trucks break the ice,  
sirens tootling peculiar tunes  
and volunteers dousing the crowd  
with tank-fed sprays.

Only the *Junior Miss* competition  
made a traditional float,  
but every sizable van in the township  
hawks some kind of claim.  
Company cars parade logos.  
Calvary Church urges "Beat the heat,  
Boycott Hell." The Yacht Club's  
Junior Fleet rolls past its pair of sailboats,  
junior yachters waving to friends  
on the sidelines. Troops of Brownies  
and athletes alternate with the rolling stock.

In almost-finale, the township officials'  
hay rack brags of "150 years  
of friendly government." The independent years  
are numbered, though:  
an Annexation Coalition brings up the rear  
with "Annex to McHenry or die."

## Agora 2001

Dark Vision  
Glen Hayman

The board that we play on is laid out before us. Its pieces fall in front of us looking back at us. The game had not changed since I got here, but the pieces do. Their roles do not move from one to another. There is a new Queen; she seems good at heart. She is a new edition to this game, but she does know how the game is played. She is flanked by the Bishop, also new at his job. We hope he is good at it; he is a good man though and for that much we can be thankful. Next stands the Knight. He was hated for a time, but he is at least true to what he believes and for that reason he must be respected. The point is that just because one does not like another personally does not mean that one cannot appreciate what that individual has done for the greater good.

Now, however, the game has changed. The King has left the board, leaving behind only his pawns to take up his wake, his pawns being his hand picked shock troops, brought here only to further his will. Not all of his pawns are evil, but some are, without question. Others seem to have good intentions, but they are so quickly lost when faced down by their dark king. Still others are good and fight to hold the line, not because they are doing it for his dark reason, but because they believe what they are doing is right. They are not misguided, but they may not be able to win the battle with their peers. The rooks are those that hold that education is the key. They fight to hold the line against those that assail them.

The chaos is on the board. Black and white change positions. There is no united front, no one area that we can hold to as our own. The bulwark is falling and those that are destroying it are the same as those who mean to maintain it. The war is between us and the factions are more and more dangerous.

We have no rally point and we are lost. There is no leadership. There is no power structure; there is a power vacuum that so many are rushing to fill: those who believe it is God's will to inherit power, and those that have fought long and hard for it, those that believe and those that are scared that they are losing the war. The battle rages on now like a fire in the night, some fear its coming, some welcome it, some believe it is a lie. But for them it is already too late; they're so removed from the battle that they are already lost. I see the lines, and I see those that are leading the war. I stand like John seeing what is to come. And then I heard a great voice cry from the throne, "Behold, Belmont Abbey, Mother of all mysteries!" Oh hear me now, we must not allow this to come to pass. But then again, I am powerless to stop it. We watch as all that we hold dear, all the good we could do, all the good that we have done, is lost in the flames. I stand like a new Jonah, "Repent your ways! Understand, repent!"

I call to the power of the White King, the White Queen, but neither of them is in this game. They have left this place, even though their house still stands here. Are we lost? Do we give up and let this ship run its course and leave it to be lost like some sacked Jerusalem or Rome? I am holding the line at the gates. The barbarians are here, the spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak. Then we must understand that all is vanity, and in my pride and arrogance I have lost too. I look down not from an ivory tower, but from an ebony one. But even from here I see it all too plainly: a city in flames, my eyes stinging from the tears of lost friends and new blood lost here; the air is thick with brimstone. Thousands at my feet, alone, with no king, and chaos begins its song anew, and once again I must repeat what I see. For that is all I can do; trapped, trapped and lost. And hope is a lie that they tell you to make you believe in a better tomorrow.



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 received by Jason Clark. This award represents top submission as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity and originality.*



## Agora 2001

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C  
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E

Not so unique no snowflake

Instead

conform to gutterdrip information

gather your substance

from what is seeping down

Always stalactite

Never stalagmite

t

would rather fa

e

ll in glistening line than endure

standing

SNAP lost another one

are you willing to be consumed

let them break you

render you into a frozen delicacy?

Agora 2001



Miranda Lockey

Winter Balcony

## Agora 2001

Holding Patterns in Default Town  
Matt Memrick

Holding patterns in default  
town living large, but learning little  
except for some strong feelings of hate and dreams of laidness  
things seem even more faker in la-la land

Monster truck rallies come and go there  
men wear nooses as they try to look serious  
under metal deathtraps with voyeuristic views  
while walking at breakneck speeds towards oblivion  
or the next meeting

And then I will always remember the time  
when information didn't matter, but the lack thereof did  
I came to two stairwells near the woods  
and I took the one shabbily put together,  
cut my knee and felt real again

And I smile behind the fat face I've come to know  
Accentuated and hyperextended, but kept to a business minimal  
...far away from the back of a truck



## Agora 2001

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Blood Thirsty  
Miranda Lockey

He picked up the cup  
and set it down.  
The barrier of white linen  
proved too hard to overcome  
when the wine crossed his lips.  
The pricelessness in the message  
of everlasting life  
is called upon by the gold  
in which it sits.  
We're bloodthirsty.  
How often we crave compassion  
and neglect the reasons  
for its importance.  
In the face of insincerity  
the light in the darkness  
glows just dimly enough  
to increase the longing  
we have for real love.  
But misguidance and naivete  
tend to tear the focus  
from the meaning behind the ceremony  
in which some emptily  
partake in cannibalism.  
What's grotesque in novels of serial killers  
is common place  
in the eyes of tradition.  
Greedily, we drink our sacrifice  
and ponder of its effectiveness  
in light of all the bad in the world.  
Simplicity behind a carpenter's lifestyle  
and the poverty to which so many grow accustomed  
is lost in the daily miracle

of transubstantiation.  
Do we participate because of obligation  
we have to be seen there  
or did God really "say the word"?  
In all the attention paid to this life,  
or why we deserve paradise in the next,  
too many times  
we rely on the exquisite value of  
filigree in the insurmountable wealth  
of a function any regular tumbler  
could perform just as effectively.  
God doesn't care what you wear  
or how much you cuss.  
Are you showing your talents  
to be worth their weight in gold?  
There is no one more worthy than  
the man behind him;  
however, passing judgement  
is as easy as  
falling into the drudgery,  
left in the hands of the  
blood thirsty.



Revelations  
Erin Walker

The still water reflects an image -  
ghostly pale and thin -  
my hollow world within?  
It speaks; I listen, but can't make out the words

My heart pounding,  
a new Wind rustles leaves around me  
My world is near; His Word I hear  
the night is ending  
My heart beats on

Fading flames flicker  
in the dying breeze  
The image gone,  
I move along.  
It went below where all ghosts go  
and I look again upon still waters

## Agora 2001

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### Renewed Inquisition

Jason Clark

Dismembered eyebrows skulk atop fury  
buried in narrow eyes  
Velvet skullcap marks his rank  
in the crimson army

The groaning chair freshly soiled  
has new occupant

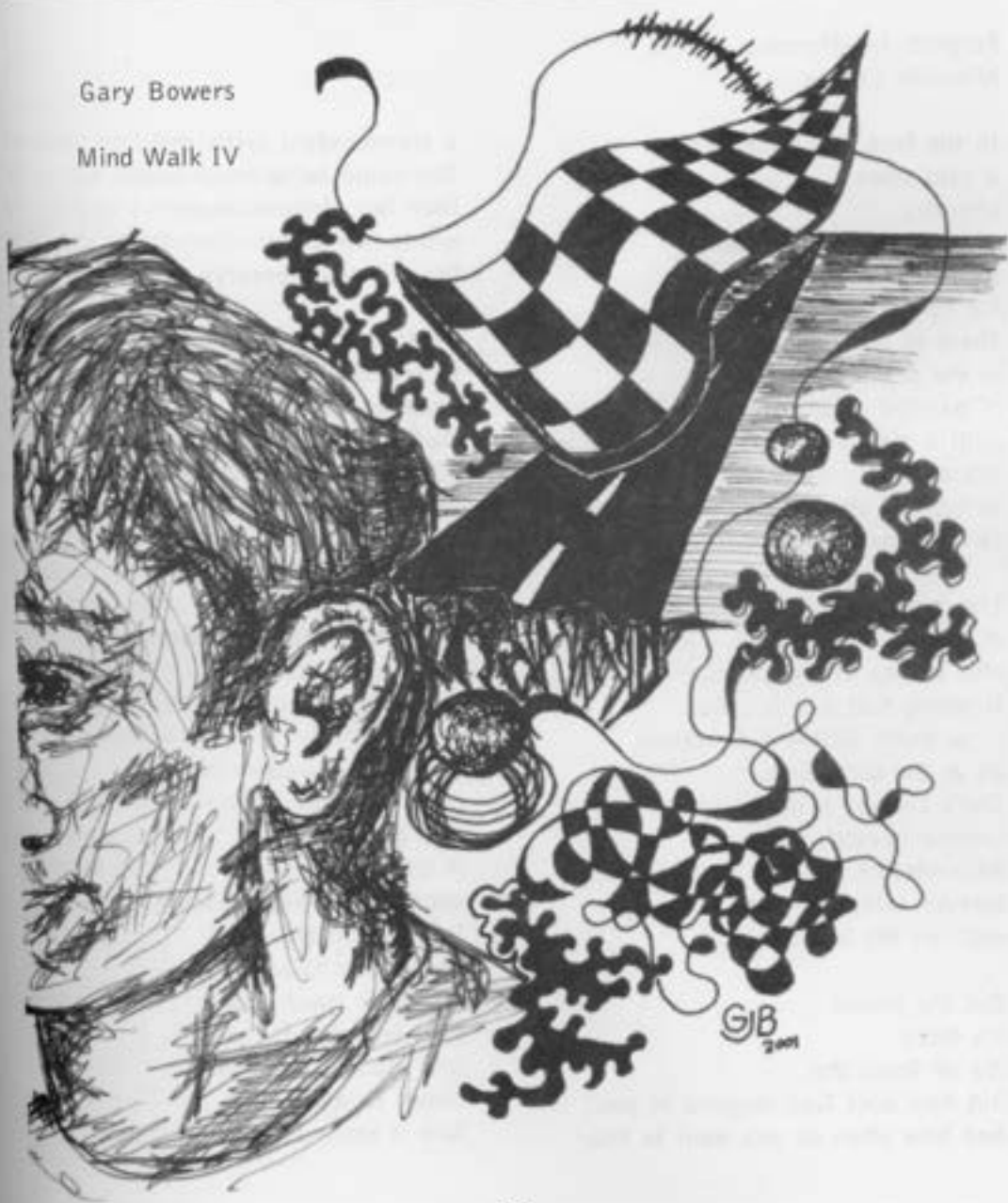
Droplets trickle from damp palms as  
nails dig new crevices  
Lips quiver into unexpected grin at memories  
glancing over iron consumes fire

Thus he begins with  
practiced honored ancient ritual  
sterilizing paranoia by purgation of innocence  
and creates faith in pain

Stifled shrieks give him  
little joy  
His life quest refuting that  
salvation lies within

Gary Bowers

Mind Walk IV



## Agora 2001

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Feigned Indifference  
Miranda Lockey

In the face of evil deliveries,  
a cold stone  
absorbs  
whatever tries to chisel  
a new mold  
for her early twenties.  
There is no crying  
in the public retreat  
of painted glass windows  
until a stagnant heart  
lets all that's inside go  
to heat up the chilled veins  
of a feigned indifference.

The sanctuary  
of not belonging  
also proves problematic.  
It seems that one is called  
in so many different directions,  
all at the same time.  
She's created a necessity  
beyond herself;  
dependence  
forever after  
rests on the intangible.

But she knows  
it's there.  
We all know that.  
But how does God respond to you?  
And how often do you want to hear

a transcendent criticism?  
She could be so much more  
than her circumstance  
wants her to be:  
beyond any stereotypes.

He took off his glasses  
to reveal nothing  
more extraordinary  
than his usual demeanor.  
She's too hard on herself  
to believe she'll still be important  
18 months from now.  
But there is always the  
possibility  
that hope will not remain  
an empty excuse  
to cut her down again.

There are so many reasons  
to be great  
and grateful  
in the eyes of all  
who've been kind to her.  
But the anticipation  
of monthly failure  
means so much more  
than empathy for others.  
Her capacity for pain  
comes from being it.  
And it really only manifests

through pictures  
of people she has no right  
to want to know;  
at least, she doesn't want them  
to know her.

Maybe being selfish  
has its perks.  
How often will she have to get over  
failure?  
God knows there are so many more things to life.  
However, it seems like she can only speak her mind  
behind closed doors  
to security.  
We linger from fear;  
fear being the most uncomfortable hurdle.

But she tried to bypass  
dealing with so many problems  
that it's easier to be alone.  
She feels less lonely when  
no one is around  
to make her feel;  
she killed that participation on purpose.

## Agora 2001

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Miranda Lockey

Work Days

## Agora 2001

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Hints That it My be Time to Retire  
Rachel Sanders

The professor paces at the front of the room.  
He projects his words,  
Yet they move him not,  
Since they are merely a program he has etched into his head.

Semester after semester.  
Year after year.  
Time as he knows it is lost in this vicious cycle.

His monotone voice drones on and on.  
As he lifts his dreary eyes from the podium,  
You can feel a chill from his hollow stare.

When he acknowledges a hand in the crowd,  
He presses pause,  
Slightly with reluctance,  
Since he is oddly driven to an end.

He speaks for the full fifty minutes  
With not a minute to spare.  
This program was proudly perfected long ago.

Finally, though, the time is up.  
The students shuffle anxiously to their feet.

Without the slightest expression on his wrinkled, old face,  
The professor raises his crooked finger.  
He presses stop.  
Then rewind.  
The program is safely saved for the following semester.



## Agora 2001

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Untitled  
Ellen Weir, RSM

Bright day,  
the Isis all shine, dripping beads of oar  
punts and students so fine

and having walked Christ Church meadow in warm late afternoon  
I am,  
head full of Oxford,  
thirsty.

I drink my pint  
at the Head of the River Pub. Dog  
chasing sticks in the water and  
aled puntsmen soak their boats

when suddenly, You, dead father, silent for so long  
come suddenly,  
you speak to me as radiantly  
as all the music of Bolero

could possibly snap this day,

and before I know  
I knew  
I had joined you for a moment in your heaven

## Contributors

Gary James Bowers is a Junior Political Science major from Thomasville, NC. He is involved in numerous organizations on campus. His artistic talents come from his creative parents and his training from the great Janice Cooper and the North Carolina Governor's School.

Jason Clark is a Senior English major at Belmont Abbey College. Upon graduation he hopes to be employed.

Miranda Lockey is a Junior English major from Charlotte, NC. Hopefully this writing thing will go somewhere so she won't have to get a real job.

Glen Hayman is the son of Margaret and Lester Hayman of Savannah, GA. He is a Senior English major, and founding member of Delta Tau Delta.

Troy Piotrowski is an undergraduate student at the University of North Carolina in Asheville.

Jane Elyse Russell, OSF is the Chair and Assistant Professor of Theology at BAC, after previous jobs in theology and campus ministry at Creighton University (Omaha) and with the School Sisters of St. Francis U.S. Provincial Team (Milwaukee.) She has enjoyed writing poetry since college, as a way to capture "snapshots" and reflections of everyday life.

Rachel Sanders is a Senior Biology major who is overly excited for graduation in the spring.

Sarah Thornburg was born in Portland, OR. She attended NCSU for textile design undergraduate degree. She completed MS Textile Management technology in 1997 then moved to Gastonia. She enjoys knitting, gardening, reading,

dancing, and singing.

Erin Walker is a Belmont Abbey Sophomore and Writing Center intern pursuing a Major in English.

Ellen Weir, a Sister of Mercy, has been an Agora supporter and contributor over the years. She teaches in the English Department at Belmont Abbey College and is also a student of her cat, Frideswide.

Karla Wiggins lives and works in Gastonia, where she is happily married to her husband of 13 years.



*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 during the submission round in January.

Submitted literary works must be typed in duplicate. A cover sheet containing a name, address, telephone number, and a brief biographical profile along with the titles of submissions must be included. Copies and/or photographs should be attached with submitted photographs and drawings. 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 will be in April.


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

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