



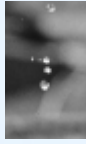
AGORA



...καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,
Δημόδοκον· τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδήν,
τέρπειν ὄππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν ἀεΐδειν.

*...and summon Demodokos, the bard divine,
Whom God gave song: the power to delight
However his own soul urges him to sing.*

Homer, *Odyssey* VIII, 43-5



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EBB & FLOW



A Parting

Light falls as leaves fall
 To winded whisperings of wispy feelings
 Half-felt but wholly remembered
 And the mourning swan mildly sings
 Her last lament too low to hear
 Over the silence descending in a slow snow drift.

~Kyrie Watson

Amelia

*Lo mi senti' svegliar dentro a lo core
 Un spirito amoroso che dormia*

But as I sleep a pestering breath covers the earth
 It spreads and weaves with a relentless force
 Breaking cold stones, uprooting fig trees in oceans
 There is no escape, this actuality commenced

Eyes emerald, sharpened knives into the soul
 Dared gave words to the wordless and life to the lifeless
 Giving rise to the voice to ransom the flesh from the sin
 And ransomed it has with one soul-piercing smile

Suddenly gray becomes black and black becomes white
 And as white becomes black I like a dart am in motion
 Moving ever closer to the waters of gold
 And as my tears touch the blood I am made white once more

What a fine line it is to balance between the yes and the no
 To lean on the white dress or fall into nothingness
 Creating angles and spheres and finding X over AB
 'Tis not how the breath would breathe in eternity

~Jonathan Torres



See a Drop of Time
by Elizabeth Leonards

Fisher

To him it is another game,
 A thing to do, a rite to oblige, to fill
 Out the story of a life lived full.
 He stoically draws the string to a glassy eye.
 Lets fly, reels, stoops to notch again,
 And smiles with rue at a shot sent home
 Into the prey, a big wriggling fish,
 Gray-and-red-mottled, an eye upon the tail,
 A black eye. He's not even playing along –

With a keen eye focused true upon the game,
 I send an arrow sharp upon the scales,
 The meat of it pierced; all my marks are true.
 I can make a kill too clean for joy
 When the waves wash up upon the reeds.
 I can see them there awake in hiding,
 And how they do not know their fear
 Until it strikes. The airboat whirrs and glides
 Off through the marshes with its burden
 Still and iced.

~Ross McKnight





Beached

by Paul Toscano

Sonnetia 1

There is a new upheaval proud, amid
Life's later spring-days: a baroque repetition
Which renews the soft-sails, now unfurled
To hold the stately breezes grown of remission.
A wind as this, though of dour tempests grown—
And me thought it divisions between us would make—
'Twere as morning breaking, the hail-clouds blown
And gay like softer beach-waves, fain to roll, shake, break.
Naught is death, nane are dead, all are but hid
Deep as the sea's sober secrets. Deep calls to deep
On this day hallowed made. Now are displayed
On my heart such blessed secrets as the morrows keep.
 So lief to us, storm-shod earth!
 So delights us, this rebirth!

~Raphaël Du Sablon

A Little Haiku

Drip drip drip drip drip
uninvited, but friendly
guests in my rainspout

Composed by Father Matthew one morning as he listened to the rain fall in the monastery courtyard.

~The Late Father Matthew McSorley

If Angel-hair Pasta Was a Little Less Brittle People Would Call It Roxanne

What falls longer than Niagara Falls
What shines silkier than prairie grass
What needs straightening less than an arrow
Yes, it's that lovely thing flying like a sparrow

You think of a highway a million-lane wide
With strawberry blonde cars forming a tide
You are up in the sky looking down from a plane
That surely must be Rox and her fluttering mane

How does she do it, folks often wonder
What brand shampoo and which conditioner
And what do the hair products cost, Miss Sandlin
Including taxes and shippin' and handlin'

Pray tell me 'cause I sure am graying and balding
Thinning streak of platinum can be disheart'ning
Even though eternal youth is a delusional lie
I could still live with more body and some blackish hair dye

~Rajive Tiwari



Butterflies Live in Me, Because I Eat Them

You put butterflies in my torso
They crawl in my tummy and tingle
Their tickle, I only know

And when my eyes ingest your face
The butterflies, they curry and mingle
They press the knobs and nerves
Of all parts of me, every single

And dilute my pupils
Where they smile
As much as my lips do
So that none is in denial

And now when my eyes shake hands
With your frozen self-printed image
The flower-winged critters, began
Creep and crawl

They spread the glitter pollen
Within my whole self
And stain my mind to which ascend
With your untarnished face

I willing swallow these creatures
Whether given or not
For your being
Is a consumed thought

~Elizabeth Leonards

A Hymn for the Children of Israel

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.” (Matthew 2:18)

Sing of sun	Scourged
And of moon	That we may yet thrive
And of west	Whipped
And of east	As a cattle drive
	All
Sing of dark	For the slaughter
And of day	
And of famine	We begin as we end
And feast	To end all begun
	Under the shadow
Low sink our hopes	Of this weeping sun
With the globe we knew well	
And pale wanes our courage	And shall we go upward?
In the depth of this hell	And shall we go on?
	Beyond the east moon
For dark are our days	From the west worldly pawn?
And blacker our nights	
The one for our tears	Let us go now indeed
The other, our frights	To the halls of our fathers
	Let us go now in need
Starved	From the homes of our sons
That we might survive	Let us go now and lead

On the uncertain way
Which only He knows
Who gave us this day

Sing of sun
And of moon
And of west
And of east

Sing of death
And of life
And of light
And of peace

~Caitlin Clancy



Staff

by Marina Hart

Let us Go!

I caught a glimpse of you supporting yourself on an antiquated record player; a glimpse of a marquee that displayed the name of your musical group. The moon will privilege the night with its full presence, so we are beginning to engage in flights of lunacy. Exclaim with me! We will be like lunatics, becoming lunatics.

I feel as though I'm an adolescent, who sips on warm alcoholic beverages made of wine. I gain a fever from the endless party. I'm wearing an immodest shirt, like those from the sports bar evoking images of owls. And while we have been well behaved, I would like to engage in a flight of hedonism; therefore, hand me an ever-so-sweet lollipop, and then we will go free together.

Let us Go!
 Because I see how we mutually
 compliment our appearances.
 I urge us to go forward tonight.
 Let us go! Let us go!
 Let us go!
 You shall not attempt to
 acknowledge a possibility that
 we will depart without pleasure.
 I urge us to go forward tonight.
 Let us go! Let us go!
 Let us go!

We vandalize the back of the bar by carving our names; we steal some “Bubblicious” from the corner of a convenience store. Exclaim with me! As we cause mischief while the dark hides us from the authorities. Furnishing the trouble of the night, the trouble of the night.

I feel as though I'm a vicious beast, who sips on warm beer. I ask you to give me that feeling of a tiny death, so you had better bring along your toothbrush. The entire night will be filled with sleeplessness. Though we have been observing the Jewish Laws of Kosher, I desire to break the shackles of Society and Reason; therefore, hand me an ever-so-sweet lollipop, but please baby, shed all your reservations.

Let us Go!
Because I see how we mutually
compliment our appearances.
I urge us to go forward tonight.
Let us go! Let us go!
Let us go!

You shall not attempt to
acknowledge a possibility that
we will depart without pleasure.
I urge us to go forward tonight.
Let us go! Let us go!

Let us go!
Do not let me be sleeping.
Let me greet the morning sun.
Let me cavort all night.
Do not let me be thinking
what will become after now.
Let me embrace the present.
Do not let me be sleeping.
Let me greet the morning sun.
Let me cavort all night.
Do not let me be thinking
what will become after now.
Let me embrace the present.

Let us Go!
Because I see how we mutually
compliment our appearances.
I urge us to go forward tonight.
Let us go! Let us go!
Let us go!

You shall not attempt to
acknowledge a possibility that
we will depart without pleasure.
I urge us to go forward tonight.
Let us go! Let us go!
Let us go!

~Nicholas Rees

Love's Flight

Then doth the airy flight of love
Pass over me, and rest on them
Though I do stretch out my arms
To present it with a perch?

What justice is in that? I say,
Or perhaps they did not look for it
And allowed it, shy, to creep upon their shoulders
Till they one day discovered its nest?

~Nikole Brand

**Roar**

by Elizabeth Leonards



Mystical Marriage

You pump your breath
Into my lifeless lungs
With kisses.

Body, members,
All beat like
Drums
In anticipation.

Strong-armed
With piercing eyes –

I have courage
Because
I love you,
Though I have
Only seen
You in
Holy
Cards.

~Charlie Jackson

Pasta Primavera

Wine soaked corks line the countertop
where an empty glass now waits
for drops of liquid passion

Steam rises from the once cold depths
and bids me drain the excess
screaming for attention

Candle flame casts light in the dark
onto blue cloth and red sauce
a celebration of time

Cologne and oregano blend
into a deep, thick layer
of familiarity

Cerulean pools catch my gaze
then a hand stretches across
holding me with sudden warmth

Served with a cup of scarlet gold
here is the promised dinner
a pasta primavera

~Ashley Faye Miller



Penelope

Lucidity, lightness and flow
Filling distance with design—
Silk patterns pulled through
Above, below.
Motion of cool, calloused hands
Holding strands of colored
Warmth and woven texture
Un-raveled into unified bands
Of patience patterned to endure.

~Annemarie Maimone

Ars Poetica Redux

For Archibald MacLeish

She waits
At the edge of the circling world
For a word

It may drift down
Silently
Like snow
Or
Tinkle
Its shivery song
Falling
Congealed
Like minute
Particles
Of frozen rain

It may whisper
At the brink
Of sleep
Dreaming-awake
Among
Tangled blankets
Its pullulating
Rhythms
At dawn

Before the mind
Rears up
Alarmed
Alert
Pulls on
Its anxious garments
And roars
Headlong
Into furious day

At the corner
Of her eye
The sunlight shatters
Scatters
Fractalled shards
A rainbow
Flung
Piece-meal
Across
The kitchen wall

Somewhere
A child calls
A mother answers
Softly
Croons a lullaby
A hand reaches out
A bird sings
Someone
Weeping
Looks back
To the broken fence
The crushed bowl

Poised
Listening
Trembling on tip-toe
At the edge of the circling world

She waits

For
The word

~Rebecca Munro

Small

Axenic and transparent,
not yet ossified into final form,
finite in glass.

Your companions are hung teased apart,
flesh plasticized,
vessels garish blue and red.

You, whole and clean, are concealed,
a piece of occult magic,
seen when caution is not heeded.

~Susan Ritchie

**Hold on Tight**

by Elizabeth Leonards

The Dance of Midnight Noon

The moon
Upon the silver lake
Bids the mid-night
Faeries wake –

Softly, softly!
Stir no leaf –
Bring no mortals
To our heath!

So whisp'ring wind
Wisps and blows
The beam-bathed waves
Where there grows

A dance, a hunt,
A play, a thrill –
Solemn, silent,
Silent, still.

There comes no sound
Of lathe or bill,
Yet war is fought
On yonder hill

And on the beam-bathed
Bath of beasts
The light-foot nymphs
Of woodlands feast.

They drink the moon
And take the dark
And rest white hands
On willow-bark;

Ten thousand ships
They launch and glide
In the breath of
Even-tide

And noiseless knock
And break and hark –
The fight is long
While it is dark.

But soon the waning,
Sleeping spark
Of northern star
Fades in the arc

Of coming grey
And fading moon –
The last farewell
Of midnight noon

And as the dark
Becomes the light
The mortals' day
Becomes their night

And all is as
It was before –
Save the whisper,
Evermore:

Softly, softly!
Stir no thought –
Lest those of mortal flesh
Be brought.

~Caitlin Clancy

Quetzal

Tom said something, but Carlos wasn't listening. He was staring at a bird in a tree on the bank. It was beautiful and reminded him of the Quetzal that lived in the forests of his Central American country, but its tail feathers could never compare to those of the Quetzal. Remembrance is half the beauty, Carlos thought.

He missed the Quetzal's bright green and blue feathers that caped over its chest of red, and the small bird's puffed head feathers. He had always wished he could hold it, just to run a finger over the rare bird.

Carlos sat, looking at the American bird, remembering the day, many years earlier, when he and his brother skipped school to spend the day searching for the Quetzal. They went into the mountains that surrounded their town. When it had reached the afternoon, and they were both very thirsty from hiking, Carlos suggested they return home. His brother refused to. So, they kept walking.

When they finally found the small, round bird, its head was looking out of a hole in a tree. They passed the binoculars back and forth until the bird flew into a nearby tree, where they had a brief chance to see the bird in full—its tail hanging well below the branch, almost curling under it. But it took off soon, and they waited for its return. But it never came back, and he never saw another one.

“Did you say something?” Carlos asked Tom, returning to the present in the canoe, in Georgia.

“I said it's hard for me to write now.”

Carlos stuck his paddle into the water and made a few strokes to turn the canoe closer to the edge of the river. At this point, the water was smooth, and they mostly let the water move the boat. He took one hand off the paddle to re-roll one of the unraveling long sleeves of his half-unbuttoned shirt. Even when canoeing, Carlos wore khaki pants with a white dress shirt tucked in. He never wore an undershirt. The shirt was old and his bony, dark-skinned chest showed through the fabric.

“I feel like I have to outdo the last thing I wrote,” Tom said. “I was at a concert a couple of weeks ago, and the lady wrote beautiful

songs. The piano music was beautiful and the lyrics were beautiful. What if the next thing I write is terrible and they start to think I just got lucky before?”

“Joven, you worry too much.”

“I know. You sound like my dad.”

“I'm not your dad.”

“Thank God. My dad could actually fish this river.”

“I could too if I lived on its shore.”

“You're not as lucky as us.”

“No, but I've had some luck.”

It was almost lunch, and the shadows of the trees were moving into the shore, leaving Carlos and Tom in the sun. Carlos kept steering the canoe closer to the shore, trying to get some shade under the dark green leaves. A couple of leaves fell into the water and ran swiftly by the sides of the canoe. One fell into the canoe. Tom picked it up and looked at the dead, fallen leaf.

“Do you ever think about suicide, Carlos?”

Carlos was watching a turtle that floated near the surface, with its head just out of the water. When it saw Carlos it quickly went under, out of sight in the brown river. “No, I'm too busy trying to stay alive.”

As they paddled toward the bank, Carlos stood up. His lightweight body hardly rocked the canoe. When the canoe hit the shore, he got out and tied the rope that was attached to the canoe to a tree. Tom hung some beer bottles off the side of the canoe with fishing line so they could drink them cold later. He kept two bottles in his bag for lunch.

Tom stood up, held onto the edge of the canoe, and stepped out onto the sandy shore. They walked inland, looking for a place to sit. They walked by an empty shack made of sheets of metal and scrap wood. One of the walls was made of a tarp that was tearing with age. Whoever once lived in it had been gone for a while. Carlos walked close to it and ran his hand against the rusted metal. It felt just like the indigenous homes near his house in Central America. The indigenous homes were also made of metal, with floors of dirt.

Carlos' family had some money, and a modern home. But they were in the same town as the indigenous, and they experienced

similar horrors. The woman and children were killed in that town, and so were Carlos' sisters and mother. The fathers disappeared, including Carlos' father. The females in his family didn't wear the colorful huipiles of the Mayan women, but they lived too close to be exempt from the killings. And their skin was too dark to be ignored.

When it all happened, Carlos was at the university in the capital. That's where he was threatened. As an academic he wasn't safe either—they were the ones who questioned the killings, and they were the ones silenced.

Carlos and Tom sat on a rock in the middle of a small creek that emptied into the river. Carlos was getting tired and hot. He opened his beer. It foamed down the bottle, onto his hand. "They're hot from the sun," he said.

"My dad said they were meant to be drunk warm. That's how people used to drink beer."

"People used to live in caves, too. I wish it was cold."

"Well, it's not. I think you'll live though."

"I'm not so sure."

After they finished the beer, they ate their sandwiches and didn't talk anymore. They just took off their shoes and soaked their feet in the cold water of the creek. It was small, but deep. Carlos tossed a piece of crust into the water below so he could watch the fish.

"Let's go back and take out the rods," Carlos said.

"Sure. But I want to drink a cold beer first."

"Let's do both."

They walked back to the canoe, and Carlos untied it while Tom got in and pulled his fishing rod out from under the seats. "Pull up the bottles, Joven."

Tom pulled the beers up out of the water as Carlos stepped in. Carlos reached back to take a wet bottle from Tom. The labels were peeling off, and the cold of the drink was soothing. Carlos brought his rod out from the bottom of the canoe and cast the line, and then Tom cast his too. Carlos leaned back onto the bar behind his bench, with his rod between his legs, and drank the beer. Looking up at the canopy of trees, he could pretend he was anywhere. He started to pretend he was under the trees of his home. The oaks were no longer

oaks, and the sweet gums were no longer sweet gums. After only a short time of imagining, he thought maybe it wasn't necessary; maybe where he was was just fine. Perhaps he didn't need to pretend. It would be nice to be home, but this river, this canoe, this beer could do for now. But, he thought, with a smile, it would be nice to see a Quetzal up there in those trees.

“Are you asleep?” Tom asked Carlos after a while.

“No.”

“I'm going to pull off the river again. I have to go.”

“Alright.”

As Carlos leaned back, falling asleep, he felt the canoe go toward the bank. Then he felt the canoe go up on the land, and the canoe rocked as Tom got out. Half asleep, he heard Tom return from the brush and reel in his line. Carlos partially opened his eyes and saw Tom take off his shirt and shoes, then walk into the cold water. When the water was up to Tom's pale thighs, he made a shallow dive in, wetting his hair completely. He surfaced, brushed his hair back out of his face, and swam upstream.

As Tom swam, Carlos slept uncomfortably. Carlos never slept well at night, so he fell asleep quickly and easily during the day whenever he sat in a place too long. When his eyes shut, as he lay back in the canoe, the haunting images came back to him again. When his empty beer bottle hit the canoe floor, he saw the next person falling into the well. The women were lined up, some holding babies. They all proudly wore their brightly colored huipiles. At this point, there was no use in denying heritage.

The babies were taken from the arms of their mothers and killed, their heads hit against a bloody tree. Then the women were forced into the hole by animals that looked like gorillas. But the gorillas were clothed, and they held guns unnaturally. The guns were very old, American hand-me-downs. This time, only the first victim of his dream made a sound—it was the one that fell when he let his bottle fall to the floor of the canoe. The others just fell silently into the deep dark as he watched from the safe distance of sleep. Back then they called it a civil war, and some still do. But, in his sleep, in the canoe, there was no doubt it was genocide.

When Carlos woke up, Tom was back in the canoe, and they were passing under a railroad bridge. A train had awoken Carlos, and startled him, but he was relieved to be away from the camouflaged men who surrounded the well.

“Good morning, honey,” Tom shouted to the front of the canoe.

“Screw you,” Carlos said, rubbing his eyes and sitting up.

“Did you have a nice rest?”

“Did you have a nice piss?”

“You get vulgar when you wake up.”

“I get vulgar when you're annoying.”

“You get vulgar and you get mean.”

“Have we gone far?” he asked, looking up at the shaking bridge.

“No. I went for a swim while you were getting your beauty sleep.”

“Did it help?”

“Did what help?”

“The beauty sleep. Do I look better?”

“No. You still look pretty bad. Your wrinkles are still deep, and you're still hunching over when you sit.”

“But at least I'm charming.” He turned around in his seat and smiled at Tom.

“Sure, at least you have that going for you.”

The train passed before they were out from under the bridge. When the rumbling stopped, the sound of the water dripping from the above tracks became loud. It echoed within the bridge's support arches. Carlos tried not to associate the dripping water and the shadows under the bridge with the murderous well of his nightmares.

As they went around a bend, they came through a small town that had a restaurant near the river. “How are you doing, Carlos?”

“I'm dying. We all are.”

“Funny. But I mean are you tired of the river? Do you want to stop here?”

“I'm never tired of the river, but let's find a cup of coffee.”

They pulled up onto a muddy shore, and Carlos picked up the rope in front of him that was tied to the bow. He stepped out, finding a rock to place his foot and avoid the mud. He walked up the shore, onto the grass, pulling up the canoe. Tom stepped out when he was

close to the edge, and helped finish the pull. It seemed like a good, trustworthy town, so they didn't tie it up or lock it. They walked up a small hill and across a street to a small restaurant. There were some metal tables and chairs on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant, and they sat down there. A waitress came out the door and walked over to them.

“What can I get y'all?”

“Just some coffees, please,” Tom said.

“Ain't it too hot for coffee?”

“No. It's just right.”

She left to get the coffee. “It's strange,” Carlos said, almost to nobody. “Sometimes third-world countries have a better understanding of how things work. I guess, when you don't have air conditioning you learn that the hot drinks make you feel cooler in the heat. If you live in a cooled house, you think only cold things can make you cold.”

The coffee was decent, and they looked out over the river with its heavily leaved trees lining it. The almost-bad smell of the summer water together with the cool breeze and the hot coffee made Carlos happy.

After drinking two cups each, they paid and left.

As they paddled slowly down the river, Carlos thought about the taste the coffee had left in his mouth. It wasn't a great taste. The coffee from his home always left a pleasant aftertaste. Maybe it was because the coffee was grown close to his house, the plants scattered amongst the shady trees. It didn't have far to travel, and it was his mother who roasted the beans. She was consistent, and the grounds were black and fresh. He drank two cups every morning, and the taste hung around until lunch.

The end of the trip came soon, and they loaded the canoe on the truck. Tom had a large truck, and it was difficult getting the canoe up. As they struggled, Carlos recalled the small trucks used on the farms near his former home. They were used to haul farm-fresh avocados and just-killed chickens into town. It would be easy to get the canoe into one of those.

~Christopher Lux

Tapestry

He took the needle in his hand
 And thread a color through its eye,
 Pulling taut the fragile string
 And looking sideways through squinted eye.

A moment or two he paused,
 Collecting whizzing thoughts in shaky palms,
 Breathing deep the butterflies in
 To stand precariously on a cloud.

*Is she ready – do I wait –
 Will these words seal my fate...*
 He steadied the glittering point
 And pierced it through her heart.

Back and forth he drew his thread,
 Cobalt, lemon, brown, and gold,
 Changing the twine as he went,
 Weaving a harlequin mold.

Crimson veined sweetly through the air
 Stirring, shimmering in the summer night.
 A flash of metal in the lamp glow
 As he buried it now in his heart.

A cold north wind blew hard on his work,
 Tangling, mangling his design.
 Thick cords of yarn bound round her throat
 And cut off her air supply.

The more sewn, the more matted and snarled
 Until with a dagger she cut
 Through the nets, and I saw with a gasp
 The hand with the needle was mine.

~Ruth Hymel



Our Diverse Hands
by Elizabeth Leonards

The Boy Monk

“*Deus, in adiutorium meum intende. Domine, ad adiuvandam me festina....*” So began the vespers that fateful night, the night he came to us. I was in the choir stalls, chanting with the others. The sound of prayer, the monastery's daily breath, filled the half-empty church. The sun was down, and by the feebly flickering candles I could just make out the stained glass face of St. Tarcisius. The holy youth, pictured in the window above Brother Zechariah, clasped the Sacrament to his breast. He looked down on the choir, and, to the keen observer, seemed to smile. The psalm ended, and all paused in silence.

It was then I heard it – a faint but prolonged creaking noise. I glanced up and my heart gave a little jolt. The door of the church was opening, and through its high portal a small, dark shape appeared. It stopped just past the door. The brothers remained silent, looking, though it was certainly time for the next psalm. The very room seemed to hold its breath. A minute passed.

At last Brother James began the prayer. I joined in the response, but could not draw my gaze away from the little shadow that was now creeping down the main aisle. Closer and closer it came, and less and less I paid attention to the words. Staring hard at the book, I tried to ignore it, but only succeeded in stumbling over the last phrase. A moment later, vespers was ended.

Beside me, one of the brothers made a sound like gasping. My head snapped up. There, in the dim, yellow circle of candlelight, stood a boy. He was small – maybe ten years old, at most. His face, though dirty, was handsome – and solemn. With the gravity of a priest, he approached the altar, bowed, and bound his right hand in the altar cloth.

I blinked. My mind went blank for a moment, not comprehending. Then, slowly, it came back to me. The Rule, in its fifty-ninth chapter, states how parents are to offer their sons to the Order. But this boy, I thought. *What could he mean? He is alone! He is* – Brother James murmured my thought aloud.

“He is offering himself.”

And that was how Jerome came to the monastery. Poor, unlettered, bereft of kin, yet devoted from the first. He never uttered a word, even at prayer, but then his every move betrayed a fervor not of this world. We named him for the patron of orphans.

For the next year Jerome lived and toiled beside us, and we loved him. Brother Philip made him a small habit. Brother Ambrose healed his sores. The Abbot taught him letters and the Rule. Even old Brother Zechariah saw fit to show him basic illumination. Jerome knelt with us and he rose with us. He washed with us and he ate with us. He dug and we planted, he listened and we instructed. And each day we discovered how much he could be taught, and how little we knew.

One day Jerome and I had kitchen duty together. It was dull work, but the boy took to it with alacrity – I, I must confess, lacked his cheerfulness – and for a while all went well. I washed, Jerome dried. I wiped, he scrubbed. I set a serving dish upon the table's edge, and turned to another matter. Jerome, not seeing what I had done, stepped back and knocked the dish to the ground, where it shattered. After that, he became disconsolate. I tried to tell him the fault was mine, that I had been careless, but he shook his head firmly and would not hear it. I explained to the abbot what happened, and he agreed that I was the one who must make satisfaction. Jerome, however, fell on his knees and silently begged the abbot to give him a penance also.

“No, son,” the abbot replied kindly, “return to your work now. If God wishes you to make satisfaction in some way, He will offer you the opportunity Himself.” At the time, none of us – neither Jerome, the abbot, nor I – could imagine what that would be. That night, after supper, we went to prayer. Jerome knelt with us and he rose with us. He prayed with us and he read with us. He slept, and we did also, ignorant of what was coming.

Then, as the thief in the night, they appeared – like great crows from the North, savage birds bent on spoils and slaying – the Norsemen. It was dawn of Good Friday. When the shouting began I

sprinted to the outer wall with the brothers, fearing the worst. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Jerome, following.

“Hurry!” I shouted, “Go inside and stay there!” – words I would forever regret. The raid was small, but the fight still long and hard. Finally, as the sun hovered on the Western brink of the world, we, together with some local farmers, succeeded in beating the destroyers back. We gave a shout of victory, and for one resplendent moment the day was ours. Then all fell silent. Another sound, that of wailing, had arisen.

At once we rushed to the oratory, and there found old Zechariah lying wounded and weeping. Before him sat a mass of shattered stone and rubble, and in its midst, two limp forms: one a man, the other a boy. Between his broken sobs, the distraught brother told us all.

I sagged against a wall as I listened, numb with shock as the scene took shape in my head. Zechariah came to lock the oratory and bar it against the invaders. But before he could do so, a Viking who had skirted the fight came bursting in and struck the old man to the floor. Unable to rise or call for help, Zechariah watched with horror as the villain made for the treasures of the church. The barbarian's eyes glinted greedily as he stretched out a hand toward the tabernacle. His unholy fingers were inches from the gold-etched doors when a voice arrested him.

“You shall not touch the Lord my God!” it shouted, and the oratory swelled the sound, echoing back the firm reverberations of the voice that, till that moment, none had heard. It seemed at once the voice of David facing Goliath, or perhaps of Daniel in the lion's den. But neither David nor Daniel pronounced those words, fervent though they were. The voice was Jerome's.

There he stood in the sacristy doorway, his face bright and terrible, as though the fire of the Sacred Heart had filled up his eyes and been emblazoned on his aspect. There was passion in this youth – passion as even the robber, the Viking, had never seen. The thief hesitated.

Not wasting a second, Jerome moved quick as a cat.

Snatching up the abbot's crosier, he brained the Northman before the latter could move. In an instant they were locked together, and for a moment it seemed that the great heathen might even be worsted by the frenzied youth. But it was not to be.

Though they struggled and strove all the way to the wall, still Jerome could not get the upper hand. The lamb was bold, but the wolf was brutal. The powerful pagan tore the crosier from the boy's grip and raised it hard and fast above his own head, intent on a crushing blow. The sturdy wood struck a support beam, upon which there rested a precarious section of the wall. The oratory had long been in need of repair. The crosier cracked, but as it did so it dislodged the beam, and in the avalanche that followed, acolyte and aggressor were lost to sight.

When we found them, the sight was too much to bear. The Viking lay in a heap of broken stone, his last ferocious snarl still half-discernible on his grey face. Jerome, however, was another matter. Covered to his waist, the child lay prone upon the floor, one arm outstretched. His hand pointed at something, and as I drew closer, I saw what he had etched, dying, in the dust.

It began, "*Ut in Omnibus...*," but I could see no more, for my eyes blurred with tears. I wiped them away, and at that moment the setting sun poured its light in through one window – that of the boy martyr who always seemed to smile. The rays pierced straight through the golden glass of his halo and wreathed the peaceful face of the still boy.

Our grief, mingled now with a love we never knew we had, overcame us. The brothers and I knelt by his side, in pained prayer. We knew now that the boy who knelt with us, who prayed with us, who loved us to the last and to the full, would never rise with us again.

~Caitlin Clancy



A Time Transparent

Purpose is intention driven through space.
 It's an arrow, a stain, a train or a trace
 That replaces the void and gives time a face.
 Reaction splits the atom.

Compulsion is instinct propelled by love.
 It's a pulsating heart's ache, a kiss, a hug.
 It's the hand of a child, a squeeze, a tug;
 A craft piercing the void.

So commonly the seed emerges to the day;
 Opens its eye with brilliant bouquet.
 With no sound of struggle it passes through clay;
 Vanquishes on the morrow.

A cloud once becoming cannot be kept still
 For there is nothing restraining. It possesses no will.
 How freely it releases knowing there are oceans to fill.
 Reason supplies the need.

The glass, empty, transparent, will fill tear by tear.
 Life's seasons hold secrets that are never quite clear.
 Search for patterns in the sky; mark the ages in a mirror.
 A pearl hides beneath the depths.

The hunter is always aware of the stream.
 The descent seems effortless; yet it is calculated, pristine.
 Prepared for the arresting because the nesting is the dream—
 That life will live another...

Day gives way as a bride to groom.
 Release of abundance—the babe from womb.

The void filled only with love until tomb.
Come death, do we part!

Quick! Gather those stones before they are strewn
About by those plans that were crafted too soon!
“Good intention is never good enough,” declares the sun to the moon.
And so he rises again.

~Randi Olson



Fence
by Paul Toscano

Winomotion

I am squished on the kitchen floor,
a grape for a socked foot to find,
sweet red and stickily annoying.

My mouth is dry and acidic, and
I do want to speak. Now.

But I seem like a bleeding vineyard,
inebriated, slowly pruning into an
anxious leathery raisin.

My words are slow and gulped,
only blushing later. I keep them
churning in oak barrels.

And there they may stay
fermented and full bodied,
breathing.

~Robin Taillon



Image

Flames flicker
and rays take flight
from the orange glow
of the firelight.

Shadows dance
a choreography
of writhing
intensity.

Going up,
coming down.
Overwhelmed by
sight and sound.

Light from
above and behind
burns the skin
and eyes in kind.

Feeling
powerful,
tricked by images
fleeting. Doubtful.

Mesmerized.
Double-eged
Shackles restrain.
Deranged.

Static feats,
unquestioning.
Preoccupied
from turning.

Know it all
not knowing.
Keeping the
cycle going.

What
matters
as the light on
the cave-wall scatters?

~Anthony Wyatt

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One Chance

by Elizabeth Leonards

Summer of Surrender

With Phyllis moving away
and Grace forgetting,
the tiny vegetable plot
has gone to seed.

Last year, tomatoes and
snap peas; this year, weeds.

Oxygen-toting Charlotte
has ceded the mowing
back to the landlord. He doesn't
bother with trim. Neglected edges
run amok, with Queen Anne's lace
tripping over sunflowers

strung through daylily beds.

Overgrown hollyhocks
menace sidewalks,
stickery stems
and orange pockmarked
leaves blocking the way.

Our days, once duly tended,
flow toward the last surrender.
What might be taking root
in our psychic soil
as wildness wins outside?

~Sister Jane Russell





Robert Jones
by Katja Gronert



Blame

Please, take the time to blame me
I deserve that form of infamy

Taking a bite of sinner's fruit
Knowledge spreads right to the root

Now just a victim of serpent's tongue
Not excused for being so young

Please, blame me for this knowing, Love
For this dark when light was once above

Look not on me with such loving eyes
I shared with you the serpent's lies

Out of paradise we have been cast
What would I do to change the past

Blame me for such quick decision
Our doom forged, then came the schism

Your reputation will not suffer
This for you I can now offer

In history I'll take this blame
and not besmirch man's good name

Then only God shall know the truth
I was the one who was uncouth

~Ashley Faye Miller



Witchy Woman

Running out into the gloam,
peopled-out and fading,

broken bodily and covered in
poison ivy, blundering elsewhere,
unthinking.

A mug of wine
slurred to the dregs, an

ipod in hand, demanding to be wind blown
and tossed into limbo.
Mind and love pump akimbo.

They writhe and wriggle
like worms cut in two.

Tonguing, slipping,
into bruised indigo sky,

my ears look for another song
to drum.

My fingertips drip bells and years,

I am shot, I am done to tears, all I can do is
commune with little bugs.

Cicada and the pattering of sky drool,
Life chortles and chums.
Tiny percussionists, singing
what it is,
what it always was.

~Robin Taillon



Santa Muerte
by Maryanna Ponce

May-Pole Dance

a sonnet in iambic tetrameter

The stories told in books of courts:
 Those told by bards of knights in love
 Like Lancelot—but not. Reports
 Have him having her; not me, not love.
 Bells ring, I'll not harms cause.
 Others have ere had love but not:
 Alike to me. Mean, no charms
 Has mine love. Where's fancy begot?
 Oh lame, my circles enough!
 I must the real matter attend.
 The May-Pole in Spring but pains.
 Comfort my heart can but pretend.
 Quickly I will go... I know,
 Around and around I'll go.

~Raphaël Du Sablon



ON THE EDGE



The Flickering Lamp

Lingering on the broken tracks amid the cold
Lovely night silences empty words with her depth
Bearing the heavy shame of those unknown sins, folds
Blind desire over hollow sounds that mix inept.
Trucks rush below in controlled confusion, driving
Within their concrete walls (north or south) unliving.

“Jump, Jump, Jump,” I heard them call out,
So I looked down to see about.

The moon still waits alone in the sky, ignored now
And blocked out by highway signs with ads to display.
For cheaper commodities and comfort is how
We must spend our days, till night comes and then we play.
Shining sea of stars, struggling to see and sound
Is drowned by smog and electricity all ‘round.

The empty bridge upon which I stand looking down
Into the darkened road drenched in rust and cold
Doesn’t care whether I should sleep or freeze or drown,
Just that I leave its rusty tracks and do as told.

Hearing the roar of the trucks, I stared at the road and dreamt
The next last step, when a flickering lamp post caught my eye.
I waited and watched with wondering sight of what it meant:
To be filled with light is to be complete, so I must try.

Whispering lamp which quietly, humbly fights to survive,
Lead me off these rusty tracks to face the darkness, alive.

~Michael Maimone

The Bells

Their gentle chimes reach cross the world, inviting all to join the throng
Sparkling notes let rapture frolic in the misty-hearted dawn
They tend to wills and solace pains
And peal their tones through all the miles
That stand between my mind and feet
Sweet emblems of defile
As silver teardrops split the silence
They callous, ethereal ring
Stones grow cold as refrains old
And the Bells no longer sing
Thy will be done, though still ye fall
Each trembling pitch tells me
The pall of sable over all
But still the Bells hold me
~Timothy Tanko



Under My Umbrella

by
Ashley Faye Miller

A Study in Schizoid

A young girl named Anna kicked absentmindedly in Tripartite Lake, sending a few tadpoles scattering. It was a fairly small body of water, surrounded by thick willows and pines that let the sky come trickling in to create misty holograms on the sedate surface. Anna's white shoes and stockings were getting heavy, changing color to a pale green as the murky liquid soaked into them. Across the lake, some reeds tore apart like bed curtains to let an egret float into the red evening air. Watching it, Anna wondered if the black trailing behind was feet or fingers.

She leaned back and looked for more animals. They were always the most interesting things during these episodes. A frog came swimming by and stopped suddenly, staring at her. The moment she made eye contact with it, she realized that its eyes belonged to her father. Angry brown and flecked with dark veins, their intensity made her forget that it was just a frog. When the orbs suddenly popped out and sank into the water, the frog followed them. Another drowned relic of Anna's lonely past.

A squirrel got her attention next as it scurried by with an acorn. The creature dropped its prize next to her, then vanished into a hole in the ground which was leaking grey smoke. Anna reached over and examined the nut; it only had a few tiny cracks on it. By their nature they didn't mean anything, but the little black lines were forming sentences even as she watched: "Life is poison." "Not worth their time." "We know everything." "In hell anyway."

As if she cared anymore. She skipped the malevolent acorn over Tripartite, one, two, six total times. When it finally stopped moving, it burst and let loose a flurry of shadows. They shrieked and fled into the depths. Although it wasn't the first time she'd seen them, Anna's heart raced, and her legs lost all feeling at the cry. She could track the shades' progress because wherever they moved, the water turned bloody. Once they reached the shore, the things emerged: tall, shapeless areas of darkness, stretching with vaporous hands as they came for her. The specters formed a circle and began tearing her

apart, hurling bits and pieces everywhere until only her head remained. It felt too heavy to not collapse into itself. Then they began chanting: “Minus, Thursday, Center, Seventeen...”

Their names.

After some minutes of repetition, the hallucination ended and Anna found herself whole again, feet still soaking. She breathed a sigh of relief. Yet, not everything was right. The ground shook. She heard a faint growl: “Kitty cat kitty cat, we hate you.” A tree crashed down towards her, and she gasped, throwing up her hands. However, as always, nothing came of it. She opened her eyes again to the same blissful scene: a quiet, secluded lake, disturbed only by the diving of a few ducks and the little spreading rings from her feet. She began crying in frustration and disgust.

It only took one throw to forsake her medicine. Thursday always told her not to take it, and his whispers were more reasonable today. The little pink pills flew all over the water like so many dreams. Some ducks swam over, swallowing several of the foreign objects. Anna seemed able to watch as the “medicine” reached the creature's brains. It flooded over their organs and began blocking off all the sensory receptors, making them only filter what the doctors called normal. The ducks stopped swimming and just floated, paralyzed.

An eagle cry shredded the silence: it dropped out of the bleeding sky and began furiously attacking the immobilized waterfowl. Even then, they could only stare straight ahead. That's what I've been doing my entire life, Anna thought.

The voices started muttering again. A presence appeared at her right, but she couldn't actually see anything there. Her nose was assaulted by the smell of sulfur and burning hair. It was hard to concentrate on the lake, or anything except suffocation. The eagle stopped its feasting and began screaming: she could understand the cries. Minus was translating for her. “Running away from life again. We're useless. A waste of space. They all just pretend to care. I wonder who pays Joseph not to leave. They call us freaks when we're not around. Probably worse. There's no escape. Kill us. It'd be easy: too many pills. We didn't throw them. Go on.”

Anna slipped into the lake as something grabbed her dangling legs. It disappeared immediately and let her resurface, gasping, whereupon nothing remained of her verbal tormentors. She crawled out, covered with little trailing weeds and soaked through. Her light dress clung to her like an ethereal sarcophagus. She tossed the weeds back, where they began eating each other. The water was churning, and she struggled to her feet to find a more peaceful area. She decided to search her purse and, as Minus had said, she found the pills again. They were moving around in the bottle on little legs. A sudden dizziness made her collapse to the ground, and the bottle smashed on a jutting rock, letting the pests loose. Anna was stricken by the same feeling as when she saw the blood-water shadows. The pills were crying in high pitched voices, reminding her of why she was here.

Paralyzed.

Her tears were burning into her skin, but she couldn't stop the pain. Seventeen caressed her, invited her to join them. She listened. Then she trembled towards the pink monsters and held them close to her face, wondering what would happen afterwards. With a moment of clarity she saw hilly fields, sheltered by glowing, overburdened fruit trees, and home to swift-running streams that looked golden in the light. Center whispered, "Peace would be with you."

God. Where are you? God! Is this you? Your world...?

There was no answer to her entreaties. Fine. With a hand full of the dancing insects, she slithered on her stomach to the lake and began taking them with its water. After she'd killed all of them, she waited. A twitch; a chest pain. Her eyes widened as, for the first time, she actually saw the world without the blinds of her reality. It was so beautiful. And sad. But it was empty. This was reality—death was the only true reality. And as she woke at last, she knew all the voices were in agreement with her actions.

All but her own... racked with screams at these ravaging, recurring phantasms.

~Timothy Tanko





The Devil Went Down to Tennessee

by Ruth Hymel

Ms. Susan

Growing up, my mother was a very sickly person; she was always in bed moaning in pain because of her sickness. I didn't have a father or any other relatives to help me take care of her. However I did have Ms. Susan, who lived next door and was a very kind seventy-year-old lady. She would come over and cook for us almost every day and even watched over mother while I was away at school. I told Ms. Susan about all my troubles. She always gave me a smile, telling me not to worry, and she would hug me afterwards. Now, Ms. Susan never married, or had any other children of her own, but to me she was the grandmother I never had. However, she did have her moments where she would change into a completely different person and it would frighten me. During those occasions, I would hide in my mother's room, locking the door, and Ms. Susan would scream and pound on the door demanding to be let in. She would eventually stop and start apologizing, begging for the door to open. My mother, in her weak state, would ask me to open the door for her. I was always hesitant, but I kindly obeyed. Every time I opened the door, there was Ms. Susan standing there silently crying. I would gently grab her by the hand and lead her home where I would put her to bed. I would then walk back into my house and clean the mess Ms. Susan always made during her moments, then I would sleep with my mother holding her as I cried. I was only twelve at the time and didn't know any better. Looking back there was nothing I could have done on the day of my mother's funeral to help Ms. Susan avoid her fate.

My mother died in the middle of spring, her favorite season. Ms. Susan and I were there with her when she died. I felt so devastated, but I knew I wasn't alone; I had Ms. Susan with me. Child services let me stay with Ms. Susan while funeral preparations were being made; little did I know of what was in store. During the day, Ms. Susan would be her normal self, but at night, she would turn into a mad woman. She would walk about the house talking to herself and sometimes she became violent. She would come to my room and start yelling at me and tried to hurt me on several occasions. There were no locks on the doors, so I began to put the dresser in front of my door and hide under the bed, crying to myself, waiting for the sun to come up. On the day of

my mother's funeral a man from child services, who was kind enough to drive us to the funeral home, was telling me that they were going to put me in with a foster family. I was excited and yet sad at the same time; happy that I was able to get away from Ms. Susan but sad that I was going to leave her alone by herself. The man asked if I would rather stay with Ms. Susan, but I immediately said no without hesitation. The man told me I was to meet my new family the day after tomorrow, enough time to say good bye to Ms. Susan.

Throughout the funeral I never let go of Ms. Susan's hand, and she would squeeze my hand every now and then, giving me some comfort. When they finally lowered the coffin in the ground, Ms. Susan led me near the grave to say a final farewell to my mother. That was when Ms. Susan finally snapped. At first it wasn't noticeable; she began crying and started shaking. I assumed it was because she was getting emotional saying good bye to mother. Then her grip began to tighten. I told her that she was hurting me, but she ignored me, so I became frightened and I started to struggle. Ms. Susan grabbed me by the shoulders and started shaking me violently; she began screaming at me: "Why? Why are you leaving me too? I've been so kind to you. Stay with me forever. Don't leave me." At that point, the man from child services came along with a few others and tore us apart. Ms. Susan was fighting against them, reaching out for me, and was still screaming. I couldn't tell if she was doing it out of sadness or anger. That was the last time I ever saw Ms. Susan. I was told she was committed to a mental asylum, and it was best if I didn't see her anymore. The thought of not seeing Ms. Susan didn't bother me. She was lost forever, and there was nothing I could do. My foster family loves me with all their heart and I will be forever grateful. However, since the funeral there's been this empty void inside of me. I had lost a mother and a grandmother on the same day; what could you expect? I still have nightmares of Ms. Susan, even to this day. I can see her reaching out to me, screaming, staring at me with hollow eyes. I sometimes wake up to the sound of knocking on my door and a faint sob. I'm tempted to go see a doctor about it, but I don't bother. After all, we tend to have those moments every once in a while.

~Maryanna Ponce



AGORA EDITORIAL STAFF

Paige Duren
Raphaël Du Sablon
John Gaboda
Ruth Hymel
Jenna Kimble
Ashley Faye Miller
Susan Ritchie
Curran Sentilles

AGORA STUDENT ACTIVITIES REPRESENTATIVE

Susan Ritchie

AGORA FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Rebecca Munro

AGORA LAYOUT AND DESIGN EDITOR

Renaë Heustess

AWARDS

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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 receives publication in Agora and a cash prize. This award represents top submission as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity and originality.

– **Timothy Tanko is the 2013 recipient of the Jean S. Moore Award for his submission “A Study in Schizoid.”**

Agora Art & Photography Award

Each year, the recipient of this award receives publication in Agora and a cash prize. This award represents top submission as judged by the editorial staff and is based on creativity and originality.

– **Ruth Hymel is the 2013 recipient of the Agora Art & Photography Award for her submission “The Devil Went Down to Tennessee.”**

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

All contributors are members of the Belmont Abbey College community.

Students & Alumni:

Nikole Brand is a Freshman.

Caitlin Clancy is a Sophomore, majoring in English.

Raphaël Du Sablon is a Junior, majoring in Mathematics.

Katja Gronert is a Freshman.

Marina Hart is a Junior, majoring in Mathematics.

Ruth Hymel is a Senior, majoring in English.

Charlie Jackson is a Senior, majoring in Theology.

Elizabeth Leonards is a Freshman.

Christopher Lux is a Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

Annemarie Maimone is a Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

Michael Maimone is a Junior.

Ross McKnight is a Senior, majoring in English.

Ashley Faye Miller is a Senior, majoring in History.

Randi Olson is a Senior, majoring in Educational Studies.

Maryanna Ponce is a Junior, majoring in History.

Nicholas Rees is a Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

Susan Ritchie is a Senior, majoring in Biology.

Robin Taillon is a Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

Timothy Tanko is a Junior, majoring in English.

Jonathan Torres is a Senior, majoring in English.

Paul Toscano is a Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

Kyrie Watson is a Junior, majoring in English.

Faculty & Staff:

The Late Father Matthew McSorley was a member of the Belmont Abbey Monastery.

Dr. Gerald Malsbary is the Director of First-Year Symposium.

Dr. Rebecca Munro, is a Professor of English.

Sister Jane Russell is a Professor of Theology.

Dr. Rajive Tiwari is the Chair of the Mathematics and Natural Science Division and a Professor of Physics.



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100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road
Belmont, North Carolina 28012