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# On Faith

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## On Faith · *Heather McHugh*

They couldn't see the future  
for a fact. Imagination  
of oatmeal, room of mush,  
it wasn't that they hadn't seen  
the blackening and ironing  
around the lungs, the celebrations  
in a raw heart, how the bullets  
were put to bed in a chamber.

They just didn't believe  
that they themselves could be  
knocked off to the nearest star.  
They didn't believe what they saw  
was gone. The red shift was, at worst,  
a dress away at the cleaners.  
Invisible ink had to be kept  
in bottles, and that took space.  
They added attics in the event,  
sperm banks in the bomb shelter.

And though the self was always  
arriving late, they saw it, at best,  
as a friendly ghost, one of the wise men  
making a point  
of carrying diamonds to stars  
or being a shade in the dark.  
The substance of the argument was pure  
spirit, the drink was drunk, the rock  
miraculously gone, and why not,  
once you saw it come to life,  
live with yourself?

The past was another story, they said.  
You couldn't imagine the past.