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# Beaming Teenage

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ALBERT GOLDBARTH

*Beaming Teenage*

“Time is like...” I’m quoting,  
for a class of mine, a poem that Nancy Becker wrote  
in our sophomore year of high school, I’m intending  
to use it to demonstrate cliché, when out the door  
I see my colleague in philosophy E.F. approach,  
so wan, so five-eleven skim-milk wan,  
in the half-here, half-in-the-radiant-universe  
ambient float of his signature walk now at the sixth  
of his eight chemotherapy sessions meant  
to address the lymphoma in him, and so he undoes  
the metaphorical lock of this literal moment, and  
it all floods (that would be the key word) over  
the banks of realization, Andy’s partner wasting  
from his stocky frame like a figure of snow,  
and Donna-and-Dennis’s seventeen-year-marriage jolting  
speedily toward the exit ramp, and of course  
the story this morning of their dragging the river for something  
that no longer resembles the beaming teenage boy  
in the top-of-the-column photo, and I don’t mean  
to say that change is always measured in damage,  
no, my nephew the precocious five-year-old is now  
my nephew the precocious backpack wanderer of the world  
in all of its multi-hued striated variations, and although  
I have composure in front of my class I’m also on my knees  
inside my brain and asking Nancy Becker for forgiveness,  
she with her charming fussy “pixie cut” and ulcerated colitis and crushes  
on foolish impossible guys and lavender notebooks,  
you were right all along as you tore out a page  
and wrote it down and submitted it to the friendly eye  
of *Reflections*, our high school literary journal in equally lavender  
1965 mimeograph smudged ink, you were so exact  
and generous in reminding us “like a river flowing.”