

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

Shannon O'Connor
In Between Days

I avoid people. I go out of my way to not see them. I'm not sure if it's because I'm afraid they'll say something to me, or I'm embarrassed of my life, but dread fills my heart at the idea of people from my past.

Yesterday I got so old I felt like I could die. I knew what time he rode the Orange Line in the morning, and if I saw him I knew he would say something to me. If I went on the train at that time, I had to make sure I didn't sit on the first car, because that's where he always sat. I saw him there once. He waved to me really fast, from the other end of the train, but I got off at the next stop. I didn't want to hear what he had to say. I didn't want him to know I left my house only to get coffee in the city, which was every two weeks.

Yesterday, I got so cold it made me want to cry. That's when I saw him again. I didn't want to deal with that. The fear of the possible conversation: What are you doing now? But why would anybody actually care?

We never went anywhere; we just listened to the trains passing by overhead. But that's all I had. We would count the times between trains. During the afternoon rush hour, there would be less time between them, and it would shake the bed in the house next to the tracks. And I knew it was wrong when you said it was true that it couldn't be me and be there in between without you.

Yesterday I got so scared I shivered like a child. There's a certain part of Boylston Street that I did not walk down for seven years because there was a café where I worked that I quit without telling them because I went nuts the third time. I was so afraid that if I went in, somebody I know would be there and they would say something to me, like hey what happened to you, and I would be embarrassed. I didn't even walk down that part of the street. But one day I did go there, and it was fine. My stomach turned like an urn of coffee being poured down the sink when I went by, I don't know why, I thought I might explode. I didn't explode, though; I survived.

I thought of him those years on the train, the same car, all the time, does he still do that even now? I don't go on the train early; I don't see him ever, so why does it matter? He could have moved to Oregon or Munich, or god knows where. I think he did move, because I don't feel his spirit close to me. I think he's broken and tethered in a place where the ocean is a different color. Go on, go on, just walk away, go on, go on, your choice is made. He chose to leave me stranded when I went crazy. My whole life crumbled like a cinnamon coffee cake. Crumbs on the table that got pushed to the floor and never swept up, just to get moldy and attracts insects.

One day, I walked down that part of Boylston Street, and I summoned all the courage I could find in my wilted heart, and I went into the café that I walked out of when I went nuts the third time. The place was totally different, the walls were yellow, the mirrors were gone; the place seemed warmer and more inviting. I got my coffee and sat down. It had been twelve years since I had been in the place, twelve years from the

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third time I went insane. I remembered the first time, and the last time, but there was something special about the third time. I had money in my pocket to assist my lunacy. I thought of the money I spent on nothing. I found a piece of purple silk on the ground in a park and I kept it. I would never do that in my normal state. I would never eat an apple core or drink questionable lemonade when I was sane. I wanted to call him, but I didn't know his number, I wanted to say, I'm here, I'm brave enough to go to the café where I worked right before the third time I went nuts, I went and I'm sitting here and it's okay and the world didn't explode. I wanted to say, come back, come back, don't walk away, come back come back, come back today, come back come back, why can't you see, come back, come back come back to me.

I wanted to say all these things. I wanted to tell him how I was better and how I was normal now, and how he would never recognize me, and I was sane. I wanted to tell him, but I didn't know his phone number or his email address, to be honest, when I knew him, we didn't even have email addresses. I couldn't type his name into the computer, because if I did, everyone would know. The computer would know. I felt he was somewhere bleak where it rained all the time and nobody ever took their eyes off the ground. He could be anywhere. He could be nowhere. He could be flying on the moon, or dead beneath a tombstone. But I didn't know.

Shannon O'Connor has been published in *Meeting House Magazine*, previously in *The Wilderness House Literary Review* and *The Spoonful Journal* among others. She spends her mornings writing, and during the evenings, she smiles for the corporate machine. She currently attends The Bennington Writing Seminars, where she is working on her MFA in Fiction.