

Mark Vogel

For Carl Eby, God of English

It would be terrible if we had barometers
of commitment

so we could gage love or hate
for each other, for our jobs,
our city home,

for the gentle work connections,
the long established irritations
with the princess and the bore,

for even this simple walking forward
on familiar ground
done so many times before.

A barometer with flashing lights
made public might show
the degree of bleak,

the excitement in running from the work day
toward escapes mastered
and mostly kept within.

Or cause us to lose faith if
we knew the twists of the trails,
the lonely woods so many have created,

the evasions and not-so-hidden
layered evidence throbbing with energy.
Even the silly attempts at sex.

Best to avert our gaze and shrug off
the new technological possibility
to reveal skinny souls,

to ignore the awkward gropes
for meaning, the lack of adequate language,
and see only half smiles

and bookish shadowed patterns—
more nuances of the obvious than
we ever dreamed possible.

Mark Vogel has published short stories in *Cities and Roads*, *Knight Literary Journal*, *Whimperbang*, *SN Review*, and *Our Stories*. Poetry has appeared in *Poetry Midwest*, *English Journal*, *Cape Rock*, *Dark Sky*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Broken Bridge Review* and other journals. He is currently Professor of English at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, and directs the Appalachian Writing Project.