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Poetry, Fiction, and Nonfiction:
We accept all forms, themes, styles, and genres of 1500 words or less; however, we limit the number of submissions to six (poetry) and three (fiction and nonfiction) per author per issue. Submissions must be typed (no handwritten submission will be considered). Fiction and nonfiction should be submitted in standard, double-spaced format. Submissions on disc and formatted in Word 6.0 or higher are greatly appreciated. Send submissions to:

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Enclose a SASE if you wish submissions and/or discs returned. Disposable submissions are preferred. Pays one copy.

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Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest:
Annual award of $100 for best poem. Submit 2 poems to Dr. Gary Ciuba at ICON’s mailing address c/o Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest, prior to February 9 of each year. Winning poem and Honorable Mention are published in ICON.

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ICON
Magazine for Literature and Art

Spring 2002

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Below the Rock, below the Dome of the revolve in intricate geometries of gold an old man recites his prayers. His beard right words;
every strand repeating his white prayer.

His long thin silence reaches out like an
His head raises and lowers with each of
god.
Each name has a separate scent, some like iris
Calf-skin purses, or the smooth lips

His turban duels with shadows.

When he prays, he doesn’t say a word.
He sings and no sounds come out.

His words carve out a cave
in the belly
at the center of the world.

It took him a long time to find the Well, even though it’s in all the tour brochures and the place is crawling with tourists.

The words found their way there first, then the silence followed.
Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest Winner 2002
Old Man in the Well of Souls
Ronald Bullis

Below the Rock, below the Dome of the Rock, where stars revolve in intricate geometries of gold and blue tiles,

an old man recites his prayers. His beard sifting out the right words;
every strand repeating his white prayers.

His long thin silence reaches out like an arm in a long robe. His head raises and lowers with each of the 99 names for god. Each name has a separate scent, some like the insides of an iris
    Calf-skin purses, or the smooth lips of Moroccan dates.

His turban duels with shadows.

When he prays, he doesn’t say a word. He sings and no sounds come out.

His words carve out a cave
    in the belly
    at the center of the world.

It took him a long time to find the Well, even though it’s in all the tour books. and the place is crawling with tourists.

The words found their way there first, then the silence followed.
He looked our way, but he stared at a spot somewhere in front of us, like he either didn’t see us or he was looking at one of our outer bodies.

He sees our gold body and maybe our stone one, too. He cups his hands to his face, like he is saying something to his breath

or looking for the smell of the name.

Bodies looking for bodies. Stars and gold, and the rare blue bodies of words.

---

Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest Honorable Mention

It Happens in Kansas

Kevin Griffith

Every so often a big twister would bring us back something from the other world. Amidst the dead cows pummeled into hamburger, the overturned tractor, mobile homes tossed like cigarette packs, we’d find a witch’s green hand,

a giant lollipop rammed through an oak tree. Any flying monkey we found we’d bury with the dogs and cats. Aunt Pearl would crochet little grave markers for them.

I remember when the man of tin stumbled to our door, frightened and disoriented. We took care of him the best we could, making a bed for him in the basement near the water heater. Pa hoped we could sell him to the freak show carnie at the county fair. He lived a few days, drinking 5W30 we had stashed in the canning closet.

At night, we could hear him weeping softly, cursing the betrayal of his heart, cooing for a girl with pigtails.
Every so often a big twister
would bring us back something
from the other world. Amidst
the dead cows pummeled
into hamburger, the overturned tractor,
mobile homes tossed
like cigarette packs,
we’d find a witch’s green hand,
a giant lollipop rammed
through an oak tree. Any flying monkey
we found we’d bury with the dogs and cats.
Aunt Pearl would crochet little grave markers
for them.

I remember when the man of tin
stumbled to our door, frightened
and disoriented. We took care of him
the best we could, making a bed for him
in the basement near the water heater.
Pa hoped we could sell him
to the freak show carnie at the county fair.
He lived a few days,
drinking 5W30 we had stashed
in the canning closet.
At night, we could hear him
weeping softly, cursing
the betrayal of his heart,
cooing for a girl with pigtails.
It was never clear when
we were dreaming or awake.
At night a movie played on the backs
of our eyelids as we slept.
We assumed the names in the sky
were lists of neighbors
who had moved away and never returned.

Bird's Notes
Raymond McNiece

The more be
form of bop,
notes in-
tensified, shot
hot through
late night
hallways of bodies,
through rooms
of moans, vib-
rating window
panes out
into evening
velvet.

When the combo re-
ceded, he
went on
alone in-
to synco-
pations, the tot-
terring steps
to dis and
back up to
resonance
all gig long
ending as
a squeal,
axe tilted up-
right,
fingered tight
as Charon's joints
steering across
the river of
Bird's Notes
Raymond McNiece

The more be
form of bop,
notes intensified, shot
hot through
late night
hallways of bodies,
through rooms
of moans, vibrating window
panes out
into evening velvet.

When the combo receded, he
went on
alone into synco-
pations, the tot-
terring steps
to dis and
back up to
resonance
all gig long
ending as
a squeal,
axe tilted up-
right,
fingered tight
as Charon's joints
steering across
the river of
forgetting, then blown again shiny and exact as new coins, thrown down wet stairs.

Even he went along for the ride near the end, chopping through smoke, chopping through stale wine, chopping through boredom, chopping through the wall of talk to get to those sharp, bright pints of night cause all that waited was that dirty needle sucking and spitting, and his lips frozen to that cold, gold burning.

When he went down his stops sounded as all time stopped. His riffs ran out of the blue and waited past the present on breath borrowed from wind scouring back streets from Kansas City to Harlem.

Bird's last notes surfaced like drowned men who rise once before sinking in the dark hole where sound waits to happen no matter if it sounds pain blown free.
When he went
down his stops
sounded as
all time stopped.
His riffs ran
out of the blue
and wailed past
the present on
breath borrowed
from wind scouring
back streets
from Kansas City
to Harlem.

Bird's last notes
surfaced
like drowned men
who rise
once before
sinking in the dark
hole where sound
waits to happen
no matter
if it sounds
pain blown
free.
Portrait
Sarah Jefferis

My sixty year-old father, salt-water drag queen, lion-fish Leo born at the end of July,
swaggers the Tidewater boardwalk.
Ocean floor no longer his runway,
his Ann Taylor suit or is it J.C. Penny--
glistens here in Virginia light.
My brother, the blue-bottle jelly ascends
with black eyes, venom in his tail.
Says little to the wigged in platinum lion fish, dives
in water, looks for a child’s foot to sting and paralyze.

Me, the girl, a lucid white box jelly
(the size of a Gucci day purse)
pulses in applause. With four eyes I can watch the North end:
where they slip Chesapeake oysters in their mouths,
and South to the tattoo parlor:
where cuttle-fish artists play with dirty needles,
and West to the toll-booths on 64,
and down East to the Atlantic
where my mother the stone fish waits.
Daily, she is mistaken for every other stone.
No one thinks her a fish, some say coral,
with her short tail and lack of scales.

But I know her shroud.
She does not miss that lion fish.

8:48 a.m.
Shannon Smith

In the morning, I will go as I please
Where in all this turmoil is my day to cease?
I have no comprehension of the things I have seen
Just the carnage I can still taste in my mind
The moon’s already passing me by
It’s so terribly slow tonight
I just wish I wasn’t here

I hope through salvation in the water on my face
I bleed through the skin on my shoulder and yet
I see no reason in the coming moments for you
And yet I weep
For the many who can’t but would if they were
A poet for a generation that can’t feel the page
A laureate without a home to whisper to in the night

How is my perspective from the angle I take?
Do I come in clear, or do I seem to stutter or hate
I have no reason and I fail to rhyme
But the learning I have absorbed is: No man knows time

Not a revelation by any stretch of the imagination
Just a warless child seeking safety in blinding light
And yet I weep
For my own lack of mobility or inability to read
I know not the destination of this nation, or how
And as I plunder through the days that never end
Like a clock on the wall or half eaten doughnut
Frozen in time, none of us could have saved
I know my innocence was raped
8:48 a.m.
Shannon Smith

In the morning, I will go as I please
Where in all this turmoil is my day to cease?
I have no comprehension of the things I have seen
Just the carnage I can still taste in my mind
The moon’s already passing me by
It’s so terribly slow tonight
I just wish I wasn’t here

I hope through salvation in the water on my fingertips
I bleed through the skin on my shoulder and your saltwater kiss
I see no reason in the coming moments for your reaction like this
And yet I weep
For the many who can’t but would if they were here
A poet for a generation that can’t feel the pages
A laureate without a home to whisper to in these new dark ages

How is my perspective from the angle I take?
Do I come in clear, or do I seem to stutter or hesitate?
I have no reason and I fail to rhyme
But the learning I have absorbed is: No man knows his day, or his time

Not a revelation by any stretch of the imagination
Just a warless child seeking safety in blinding reality
And yet I weep
For my own lack of mobility or inability to react
I know not the destination of this nation, or how we will attack
And as I plunder through the days that never change
Like a clock on the wall or half eaten doughnut now stale for days
Frozen in time, none of us could have saved
I know my innocence was raped
Lynn Gerber

CHANGE YOUR MIND
AND YOUR HAIR WILL STOP
FLYING OFF YOUR HEAD

My husband said
When I complained
I don’t know how to uncoil myself

Terror from recall of my past
began the shedding of my hair
then my therapist excavated
father’s toxins as he spilled his own
biting criticism harsh perceptions
accusations

Rather than run
To escape him punish him elude my wrath
I stayed and stayed –
Not an ousted victim
I stood up for Me

As Dr. Hirsh escalated his attacks
he repeatedly confessed
I know I’ve been out of control
but I really want to work this through with you

I left treatment expecting
my hair to stop falling
my intestines to stop raging
but it’s hard to convince myself
I am the victor
extracting myself from the familiar

I had been fooled by hi granny cap
his ruffled collar sweet smile
then noticed his hairy knuckles
pointy teeth long nose
tenacious claws

Tiny Signs
Mark Mansfield

“[T]iny signs were placed on the ceilings of houses so that if people were genuinely having out-of-body experiences and hovering over their beds, they would be able to see them and provide ‘proof’ of the phenomenon.”

The first to really grab my eye?
IF YOU CAN STILL READ THIS, YOU’RE
Already somewhat torn between ogling KILROY WAS HERE

was no surprise, nor was NO ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALL
science having always seemed a prank
someone let get way out of hand.

It was the other signs, although, covered by these freshly taped-up idiocies, that caught me unaware. In one, sunlight vanished into a hill near dawn, another was of fog on a road as it curved toward a sleeping town. These, and others had been obscured by the handiwork of the inductively challenging
I had been fooled by his granny cap
his ruffled collar sweet smile
then noticed his hairy knuckles
pointy teeth long nose
tenacious claws

Tiny Signs
Mark Mansfield

“[T]iny signs were placed on the ceilings of hospital rooms,
so that if people were genuinely having out-of-body experiences
and hovering over their beds, they would be able to see the signs
and provide ‘proof’ of the phenomenon.”

The first to really grab my eye?
IF YOU CAN STILL READ THIS, YOU’RE NOT DEAD YET.
Already somewhat torn between ogling
and being me, this did not help.

KILROY WAS HERE was no surprise,
nor was NO ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALIVE,
science having always seemed a prank
someone let get way out of hand.

It was the other signs, although,
covered by these freshly taped-up idiocies
that caught me unaware. In one,
sunlight vanished into a hill

near dawn, another was of fog
on a road as it curved toward a sleeping town.
These, and others had been obscured
by the handiwork of the inductively challenged.
Who, dead or alive, could not make out
ON WAKING, PLEASE ADVISE THE STAFF THAT YOU
HAVE READ THIS SIGN. THANK YOU, THE STAFF.
Placed like a refrigerator magnet
above the operating table?
But it's the others, the fog upon
a tiny road heading into a town
that never was—this I recall as the birds
start caterwauling once again,
and the ground warm as the first few rays now slant
across the hillside, as if a sign.

Late Afternoon Song
Bert Berry

Black against the glare
-- garnish red-orange sunset -
the lone man on the derelict pier
leans over the water
limp as his fishing line,
and the waves he sees rising
are no more than the scoops,
whorls
of slanting light
reflected from the broken windows
of an abandoned house.
And from the doorway
arching over
the long deserted steps
he still catches the faint melody
of ancient delight.

Some days I get it the way Borges got it,
the world as a labyrinth and mirror,
reflections reflecting reflections
on Minotaur’s maze, landscaped
in dense green hedges. And some days
I get it like the Weekly World News.
so I stuff it shamefacedly in a shopping cart
under my cereal made from whole grains.
Some days I get it the way Melville got it,
and reeling I lose it on a sea of time
where it waits, floating on Queeg’s coffin.
But more frequently than not,
I get it like my mother, with a belly full of feces.
Or some days I get it like my father
hunched over the kitchen table
to pay the mortgage,
or to graph an equation on a calculator,
his face suddenly clear
with ecstasy at some simple proof.
As far as this, poetry that is,
mine’s an egg—one I’ve fashioned
for myself. I’ve arranged
and changed the miniature doll’s furniture
one-hundred thousand times
and straightened the paintings
on the stark white walls. It’s mine alone,
hermetically sealed. Yet, here,
I invite you in.
Dwell in warm yellow yoke.
Tuck yourself into a guest bed of nutrition.
Dip your toast, browned and buttered,
And swipe it along the corner
Of a sun drenched plate.
Keys to Life and Literature (Please Return to Attendant)
Adam Penna

Some days I get it the way Borges got it, the world as a labyrinth and mirror, reflections reflecting reflections on Minotaur’s maze, landscaped in dense green hedges. And some days I get it like the Weekly World News. so I stuff it shamefacedly in a shopping cart under my cereal made from whole grains. Some days I get it the was Melville got it, and reeling I lose it on a sea of time where it waits, floating on Queeg’s coffin. But more frequently than not, I get it like my mother, with a belly full of fear. Or some days I get it like my father hunched over the kitchen table to pay the mortgage, or to graph an equation on a calculator, his face suddenly clear with ecstasy at some simple proof. As far as this, poetry that is, mine’s an egg—one I’ve fashioned for myself. I’ve arranged and changed the miniature doll’s furniture one-hundred thousand times and straightened the paintings on the stark white walls. It’s mine alone, hermetically sealed. Yet, here, I invite you in. Dwell in warm yellow yoke. Tuck yourself into a guest bed of nutrition. Dip your toast, browned and buttered, And swipe it along the corner Of a sun drenched plate.

16
Forgiveness
Amy Rene Durst

Time can never be replaced
by words or sentences on a page
thoughts and feelings can’t be relayed
they’re held in an unseen cage.
I’ll never know how you really felt
because I wasn’t there at the time
and the honest understanding is
an impossible mountain to climb.
Maturity comes with experience
and never simply with years
it can’t be measured in laughter
and not completely in tears.
Time and distance can separate
but if the feelings are real
all the resentment and the anger,
with time and distance, can heal.

The Outside Player
Allison Whittenburg

Don’t ask me if you can sit near me, just bring
Overcrowded with peachcobbler sweeptomatoes
Graze, pump me for info, and fill my ears
Who do you know?
After I say that I’m a poet you
Ask me
Where have you been published?
Where else?
Where else?
Any other places?
The last thing you want to know is my name and
it on you laugh out loud. You tell me that I should
it to something more artistic, more African like
Sonia Sanchez


The Outside Player
Allison Whittenburg

Don’t ask me if you can sit near me, just bring over your
Overcrowded with peachcobbersweetpotatechinettedish,
Graze, pump me for info, and fill my ears
Who do you know?
After I say that I’m a poet you
Ask me
Where have you been published?
Where else?
Where else?
Any other places?
The last thing you want to know is my name and when I lay
it on you laugh out loud. You tell me that I should change
it to something more artistic, more African like
Sonia Sanchez
Half Naked Beauties
Teresa Miglozzi

Beau-ty (bu’te) n. 1. Quality or combination of qualities that delights the senses or mind: the beauty of a face

You see them strolling down the runway.
You see them on the cover of every magazine.
Unceasingly able to see some part of their flawless body,
For there is always an piece left unstitched at the seam.
But what you never see is that one particular girl
That makes up a million and then some,
The one gawking back at them with jealousy and envy,
The one that thinks she weighs a ton.
She is the same young girl who thinks the ends of her hair are split

And her nose is like a crest.
Her hips are too wide.
Her smile’s not too bright
And she’ll never find a way to boost her small chest.
She wonders why she’s not the one,
Perfect enough to be a cover girl.
Thinking she’s just some cheap old piece
And not a fresh and valuable pearl.
Not realizing what she’s seeing is merely an image,
An image that can be fatal,
For she let it take the throne and rule over her,
Placing her self-esteem in an environment unstable.
To be beautiful is not to be
A half naked beauty.
One does not have to uncover her skin
In order to show that she is pretty.
It’s stripping down to what’s in the mind
Down to her heart until it’s bare.
Proudly revealing to all what’s inside
Is what makes a young woman so beautiful and fair.

A Postmodern Interpretation of Geoffry Chaucer:
Many Shoes
Sarah McCulley, Kimmie McCulley, Shannon Smith

O Chaucer,
My Chaucer.
Wherefore art thou Chaucer?
When that Aprill
Of the bearded ers,
Seared my love with the red iron kultour.
My Chaucer sailed away to straunge strondes
Forgotten thou many shoes in Caunterbury.
O Chaucer, Priketh my loins with your medie
O Chaucer,
My Chaucer.
A Postmodern Interpretation of Geoffry Chaucer: Man of Many Shoes
Sarah McCulley, Kimmie McCulley, Shannon Smith and Jen Smith

O Chaucer,
My Chaucer.
Wherefore art thou Chaucer?
When that Aprill
Of the bearded ers,
Seared my love with the red iron kultour.
My Chaucer sailed away to straunge strondes.
Forgotten thou many shoes in Caunterbury.
O Chaucer, Priketh my loins with your medieval verse.
O Chaucer,
My Chaucer.
Choosing A Career
James Doyle

The one-hundred-sixteen page Aptitude test asked questions a demented Confessor one bar stool over Might come up with after too many Or maybe too few martinis:

"Would you rather listen to Beethoven in a rural bathroom with the lights out or ride through Times Square on the back of a donkey?"

"Would you rather play major league baseball for a million dollars a year or hand out pamphlets on the apocalypse for room-and-board?"

It took me hours to finish. The proctor kept eyeing me To make sure, no doubt, My unconscious didn’t copy Answers from my conscious. Or was it vice-versa?

The results came in a week later. My high-school counselor pulled down the shades of his office and in a hushed voice told me my aptitude was to be a pearl-diver.

"Maybe you should drop all those college prep courses," he said, "and switch to something else entirely, but I can’t imagine what."

I left his office excited about my chances in the world: gliding up behind a coral reef instead of a desk, opening an oyster rather than a briefcase.

My parents weren’t as enthusiastic: "We paid all that money for the testing and it came up with what?" As usual, the argument ended in a compromise: I would keep doing exactly what I was doing, going exactly where I was going: college, a career, marriage not to the first scuba tank that came along but to a good woman with grandchildren loins.

If, when I was sixty-five, retired, couldn’t walk but could still manage swim and I wanted to pearl dive, why, there was a lot of water in the world and not all of it would have gone under the bridge.
“Maybe you should drop all those college prep courses,” he said, “and switch to something else entirely, but I can’t imagine what.”

I left his office excited about my chances in the world: gliding up behind a coral reef instead of a desk, opening an oyster rather than a briefcase.

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If, when I was sixty-five, retired, couldn’t walk but could still manage swimming, and I wanted to pearl dive, why, there was a lot of water in the world and not all of it would have gone under the bridge.
Goodbye?
CJ Timko

She was cold. And still. So cold and still. It was all I could do to stand there and view her now lifeless body, but it was time to say goodbye. I didn’t want to say anything. I couldn’t say anything for a long time. I just kept waiting. For what, I really don’t know. The gentle rise and fall of her chest . . . the fluttering of an eye . . . something. Anything. But there was nothing. She was just cold and still.

She’d not been terribly ill. Just old. Not terribly old. Just old. They said she’s had a heart attack. And now she was gone to live with the angels. Gone? Not really. She would always be here in one way or another. In the spontaneous laughter of my children. In the unconscious “momerisms” of her daughters . . . the uncanny similarity of our voices (no one could ever tell any of us apart on the phone) . . . those subtle little inflections . . . the familiar “hillbilly” phrases and colloquialisms. In our, now humbled hearts, and our ever-so-precious memories.

But now we had to say goodbye.

I’d never said goodbye when she didn’t respond in kind. But she wasn’t responding now. I held my younger sisters as the tears, too, struggled to make sense of what we were now expected to do. I knew that she would want us to hold one another . . . to cling to each other and help each other just as she had done all of her life. Her life A life that she’d fought so long and hard for to live on her own terms . . . filled with a practical compassion and a fierce love and a “DO unto other” kindness for everyone that knew her. Her life. A unique montage of homemade happiness and shattering sorrow . . . ceaseless struggles and stubborn victories . . . heartfelt laughter and heart-filled tears. A not-so-ordinary life of an extraordinary woman.

I knew that somehow we would make it through and we were her children and were taught well. But we had always found so much joy and comfort in the last few of her countless and treasured friends leaving. I knew it was time. I had to find the words somehow, to say it.

How could I say it? I knew I wouldn’t mean to see, she had taught us well.

The Director was kind and understanding and left the door of the parlor where my sisters and I stood and we, softly and still body, drawing from each other what little there could be of what little strength we had left just then. Tears streaked our carefully made-up faces so that, separately, we approached the beautiful chest (or possibly be described as beautiful) where the heart was now cradled.

And one by one we went to kiss her for one last time.

We knew that they were all waiting for us. We knew that they were all waiting. But we had to. But I still had not found the words.

Unwilling (or perhaps unable) to pull myself carefully considered the once so determined woman who had given me life, totally aware that I was seeing the strongest woman I had ever known. I recalled the many times someone had remarked that she resembled her.
I knew that somehow we would make it through this. After all, we were her children and were taught well. But now, as the music she had always found so much joy and comfort in was fading, and the last few of her countless and treasured friends and family were leaving. I knew it was time. I had to find the courage somewhere, somehow, to say it.

How could I say it? I knew I wouldn’t mean it. Not really. You see, she had taught us well.

The Director was kind and understanding and gently closed the door of the parlor where my sisters and I stood in front of that cold and still body, drawing from each other what little strength we could of what little strength we had left just to get past the next few moments.

Tears streaked our carefully made-up faces as together, yet separately, we approached the beautiful casket (if any casket can possibly be described as beautiful) where that beautiful woman was now cradled.

And one by one we bent to kiss her for one last time on this earth.

We knew that they were all waiting for us. But how could we just leave? But we had to. But I still had not found the words . . .

Unwilling (or perhaps unable) to pull myself away (not just yet), I carefully considered the once so determined face of the woman who had given me life, totally aware that I was looking at the face of the strongest woman I had ever known. And suddenly my heart recalled the many times someone had remarked at how much I resembled her.
And I recognized the significance of that remembrance.

For as in body, I did resemble her . . . in spirit I do resemble her. I am her daughter and I am her legacy.

And saying goodbye just wasn’t an option. And so, as I straightened and finally prepared to join the friends and family who shared in our grief and sorrow that dark, cold October morning, I turned to her one last time and softly whispered . . .

“Love you Mom. See you later.”

And, I smiled.

Sullen
Shannon Smith

It’s a lazy morning in the dark
Fleeting emotions wrap around my heart
It’s a stranglehold I embrace
The winter came in the middle of my summer
Strumming the memories of the other lives I’ve
Playing the broken record of Sundays spent in
I never felt good, I just felt something
It’s better than nothing, but still, it was very s

In the midst of a blink my head fell forward
The hair on my head, scattering in the fallen b
Pillows of shadows caught the fall
And I landed on a season
Choked by the fear of another laughable love
The ingrate comes out to block all my havens
It never felt good, it just felt like something
It’s worse than everything, it’s vibrant, very v

Oscillating like a top on broken window pane
My stability unsure of its own destiny
Wobbling and turning, Spinning and falling
Faster now comes the morning
Even dawn has its limits
Oceans of air crest on my heart
Waves erode my soul into what they want m
This is never good, this is never like anything
It’s the beginning of all things, brilliant, Oh s
Sullen
Shannon Smith

It's a lazy morning in the dark
Fleeting emotions wrap around my heart
It's a stranglehold I embrace
The winter came in the middle of my summer slumber
Strumming the memories of the other lives I've lived
Playing the broken record of Sundays spent in bed
I never felt good, I just felt something
It's better than nothing, but still, it was very still

In the midst of a blink my head fell forward
The hair on my head, scattering in the fallen breeze
Pillows of shadows caught the fall
And I landed on a season
Choked by the fear of another laughable love
The ingrate comes out to block all my havens
It never felt good, it just felt like something
It's worse than everything, it's vibrant, very vibrant

Oscillating like a top on broken window panes
My stability unsure of its own destiny
Wobbling and turning, Spinning and falling
Faster now comes the morning
Even dawn has its limits
Oceans of air crest on my heart
Waves erode my soul into what they want me to be
This is never good, this is never like anything
It's the beginning of all things, brilliant, Oh so brilliant
Deconstructionism
Peter Roemer

Having read one or two of these word-groupings (like veritable beads on a string!) I have come to the adjectiveless conclusion (that never had a beginning or a real beginning that one can speak intelligently or — thus implying an end to me to be and/or is in fact a most philosophical approach to literary criticism, so-called and but which is and/or isn’t (i.e. n-ether, Neanderthal man, etc.) philosophy as we know it nor-or (i.e. — Thor, the god of thunder!) literary criticism as we would like it to be (sans appreciation of course) but a kind of literature all its own and I say this without even knowing what it is and/or isn’t for that matter (not that it matter, of course).

A Fantastical Arrangement Of Flowers, The Crushed Velvet Folds
11.12.1
Shannon Smith

We stand in the praise of the unknown
The herds of masses gathering for the feast
Assumption is not faith, but it does give one peace
That human debris must have a meaning
And so the rocks are given to the Oracles

But in what wonderland am I?
How does the flying body shoulder my burden?
When can I see the writing on subway walls?
Does the sun shine because I know it can’t rain?

It’s serendipity that makes the room so valuable
It’s the way wrinkles on the sheets remind me
And yet I stand in awe of the zealot power, with
I tend to think of things in perspectives not all
So my open heart relives only fantasy, that we

Across the euphoric Utopia, a field holds the day
Plants that spasm in euphoric sunlight, I see
The jacket of velvet upon my back, I give to
And now upon my feet I see what was given
A fantastical arrangement of flowers, thrown velvet folds
A Fantastical Arrangement Of Flowers, Thrown Upon The Crushed Velvet Folds
11.12.1
Shannon Smith

We stand in the praise of the unknown
The herds of masses gathering for the feast
Assumption is not faith, but it does give one proof
That human debris must have a meaning
And so the rocks are given to the Oracles Omnipotence

But in what wonderland am I?
How does the flying body shoulder my burden?
When can I see the writing on subway walls?
Does the sun shine because I know it can’t rain all the time?

It’s serendipity that makes the room so valuable to me
It’s the way wrinkles on the sheets remind me of the movement
And yet I stand in awe of the zealot power, with the herds
I tend to think of things in perspectives not allowed
So my open heart relives only fantasy, that which once was held

Across the euphoric Utopia, a field holds the presence of newborn day
Plants that spasm in euphoric sunlight, I see no path in my way
The jacket of velvet upon my back, I give to the flowers at hand
And now upon my feet I see what was given to me
A fantastical arrangement of flowers, thrown upon the crushed velvet folds
Combustion
Richard Kenefic

Flames can be laminar, turbulent, or absent. There is always luminescence when I find the deflagration of desire, and our Stoichiometric mixture might be just enough to consume me completely. I’ve released latent heat and dissociated at high temperature. The process is irreversible. No matter, all my losses were inevitable. If I were adiabatic,

I could keep my heart. Instead, I am pushed through the passages, atomized, ignited. Ah, Caratheodory and his damned axioms! There is no process to save me from this phase. I am well mixed, vaporous, and headed for the blue glow of her eyes, the fire, and then the spinning blades of the days that will cool us.

Echo Town
Mark Mansfield

Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Tennyson

The drive-in, long since closed, is now home to puppets. All night the careless headlights whiz past Freeze, while a scarecrow stands beside the old state still trying to hitch a ride by sticking out and

A few years back, the ironworks shut down along with fernlike shavings, thick enough, they alrmwormhole. Along the tracks from the boarded-up depot, stretches the riverbed, warning no water runs.

Downtown, by the five-and-dime’s soap-wind the battered sign outside the entrance to the O VACANCY which include a dead rodeo clown, a shapeshifter, and the Mirror Girl, escaped last night from

Squatting midair above the lobby bar, a TV s with muted snow, while the butt of a hand-ro glows inside a drained-out, glassless fish tank facing a throne of silver Naughahyde, crowned by the
Echo Town
Mark Mansfield

Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,

Tennyson

The drive-in, long since closed, is now home to a troupe of shadow puppets.
All night the careless headlights whiz on past the vacant Tastee-Freeze,
while a scarecrow stands beside the old state road,
still trying to hitch a ride by sticking out an ear of corn.

A few years back, the ironworks shut down and since is overgrown with fernlike shavings, thick enough, they almost hide the fresh wormhole.
Along the tracks from the boarded-up depot, stretches the riverbed, warning no water runs for miles.

Downtown, by the five-and-dime’s soap-windowed front, flickers the battered sign outside the entrance to the O VACANCY whose current guests include a dead rodeo clown, a shapeshifter, and the Mirror Girl, escaped last night from Krono’s Magic Show.

Squatting midair above the lobby bar, a TV set fills up with muted snow, while the butt of a hand-rolled cigarette still glows inside a drained-out, glassless fish tank facing a throne of silver Naughahyde, crowned by the letter N.
While off on the distance the rolling thunder slowly builds again, growing steadily louder all the time, and once more coming from the old abandoned mine off the state road not far from the turn-off point where an ear of corn now lies beside what once had been the county line.

“Fui Aquí”
R.G. Cantalupo

I stand at the foot of a boulder, my hand reaching for the finger-hold one tenth of the way up the face. I am reading words left on the stone, the blue-white slur of spray-painted letters written by some visitor from the city of angels. The stone has gnawed through the letters, the words half-gone, the teeth of wind and sand gnashing them to riddles now. There’s a name I can’t make out, part of a phrase and then “fui aqui” – I was here. Above me, the gray-blue sea of heaven sifts into a lighters shade of pink, maroon. A humming bird buzzes me as my fingers touch the letters. A butterfly lights on a sage sprouting from a crack where my palm hugs the stone. “...Fui aqui”—I was here. This twilight. This Monday. This June. There were no other words.

Heaven’s Smile
Amy Rene Durst

I know it can’t be easy for her moving about the world with legs that won’t always obey her that tire and weaken and can’t carry her where she wishes to go. Yet she always glows with hope you can see it on her face in those tranquil blue eyes that tell me it’s okay. And gazing into them I understand my angel child doesn’t need legs for she glides through the world on wings. She’s just one small token of God’s love and grace my precious little girl from above.
Heaven’s Smile
Amy Rene Durst

I know it can’t be easy for her
moving about the world with legs
that won’t always obey her
that tire and weaken
and can’t carry her
where she wishes to go.
Yet she always glows with hope
you can see it on her face
in those tranquil blue eyes
that tell me it’s okay.
And gazing into them I understand
my angel child doesn’t need legs
for she glides through the world
on wings.
She’s just one small token
of God’s love and grace
my precious little girl
from above.
Mark Mansfield

I think we knew it wouldn’t last with each defining who knew what, always so perfectly inexact.
I think we knew it wouldn’t last, given our separate ways, but mutual knack for cat and mouse, or buttonpushcometos shove, forever reinventing who knew what.
I think we knew it wouldn’t last.

Kaye Bache-Snyder

I run my own home business and my life would be bored or depressed working all day in an office, helping people prepare their tax returns. 1040 forms tell me more about clients than themselves. The numbers are about as revealing as underclothes. If I get the blues, I remind myself of the benefits. A decent income, a home, and a cantankerous boss. And, since my divorce, thank God, no more hot flashes or my moods.

When I get cabin fever, I often go to K-Mart and poke around for bargains. I entertain myself by selecting plastic flowers and imagining her place, her husband’s grave. I watch a pregnant teen fine-tuning her panties and sense her regret for her bulbous self-frustration of a man with a beer belly, who’s stationary bicycle with fantasies of losing weight. I’m as if I can hear such people’s dreams, the miller moths inside the bowl of a lamp. By those sliding, automatic doors, I usually feel much better off than I am most.

That is, until last Saturday afternoon. I went to K-Mart and found a bargain on an electronic bathroom scales that talks. It was stepped on, but only fifteen dollars. Holding observations of shoppers. But with kids screaming and parents shoving carts every which way. Pressing the scale to my chest, I batted my way through the check-out line.
I run my own home business and my life. Some people would be bored or depressed working all day in a living room office, helping people prepare their tax returns. Not me. Those 1040 forms tell me more about clients than they know about themselves. The numbers are about as revealing as their underclothes. If I get the blues, I remind myself of my fringe benefits. A decent income, a home, and a car. No commuting. No boss. And, since my divorce, thank God, no gratuitous advice on my hot flashes or my moods.

When I get cabin fever, I often go to Target of K-Mart. Poking around for bargains, I entertain myself by glancing at shoppers and guessing their stories. I see a cotton-haired elder selecting plastic flowers and imagine her placing them on her husband’s grave. I watch a pregnant teen fingering some bikini panties and sense her regret for her bulbous shape. I feel the frustration of a man with a beer belly, who’s test-riding a stationary bicycle with fantasies of losing weight.

It’s as if I can hear such people’s dreams sizzling like miller moths inside the bowl of a lamp. By the time I walk out those sliding, automatic doors, I usually feel good, realizing how much better off I am than most.

That is, until last Saturday afternoon.

I went to K-Mart and found a bargain on one of those electronic bathroom scales that talks. It was a floor model, a little stepped on, but only fifteen dollars. Holding it, I tried to begin my observations of shoppers. But with kids screaming, infants bawling and parents shoving carts every which-way, I gave up. Pressing the scale to my chest, I batted my way to the shortest check-out line.
Lucky me. I got stuck behind some lanky, old coot who smelled like moldy cheese. From his chartreuse tights and Nike shoes, I figured he was a runner, advertising through his outfit that K-Mart was merely his pit stop on a much grander race. A plastic shopping basket hung on his left arm with stuff purchased as his excuse to stride the aisles exhibiting his muscles. I took shallow breathes to avoid his odor. Meanwhile, I tried to ignore that brat whopping the back of my knees with a balloon. The guy was lifting one heal, then the other, as runners do to keep their calves warm, when they’re curbed at a traffic light. He had muscular legs, but more wrinkles on his neck than a turkey and electrified white hair, like Einstein’s, minus the brains no doubt.

“Twenty pounds,” said a clipped, electronic voice from the scale.

I must have set the thing off, hugging it.

Anyway, the pedaling runner turned sideways and looked down on me and my scale through his bifocals. “I don’t worry about my weight. Running keeps it down.”

As he smiled, I looked away, swallowing to keep my lunch down. He had saliva at the corners of his mouth and salty deposits under his tufted eyebrows. I pegged him as a lonely widower, a health nut who lived in a buffet apartment, amid the aromas of wadded Jockey shorts and stir-fried tofu. I scanned the tabloids in the rack beside me to avoid his gaze.

“If you know the right running technique, you won’t injure your joints, no matter how old you are. Bet you can’t guess my age!”

I eyed the cover photo of a peroxide dolly in a skin-tight dress.

“Seventy,” the man offered. “One hundred eighty pounds at age seventy.” He began running a hand over his sinewy, moving thigh.

“You’re younger, I’ll bet, but I’d pit my legs against yours any day.”

“Excuse me?”
“T’ll race you.”
“Not interested.” The line inched forward into boxes of Mars, Snickers and Heath bars.

He persisted. “Not interested in your kind of retired people who aren’t interested in their health. Sir, I’m not retired.” I gestured for him to avoid slipping past him and out the door.

“Forty pounds,” the electronic voice read.

He turned sideways again, still pedaling that his morning jog inspired him to buy oil paints on canvas board in his basket. “I’m going to do paintings,” he said. “Running releases your creativity, sends your spirits up. And really, a woman like you is good shoes.

“Like who?”

He scrutinized my slacks, then my sandals, then my shoes. “That need is good shoes. A little instruction in technique will push forward from your toes like this when you run.”

He actually put his right hand on my shoulder and pushed me down, then lifted his fingertips to demonstrate.

“See,” he said. “That way you won’t compress your vertebrae.”

I held the scale out to block his touch.

“Five pounds,” the voice quipped.

“Shut up, stupid thing!” I shook the scale.

“Operator error,” it said.

“Look mister, you take care of your body. I’m interested.”

He blinked behind his bifocals. “I bet you are. But I’m old.” His voice faded, legs stopped pedaling, shoulders turned, paid for his art junk and headed out the door with his plastic sack.

At last, I was facing the cashier, a high explosion of permed, red hair.
"Excuse me?"
"I'll race you."
"Not interested." The line inched forward and I stared at boxes of Mars, Snickers and Heath bars.

He persisted. "Not interested in your health? I know a lot of retired people who aren't interested in their health, but..."
"Sir, I’m not retired." I gestured for him to move forward into the gap in the line. I considered dumping the scale and slipping past him and out the door.

"Forty pounds," the electronic voice reported.

He turned sideways again, still pedaling in place, and said that his morning jog inspired him to buy oil paints, brush and canvas board in his basket. "I’m going to do a landscape painting," he said. "Running releases your creative juices. Keeps your spirits up. And really, a woman like you..."

"Like who?"

He scrutinized my slacks, then my sandals. "All you’d need is good shoes. A little instruction in techniques. You must push forward from your toes like this when you run."

He actually put his right hand on my shoulder, pressed down, then lifted his fingertips to demonstrate.

"See," he said. "That way you won’t injure your knees or compress your vertebrae."

I held the scale out to block his touching me again.

"Five pounds," the voice quipped.

"Shut up, stupid thing!" I shook the scale.

"Operator error," it said.

"Look mister, you take care of your bones and I’ll take care of mine."

He blinked behind his bifocals. "I. I. I was only trying..."

His voice faded, legs stopped pedaling, shoulders slumped. He turned, paid for his art junk and headed out the door with a plastic sack.

At last, I was facing the cashier, a high schooler with an explosion of permed, red hair.
“Thank God, he’s gone,” I said. “Lonely, old people like that depress. I ought to feel sorry for them, but I hate how they use you the way dogs use fire hydrants...to relieve themselves.”

The girl fumbled with the scale, searching for a price tag. “It was marked down,” I said. “Sign said fifteen dollars.”

With her fingers poised over the register, she asked, “Senior discount, ma’am?”

“You must need glasses.”

“Ten-percent off would be a dollar fifty.” She flashed a smile of braces.

“You know,” I said, “guessing a customer’s age is very presumptuous.”

The girl just stared at me, as if she didn’t understand the word. The woman with the brat was loading her purchases onto the check-out counter.

“Since everyone’s in such a hurry and you haven’t figured out the price, why don’t you just stick that scale somewhere.” I left it behind and drove home, steaming mad.

I worked at my computer until I’d calmed down enough to eat and think straight. Then, I made a decision. Never again would I get stuck in one of those discount stores on a Saturday. I’d find another way to cure cabin fever.

Sunday’s Child
Adam Penna

I am Sunday’s child, born after six o’clock, after dusk. I cost three hundred eighteen bucks including a week of television and phone.

Dust comes from dust. I burst from the body, the indigestible husk. I remember the scalpel’s clean light incision, the warmth stolen, my breath stolen, the rest of life pretty much the same.

Dust eats dust, chokes and returns to dust. I remember my mother shucked like an oyster, I remember my father drunk on Canadian Club and soda water. I remember my mother’s breast now changed to a drooping dug, eaten by its own cells. I remember the smack on my rosy bottom, the rest of life pretty much the same.
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I remember the smack
on my rosy bottom,
the rest of life pretty much the same.
The Devil Is A Capitalist
William Dauenhauer

(Acts of the Apostle, II: 44, 45)

The devil is a capitalist:
He is wealthy, he is proud,
he does things in his own way
as any non-conformist.
Individuality
Is the devil's fort.
He speaks of Natural Law
and Natural Aristocracy.

Lord Byron said the devil
was the first democrat.
Yet the devil drudges on,
non-partisan, non-sectarian.
In fine, he is everywhere
and nowhere at once.
Largely, we have fashioned him
even as he has shaped us.
untitled
Rachel States

You create
Through my head
You speak
Through my lips
Inside me
Through your eyes
I see
Through mine
You see
Protect me
From myself
My soul was bought
A spirit was given
To reside with my own
My mind I give
For you to create.
Not Promised
J.L. Kubicek

Reach, reach poet
touch the golden lyre
in the land
called Shangri la.
Fail,
fail to the day
within reach
only . . .
ad astra per aspera.
One wonders,
if Mead and Nectar
were offered and accepted
the rise certain,
not promised the return.