ICON

magazine for literature and art

is student-produced since 1965 at Kent State University Trumbull campus and published annually in the Spring semester.

Poetry, fiction, and nonfiction: We accept all forms, themes, styles, and genres of 700 words or less; we limit the number of submissions to six (poetry) and three (fiction and nonfiction) per author per issue. Submissions must be typed. Fiction and nonfiction should be submitted in standard, double-spaced format. Send submissions to: Dr. Michael Lynch/ICON/Department of English/Kent State University/4314 Mahoning Ave. NW/Warren, OH 44483 (mflynch@kent.edu). Enclose SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope) if you want submissions returned; disposable submissions are preferred. Include e-mail address. Pays one copy. Deadline for the annual Spring issue is February 1.

Artwork and photography: Submit copies, not originals, in black and white or color; 5 x 7 inches. Limit of six submissions. High quality photocopies accepted. Pays one copy.

Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest: Annual award of $100 for best poem. Include a letter stating submissions are for this contest, and a maximum of two poems to Dr. Michael Lynch, ICON/Hart Crane Poetry Contest (address above) by February 6. The winning poem is published in ICON.

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ICON
magazine for
literature and art

spring 2011

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**Walking to K-Mart to Buy a Dolly Parton Album**  

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**Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest 2011 Selection**

**David-Matthew Barnes**

**Walking to K-Mart to Buy a Dolly Parton album**

Someone protects me when I’m ten: a boy in my class. He’s stronger than the other boys. He waits for me each day, walks me home. He’s convinced I’ll be the next Nancy Drew and encourages me to open my own detective agency. He colors the construction paper signs we tape in store. We wait for our first clients and when my mother calls, he tells me, “Don’t worry. Business pick up.” When I walk down the road we go to K-Mart to buy a Dolly Parton album. I imagine what it will be like to marry the defender of my honor. He makes me love Disney princes, love songs belted out by animated women, glass slippers. I bl art open wide when he kisses my cheek, right below the bruise. When I crawl out windows at night, to call the police when my mother and her lover are beat up in love again, he’s there to turn the record player on. He makes me listen until we know every word Dolly sings before. While I wait until the coast is clear and to go home again, he offers me his version, “But You Know I Love You” and when he’s surprised to see me cry. On instinct he holds me until the music ends. I propose we live together, in a home of our own.
Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest
2011 Selection

David-Matthew Barnes

Walking to K-Mart to Buy a Dolly Parton Album

Someone protects me when I’m ten: a boy
in my class. He’s stronger than the others.
He waits for me each day, walks me home.
He’s convinced I’ll be the next

Nancy Drew and encourages me to open up
my own detective agency. He colors the green
construction paper signs we tape in store windows.
We wait for our first clients and when no one
calls, he tells me, “Don’t worry. Business will
pick up.” When I walk down the road we live on
to go to K-Mart to buy a Dolly Parton album,
I imagine what it will be like to marry him,

the defender of my honor. He makes me think
of Disney princes, love songs belted out
by animated women, glass slippers. I break
open wide when he kisses my cheek, the spot

right below the bruise. When I crawl out of
windows at night, to call the police
when my mother and her lover are beaten
up in love again, he’s there to turn

the record player on. He makes me listen
until we know every word Dolly sings by heart.
While I wait until the coast is clear and it’s safe
to go home again, he offers me his version of

“But You Know I Love You” and when he finishes,
he’s surprised to see me cry. On instinct,
he holds me until the music ends. I pretend
we live together, in a home of our own. We duet
David-Matthew Barnes

each night after dinner. We line dance, arm in arm.
We learn to play the fiddle and the banjo. In spring,
Aunt Dolly comes to visit, writes a love song
for the two of us to always keep. A week

before my mother makes us move again, the other
boys try to run me down, chase me with bikes and bats,
but he hits them hard with closed fists, as if he's holding
my heart in both hands. As if he will

never let me go.

Mokuo Nagayama

Rainy Season

A heavy gray sea
ripped by a ship
grins in ripples

Surfs break on the beach
roll and recede
their white teeth diving

Smiles again on the sea
approach bringing up
an image of hydrangeas
Mokuo Nagayama

Rainy Season

A heavy gray sea
ripped by a ship
grins in ripples

Surfs break on the beach
roll and recede
their white teeth diving

Smiles again on the sea
approach bringing up
an image of hydrangeas
Julia Marley

October

I have said too many intimate things to the wall,
to the backs of strangers out of range of hearing

there is some twin to my soul whom I will never meet--
but we will pass each other on a crosswalk,
headed in different directions,
and we will feel for that instant that we are not alone

if I were the sea, I would not be alone
if I were October, my hands would be each of the falling leaves
to be the spirit of some vast, inanimate thing
to take the world into me with a single breath

world,
take these expressions of my empty hands
make me to stare through the eyes of the invisible beggar,
of the invisible God
give me a pomegranate full of the dreams of the fallen children
and I will eat it whole
and I will become the magpie that tends to the unmarked graves

Julia Marley

In the desert when it rains

dahlias wake up and walk on their root
rivers rush louder, fuller
the cacti clap their hands at the sound of
why did I go hunting for enormity
when I am the size of a spot
in the eye of a snake
in a space stretching to ten thousand tr

I have only one tongue
to praise the size of skies
but desert, desert when you rain
I will be like an arrow in my chasing
your cities of smoke in the sky,
your wild horses,
until my legs' muscle splits from the bone
the bone from the marrow
and the pulse from the veins

a set of legs is made for running,
a body of dust for rolling in the dust,
a hand for snatching the firefly
in which the whole world burns
Julia Marley

In the desert when it rains

dahlias wake up and walk on their roots
rivers rush louder, fuller
the cacti clap their hands at the sound of falling water

why did I go hunting for enormity
when I am the size of a spot
in the eye of a snake
in a space stretching to ten thousand trillion suns

I have only one tongue
to praise the size of skies
but desert, desert when you rain
I will be like an arrow in my chasing
your cities of smoke in the sky,
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and the pulse from the veins

a set of legs is made for running,
a body of dust for rolling in the dust,
a hand for snatching the firefly
in which the whole world burns
Make Up

It started as a joke. We had dinner guests. We had some wine, a nice meal. Nancy and I were goofing around, doing the girl talk, hair play. I got a mirror and some cosmetics, and we started ourselves up while the husbands looked on, amused. Eyeliner wings, big smoochy lips. Hussy rouge and pigtails. It felt great to laugh. The big laughs, the laughs that feel almost like rage.

Then it happened. My husband asked me to do him. And I did, the whole face, a total make-over, eyeliner, shadow, pink cheeks, lipstick. But it stopped being funny. Some female emerged from his skin. He looked like a street whore's cadaver.

"Wash it off," I said. "Wash it off."

But he only leerred at himself in the mirror, making pouty Betty Boop faces.

I begged him to wash his face, but he wouldn't. I shouldn't have done it. He shouldn't have let me do it. You see it was as if a mirror had cracked, or time, or his face; I'm not sure which. But I glimpsed something. Something terrible. And it was in that instant looking at his insipid pink face which was trying to mug, trying to play but didn't really know how, it was then, in that second of split time, I knew that we would never be the same again. I rubbed my lipstick off with my hand. Although the action would take longer, although I did not know it at the time--that night, I left him.

When You Come Upon a Fork

Don't turn back. You can smell your home. It smells like salt, like tears, like fear. Keep going. Twigs snag your sleeve, drag a ragged night unknitting, like hinges springing undone. Don't turn back. Branches graze ahead through the world smearing, bleating, watery.

Trees trip you, but keep going. Behind your husband chars, your house haunts. Bed is rubble, your bedsheets curl into a hunch, beside you a shape hunchers. Yellow eye backbone, but keep lurching ahead.

If you pause, if you think. Keep running, smoking soles of your feet. Run, run until you ou.
And when you come to a fork in the path, choose that.
Joan Connor

When You Come Upon a Forking Path

Don’t turn back. You can smell your home behind you burning. It smells like salt, like tears, like fear. Keep running straight ahead. Twigs snag your sleeve, drag a red thread unraveling like night unknitting, like hinges springing. Your whole world’s come undone. Don’t turn back. Branches grab for you. Keep stumbling ahead through the world smearing, blearing, a world gone watery.

Trees trip you, but keep going. Behind you your babies burn, your husband chars, your house haunts itself with smoke. Your bed is rubble, your bedsheets curl into ash. In the woods, there, beside you a shape hunkers. Yellow eyes. A howl scales your backbone, but keep lurching ahead.

If you pause, if you think. Keep running. Let the flames lick the soles of your feet. Run, run until you outrace your heart. Run. And when you come to a fork in the path, choose this way, choose that.
Dennis Saleh

Dram
The moon
is a pill
the mouth
of the sky
must
swallow
for night
to sleep

Granites
What is grander than to be a stone
A stone is a tick of eternity
A stone is a bead of certitude
A fleck of unmined ore of determination
A knuckle of resolve A statue of itself
A god in waiting A candle of black
A memory of nothing An echo of silence
A stone precludes occludes concludes
Punctuation in the earth
It shall not grow Rather ripen time

Dennis Saleh

Whimsy
I am certain I meant to write
an altogether different poem. But.
There is simply less and less
to say about more and more.
If I have run out of words,
please, someone, gently tell me.
Another time, some other day, write
that altogether different poem.
Do not fear the end of a page.
Time is not always punctual.

Maude Larke

Identity
I was walking my bicycle down the side
rainstorm and some people were still st
and in store doorways where they had g passed in front of one such, an elderly w whose eye? She gave a wise smile and a nodded back, and walked on wondering, retired school teacher, and she greets a with wise smiles and wise nods. Too ba
Dennis Saleh

**Whimsy**

I am certain I meant to write
an altogether different poem. But.

There is simply less and less
to say about more and more.

If I have run out of words,
please, someone, gently tell me.

Another time, some other day, write
that altogether different poem.

Do not fear the end of a page.
Time is not always punctual.

Maude Larke

**Identity**

I was walking my bicycle down the sidewalk just after the
rainstorm and some people were still standing under awnings
and in store doorways where they had gone to take shelter. I
passed in front of one such, an elderly woman. Who caught
whose eye? She gave a wise smile and a wise nod. I smiled and
nodded back, and walked on wondering why wise. I bet she's a
retired school teacher, and she greets all her former students
with wise smiles and wise nods. Too bad I'm not from here.
Christine Popadak

Peace

Grasping and distracting mind
Always wanting more

it's here, within, not without
that "thing" you're searching for.

Heed me, for I know full well,
the truth falls from my lips.

You need to listen with your eyes;
try looking with your fingertips.

The first time is a leap of faith,
jumping off the ledge is tough.

When you set aside your ego
you will find you have enough.

Peace.
David Sapp

Yellow

From the fallow field, a barren stretch, the crop left unresolved by the farmer, between what's newly tilled and sown, there leaps a vibrant color, and even though the word would do, one would struggle to say "yellow."

What's left of the wheat, the stubble buried beneath the snows and burnished skies of winter, is now an Impressionist's vision, a painting from the pastures along the Seine, near Monet's Giverny; when the morning light skips across the beads of dew, the pigment, still wet, glistens seductively in our gaze.

Flecks of soft, pale green, the virgin growth of spring, mix with the flaxen and golden straw, remnants of the previous summer, to form a delicious hue where words fall useless from the tongue; only the eyes may comprehend.
Yellow

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Flecks of soft, pale green, the virgin growth of spring, mix with the flaxen and golden straw, remnants of the previous summer, to form a delicious hue where words fall useless from the tongue; only the eyes may comprehend.
David Sapp

Sensation

I tasted bliss
on the township roads
round Utica, Ohio;
at fifteen and seventeen,
bodies hungry but minds shy,
our tongues stemming ungainly words,
all we knew was to kiss.
After thirty years my mouth
still listens for that summer
when delicious, electric silence
clung to our lips.

Side by side, my wife and I
lay listening to a wailing sky,
to a cold storm hurling fierce kisses
at roof, windows, and brick,
the thwarted torrent's desire to assail us,
to soak our blanket, bed, and skin,
and shrieking, to rouse our children
from deep, unworried sleep.
How lucky I was to pelt
your cloistered thighs with caresses.

All was snow on Christmas day;
all was doleful and frigid to the touch,
the wind modeling white marble
into dense sculptures defying pedestals.
But I had a vision: I caught
a searing star in my palm,
my fingers scooped up the icy stone,
melting it away, and grass grew
as warm and lush as June.
Dandelions and violets kissed
my eyes with color.

On a pristine winter night
I could see the sun
from the far side of the world,
from India where Buddha and Brahma sweat,
kiss the moon just so;
its rapture burst rings of light
through the heavens, piercing an instant
shimmering mosaic in a Byzantine basilica
a golden nimbus circling a saint's head.
The aroma of a scorched firmament
lingered at the halo's blackened edges.
I smelled the spring rain,
a stampede of pungent fragrance,
before it came rolling
across the earth, and when it slowed
to graze among the fields and woods,
its scent gave me a sensual kiss,
astonishing and resurrecting nebulous primordial images.
This flavor of nature
was tart on the tongue,
its feral tang familiar.
kiss the moon just so;
it's rapture burst rings of light
through the heavens, piercing an instant,
shimmering mosaic in a Byzantine basilica,
a golden nimbus circling a saint's head.
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astonishing and resurrecting
nebulous primordial images.
This flavor of nature
was tart on the tongue,
its feral tang familiar.
Energeia #018

The scent of the flower is in the flower seed.

The equilibrium of the flower is in the flower seed.

Nature knows exactly what it is doing but is never obnoxious.

Nature knows that all words are verbs and has nothing to do with the dissipation of energy.

If we tell a person something that he already knows we are wasting his energy.

If we tell a person something that is necessary to know we are touching his soul.

Soon we will learn that the infinity of the flower is in the flower seed.
Those trees seem like *public* trees. That is to say, they're planted along sidewalk right-of-way--even though they're property of Miramount Country Homes.

At this moment a slender walker, chambray collar buttoned down, and beachcomber pants in smalltown Colorado mars the offhand pace of his morning stroll.

he reaches the lead-off crabapple tree on the plumb-line parsing the flowered and breaks off cleanly a forked branch blistered with apples up and down its tines.

I know this for sure because the early sun shows the small polished rounds of red-green through my

But suddenly he's scurrying. And his argyle socks are dismissing me. And from the back he now seems ineleg

I'd guessed he was suburban sprawl when he'd stepped into my frame of reference but perhaps, after all, he is homeless.

I would tell him I think it sad if anyone watching him were to ask that he be held accountable for his apple indiscretion.
Those trees seem like *public* trees. That is to say, they're planted along sidewalk right-of-way-- even though they're property of Miramont Country Homes.

At this moment a slender walker, chambray collar buttoned down, and beachcomber pants in smalltown Colorado mars the offhand pace of his morning stroll when he reaches the lead-off crabapple tree on the plumb-line parsing the flowered walkway and breaks off cleanly a forked branch blistered with apples up and down its tines.

I know this for sure because the early sun shows the small polished rounds of red-green through my kitchen window.

But suddenly he's scurrying. And his argyle socks are dismissing me. And from the back he now seems inelegantly skinny.

I'd guessed he was suburban sprawl when he'd stepped into my frame of reference, but perhaps, after all, he is homeless.

I would tell him I think it sad if anyone watching him were to ask that he be held accountable for his apple indiscretion.
Kayla Yarger

Church Doors

A man amidst a dirty blue backdrop
is knocking at the door of a silent building;
only echoes through the halls greet his heart.

Steadfast, he turns toward the darkness,
waiting for God to warm his chilled toes--
held in boots waterproofed with grocery bags.

Where is your home that supports you,
where is the anger and grief that should
be shown upon your tired yet kind face?

He whom you believe in will value your life:
the battles you've been through, strife you've seen.
You can come in, please do come in quick.

"I'm here for church, and I'm early."

Kayla Yarger

Competition

Victoriously I have never sparkled, brazenly
any "plain Jane"; my foundation is not
in my most concealed state I am still one
who cannot compete with the shiny

Her harmonious exuberance will definitely
as I hide myself behind expensive color
her walk slowly swishes and sways, exudes
(sighing briefly, resolved) I accept forever
passes.

If she should even briefly glance my way
my frantic attempt at beauty will try ver
to appear nonchalant--as if this bright a
this embodiment of every man's lust, de

Nothing I can easily alter on this huma
(the pink of my cheeks, gloss of my lips
will ever be able to compete with such a
clearly created by the artist bearing syri

(I must not fade when confronted by her
and charm; everything in me concentrate
on the assumption that her lack of self made her alter herself--beyond any recog
of the woman she once was.)

My imperfection is in reality my strength
for I have not fallen victim to the polish
needle.

Yes, I too lose sight and strive for beaut
but I will always know that true beauty is

I will always wash off false confidence, th
product,
down the drain of my sink: and see only
Kayla Yarger

Competition

Victoriously I have never sparkled, brazenly beyond any “plain Jane”; my foundation is not perfecting: in my most concealed state I am still only a girl, one who cannot compete with the shiny sheen of surgery.

Her harmonious exuberance will definitely unsettle me as I hide myself behind expensive colorful powders; her walk slowly swishes and sways, exuding pristine confidence; (sighing briefly, resolved) I accept forever mediocrity as she passes.

If she should even briefly glance my way, I and my frantic attempt at beauty will try very resolutely to appear nonchalant— as if this bright angel of paragon, this embodiment of every man’s lust, does not affect me.

Nothing I can easily alter on this human body of mine (the pink of my cheeks, gloss of my lips, or arch of my brows), will ever be able to compete with such a mystical creature—clearly created by the artist bearing syringe and scalpel.

(I must not fade when confronted by her false beauty and charm; everything in me concentrates wholeheartedly on the assumption that her lack of self-esteem made her alter herself—beyond any recognition of the woman she once was.)

My imperfection is in reality my strength, for I have not fallen victim to the polished knife or paralytic needle.

Yes, I too lose sight and strive for beauty unattainable, but I will always know that true beauty simply cannot be created.

I will always wash off false confidence, the media-driven product, down the drain of my sink: and see only myself again.
John Randolph Carter

Unicycle

A coach with six white horses appears.

I'm lost without my fluorescent yo-yo.

I lay down my guns and take up an occupation as an upholsterer.

The parking lot is full.
The town is empty.
Fireflies appear at odd angles.
The sidewinder enjoys elemental lettuce.

The mayor of Cincinnati has been caught red-handed having sex with a rare Panda.
What is it about Ohio?
The state or the football team?

My mother wants me to be a billionaire.
"Money can't buy me happiness," I tell her as I stuff the last of her jewelry into a paper bag and slip out the window.

The Old Musician

Camille Saint-Saens dies in his sleep.
Rumpled sheets and blankets cry out.
The nursery is in an uproar.
Lions feed on the remains while vultures wait patiently in the dry grass.

The voluptuous Saint of sound and silence rises up in a soft whisper and floats out of the field and into the woods.

A commotion is heard in the old wood beside the crooked stream.
Farm implements are jostling noisily, vying for attention.
The farmer pretends not to notice as he digs a grave for the old musician.
John Randolph Carter

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The Wharf

I couldn't admit
my lucky lot
at the open boat
returning to the wharf
to anchor in warm air;
a child in a sailor suit
mocks halos of his uncle
with Dali's big beret,
time stops moving
without a passport
on the backgammon table
near the blue fringed map;
the sea becomes earthy,
dust waves to us
from sheltering wind.

The child climbs
on laughing coral reefs,
gestures to the harbor graves
where night owls
throw love grenades;
the shore chimes
with bells in twelve tones
eying cuddle fish
in the blue-black waters;
you find a year-old newspaper
and read it backwards
with false death notices
and you, Hart Crane
alive at last.

Jam Session

(for John Cage, in memoriam)

Sunday took up
soundproof rooms
of our genius,
I'm playing bass
of a ravenous jazz,
imploding fingers
in atonal clashes,
you on hurting piano
by a wind section
with improvisational
hands.

Drum rhythms
sound out in footnotes
by big apple taxis
of eerie urban noises,
we rehearse the cool
chromatic notes
of our adolescent blues,
jumbling wanton distillations
and nerve-ending scales
carrying electric cords
of augmented beats,
frazzled metronomes strike
like a couple of pitchmen
moving in aesthetic time.
The Wharf

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at the open boat
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you find a year-old newspaper
and read it backwards
with false death notices
and you, Hart Crane
alive at last.
Anne Ciarrochi

A Secret

I want to stretch you out,
you--man of strong hands and gentle voice,
you who are so patient with me.

I want to stretch you out,
until I forget this past
that sticks to me like spider webs;
too thin to comprehend,
too thick to forget.

Every kiss that has fallen from my lips,
sweet words, whispers,
every touch that I’ve forgotten but
always carry with me;
shadows I don’t have to turn to
if they aren’t really there at all.

When you kiss me, I can’t remember
what of me has been lost;
when you put your hands on me,
I know that I belong to you.

It is you who doesn’t know,
and I won’t tell.

Your Bedroom Window

I woke up in the night’s cold belly to
a half shaded moon,
  cool white light
looking down,
  laughing at its own indifference,
  sliding through the glass onto
our naked bodies held together
by these warm blankets, that
shield us from each other;
from ourselves.
This one's a metaphor for dreams

The fun at the beach just wasn't mine until I decided to open my mind.

I open my eyes and the sea will rise it takes me easily by surprise.

With this touch my body froze and out of the sea the monster arose
it gripes and grabs me by my toes and then goes up and in my nose.

It ran around then came back down the shades I sit right up, out of the muck, and it slows
Until a crash, then in a flash, I'm back to the beach.

You see my sea is white and green
It is deep, but incomplete
The Phish all swim in ecstasy
But once you've reached the top, you have

It was dark, I couldn't see
I saw the shark hiding in the weeds
So I got back to the beach
I can swim, but I'd rather walk free.
This one's a metaphor for drugs

The fun at the beach
just wasn't mine
until I decided
to open my mind

I open my eyes
and the sea will rise
it takes me easily
by surprise

With this touch my body froze
and out of the sea the monster arose
it gripes and grabs me by my toes
and then goes up and in my nose

It ran around then came back down the shape of my face
hushed the sound, I look around and now it's on my waist
I sit right up, out of the muck, and it slowly goes away
Until a crash, then in a flash, I'm back trapped in this place

You see my sea is white and green
It is deep, but incomplete
The Phish all swim in ecstasy
But once you've reached the top, you have to sink

It was dark, I couldn't see
I saw the shark hiding in the weeds
So I got back to the beach
I can swim, but I'd rather walk free
Wendy Lee Klenetsky

The Old Folks

You can see her,
that little old woman who peers out secretly
from behind the yellowing curtains on the window.
This is as close to the outside world that she dares to come.
She sees no one and no one comes to visit.
You can see her.

Here he comes,
that small, bent-over little man with the rickety cane.
He hobbles as quickly as he can down the street,
not looking up at the people who stare as they pass by.
Here he comes.

They live this way thanks to us and our society;
she afraid to come down from her two-room apartment,
and he racing (as fast as he can) by all
so as not to have his few packages
taken, or be knocked down
for the few pennies he has in his ripped pockets.

Look at them... Look very closely...
We will BE them shortly,
the Old Folks.
Look very closely....

Diane Webster

Lake Across

From childhood monkey bars
I stare across mist-laden grass
toward trees whose leaves
flutter or clutter beneath
beside the lake hidden
flooding its mist toward me
the monkey bars I climb
to escape the rising kiss
of evaporative water
lapping against my ankles,
my knees, my waist, my mouth
choking on the scene
I cannot see
across the lake from
my childhood monkey bars.

Storm Passings

Across pavement puddles
angry raindrops stomp
like sullen gang boys
trying to splash
anonymous pedestrians
into confrontational complaints
so lightning flashes
of spent powder burn surprises
moments before thunder blasts
against shivering skin.
Inside locked houses
curtains pray pleated pleas
for storm clouds to pass,
and by morning
the lone sunflower finally peeks
over the high voltage box
and squints into its first sunrise.
Diane Webster

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and squints into its first sunrise.
Richard Dinges, Jr.

Awakening 3

Eyes open, it seems, before I awake. Perhaps a door opened to hallway light and a shadow, my wife, passed between, then words about my daughter who refuses to come home. Digital sounds from a phone dialing and pale green display glows into my opened eyes. My hand puts the phone to my ear. An abrasive distant word at the other end drives up from a chasm. The only phrase my dream could provide, this is dad, and then I am awake.

First Frost

First frost turns lawns old, gray hair below gnarled arthritic branches. When I step out into this aged world, a sharp clean pain slaps me in the face, thrusts razors down my throat, clinches my heart, until I exhale and see my own breath for the first time in months and know that I am still alive.
Linda Fuchs

first frost

everything is vibrant
oscillating wave lengths
bring breathtaking colors

ice on my window
breaks everything into fractals
sharp shapes made glorious in the sun

more breathtaking
than I could imagine
like a blind man seeing

for the first time
eyes hurting from the sunlight
he squints

gray morning

in this winter space of my life
I am monochromatic
as the seascape

fog, no delineation
where water and atmosphere meet
as my nights and days

plod
one into another
Linda Fuchs

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The Louvers
(for Sharon)

open again. The typhoon warning is over.
The island, like a reclining Roman waiting
to be fed grapes, surrounds itself with docile
ocean once more. Bent palm trees straighten
and the sharks circle as long as it takes,
maybe another thousand years, to part

a white path through the coral reef
at the swimmer, splashing around, all
the fun and insolence of a tropic day.
I can count the moving things, myself
included, on the fingers of one hand. I
burrow deeper into the water, draw
it over myself like a rare shell. She
will watch through the louvers as I disappear.

Later, when she walks the beach for signs
of the human among driftwood, I will come up
behind her, close my hands over her eyes. The same
night darkness above this island that widens and widens
without edges. The same sleep the rest of our lives
has been, as we lie down on the sand. Let's make love

so that nothing is countable, that the sum is always a zero,
the millions of microscopic grains outlining our bodies.

The Gulls

fight off the lethargy of the flock,
break a skimming run over the sandbar,
gulp twice to line the air with their beaks
and dive.

The water curls towards them like hands
full of fishes. God's hands to the medieval
philosopher, a granary swollen with gills
to the naturalist.

Tails and feathers spinning the sky
clockwise, the crest of the water
speckled white and flying, spindly legs
etching salt,

sealing the closed wings. The beach
rises with the wind. A flail of sand
notches the clouds east northeast
by a centimeter,

bones stoic as rocks crank the tide
onto the shore, driftwood for sandpipers
to sample as if a pulse were beating
in each shard.
James Doyle

The Gulls

fight off the lethargy of the flock, break a skimming run over the sandbar, gulp twice to line the air with their beaks, and dive.

The water curls towards them like hands full of fishes. God's hands to the medieval philosopher, a granary swollen with gills to the naturalist.

Tails and feathers spinning the sky counterclockwise, the crest of the water speckled white and flying, spindly legs etching salt,

sealing the closed wings. The beach rises with the wind. A flail of sand notches the clouds east northeast by a centimeter,

bones stoic as rocks crank the tide onto the shore, driftwood for sandpipers to sample as if a pulse were beating in each shard.
The Triremes Can Be Seen from the Shore

The triremes are bending the potash sky forward until it pouts, red galleys widening like scratches on cloudy grey, the backs of slaves burning towards shore. The town is up to its knees in low tide, waiting and waving. It has been three years.

Children are buckling like the sand with quick breaths for the fathers that bristle inside them. The wives are skimming shells as if the whitecaps were households. The blood count cannot wait, though it pales beside scars and muscles. Something for each family, if only the knife’s jade handle and a polished story of the battle. Death is not to be taken personally, glory is. One incident after another, the three years pass and their ransom is bright in tapestries over the fire, a new slave at the lute with foreign dusks.

Sam’s Hands

She sits in the corner of the room, her pale reflecting the colored lights on the Christmas tree. Closed to everyone, waiting... for only his.

People mill around, eating, drinking, obliterating. Still she waits.

Finally he approaches. At his touch she of appearance changes. His mistress, he says, No shame, no jealousy; after all, she lives.

He slides nearer; experienced hands tickle. She makes sounds of happiness.

Hands expertly bring her to a crescendo; she sings and he joins her, their voices blending. His dad, watching, knows the lessons paid.
Sam's Hands

She sits in the corner of the room, her pale countenance reflecting the colored lights on the Christmas tree. Closed to everyone, waiting . . . for only his touch.

People mill around, eating, drinking, oblivious to her. Still she waits.

Finally he approaches. At his touch she opens, her appearance changes. His mistress, he says, as his wife nods. No shame, no jealousy; after all, she lives with them.

He slides nearer; experienced hands tickle her keys. She makes sounds of happiness.

Hands expertly bring her to a crescendo; softly now, she sings and he joins her, their voices blending.

His dad, watching, knows the lessons paid off.
Holly Day

If Only I Could Appreciate the Irony

I never thought this would be me
compulsively taking pregnancy tests
every time I feel sick
so hopeful
things were so much easier when I was younger
and took getting knocked up
for granted, the first one
was so effortless
in such a wrong time

I never thought I’d end up like this
shouting for sex when my P.H. levels
were just right for conceiving, checking off
days on the calendar, fingers crossed
praying that we could come together just right
just one more time

Holly Day

October

slowing, slowing your breath
seems to slow and stop the contractions
for a while, long enough to swing your leg
over the edge of the bed
creep into the dark
of the living room.

then it’s moving, it’s moving
again—not the long-awaited flutter
of fetal fists and feet
but your whole body, at least
from the waist down, and you have to
sit down, breathe slowly, slowly, slow
before you fall.

it had seemed like such a silly dream
one where aliens, or monsters
appeared in your room,
waved pointy lights and clattered and squeaked
and you just knew
they were here to take your baby.
it seems so strange in retrospect
that the same night you had the silly, crazy
was the same night
that your baby died

and that you can pinpoint
the exact, precise moment
when it all went wrong.
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seems to slow and stop the contractions
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the exact, precise moment
when it all went wrong.
Odysseus Watches Achilles Mourn Patroclus

At first the weeping made him roll his eyes, and then it made him laugh, but when it did not end, Odysseus stopped and watched and knew that this at least was not a lie. The world, he knew, followed rules that made no sense, but Achilles, he always thought, saw through them. Odysseus found he was in awe of the display. It intrigued him though he knew it would mean the death of the man. He'd lived beyond it all his life, above the frailties that drove men down, but here was Achilles, who was more skillful than anyone else, blubbering for lost love. It made the world he knew feel so unclear.

Achilles Appears in His New Armor before Odysseus's Men

When my warriors first saw Achilles clad in Hephaistos's armor, they gasped for a second, then hailed him. How they adored him at that moment. He was shining and grand in the morning light, and I could see in their eyes that each of them wanted to be one of his men. They were slipping from me, so I needed to be sure that I could win them back, and luckily they were starving. He stood there in the golden light, looking for all to see like a god, and at his great moment, I tripped him up, got him arguing that they shouldn't eat. I was their savior, and he, a tyrant, they began to hate.

Returning Home

I wait for the bus, the only way to get there. Railroads long defunct. I am in the middle of a waiting line. Someone cannot find a ticket, another delay. A Swedish couple, hiking gear on their backs, make us wait another ten. Finally we board, start, and Des Moines soon fades away. Every few miles we pass a little town. JEWELL, "A gem in a friendly setting." Flat country, furrowed deep. Farmers guiding tractors down neat rows. Tassled corn and pig sties. MINBURN, "A little town with a big heart. A smattering of trees, no hills, making for monotony as mile piles on mile. "Welcome, stranger, to friendly GRANGE! Finally the four corners. The six miles left so familiar, every sign, tree and post sets the clock backward for a lifetime. So many memories, so long ago, and then, MANNING, "Big enough to serve. Small enough to know you."
Burton R. Hoffman

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So many memories, so long ago,
and then, MANNING, “Big enough to serve you,
Small enough to know you.”
Brian C. Felder

Down Along the Ohio

There is a poetry to this land,
something that it gives me
and not I it.
I hear it through my eyes
as I pass through its many manifestations;
feel it through my hands
as my car curves down and through its hollows,
climbs and crests its hills.

This is coal-bottomed, oak-crowned land;
in turn,
sun-lit and shadowed,
full of lyrics known by heart
but never set down.
These are words older than all of my kind,
the words of a poem impossible to pen.

Lyn Lifshin

The Black Angel

One night and I can't swear it wasn't
a dream, something half woman, half bird
seemed to be perched on the foot of the bed, a pale woman with wings
where there'd be arms

and in the morning, the shades
looked clawed or pecked. Maybe if
I had reached out . . . But it could
have been a dream and she seemed
so angry, homeless, maybe unable to find
a place she could fit in. She might have seen
me feeding the cat, somehow hoped to find
someone who could hold her.

It was clear she didn't like
men. It was as if she was coming
to me. Who could blame her
after the things she saw. Once I thought
I could feel her sleeping coiled against my
starved for warmth, shoving the cat out.

She ate less than the cat, maybe feeling
too earthbound with her black wings and
bronze. Maybe she longed for her
woman's breasts and hips, hoping for flight.
Many have seen her looking down
but when I saw her she seemed to
be looking up at the sky
on the balls of her feet as if aching
to turn those wings she'd
been cursed by to
a bird's wings.
Lyn Lifshin

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Peggy Sue Byrnes

It is Possible to Forget

It is possible to forget
your touch... my skin...
I am quite able to unbegin...

There never was a you and I...
It's a story; a story someone made up.

You say it's a lie, and I'll swear
it's untrue... There never was
a me and you...

It is possible to forget
the breath of us...
I cannot hear the
sounds we made...

I have not looked
upon your face,
as you moved with passion,
touched with grace...

I can be quite convincing too--
there never was a me and you.

It is possible to forget, until--
until I remember....

Peggy Sue Byrnes

Nightmare

Death sucks at me with
the flared nostrils of a
diseased horse.

I wake suddenly,
ashen white and
drained of all power;
trembling.

The polio
of this nightmare
has left me
crippled and gnarled
as an old tree;
too frightened
to form words,
too frightened
to do anything--
but cling to reality.

If I close my eyes again
it will surely be there....
Nightmare

Death sucks at me with the flared nostrils of a diseased horse.

I wake suddenly, ashen white and drained of all power; trembling.

The polio of this nightmare has left me crippled and gnarled as an old tree; too frightened to form words, too frightened to do anything—but cling to reality.

If I close my eyes again it will surely be there...
Floriana Hall

It Is What It Is

Vast canyons echo
Reverberating memories
Voices from the past

Chasms of charm and wit
Slide slowly to wither away
Confusion left in the wake

Whispers of love and rapture
Intensify in the loneliness
One instead of two

Whistling in the light of day
Jesting in the peak of time
Composed yet complex

Whiffs of smoke encircle
"Melancholy Baby" sounds
Contented in the cave

Tenacity like a river
Flows over the cliffs
To a muddled puddle

Silence envelops the walls
Heroic symbol wanes
It is a matter of fact