ICON

Spring 2009

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ICON

magazine for literature and art

is student-produced since 1965 at Kent State University Trumbull campus and published twice yearly at the end of Fall and Spring semesters.

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 (mlynch@kent.edu). Enclose SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope) if you want submissions returned; disposable submissions are preferred. Include e-mail address. Pays one copy. Deadlines October 15 (Fall issue), February 15 (Spring issue).

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

Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest: Annual award of $100 for best poem. Submit a maximum of two poems to Dr. Gary Ciuba at ICON’s mailing address c/o Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest by February 6. The winning poem is published in ICON.

Subscriptions: ICON is available free to Kent State University Trumbull campus students, staff, and faculty. Those off campus may purchase individual copies for $4.00 or subscribe for $8.00/year (2 issues).

http://www.trumbull.kent.edu/Arts/ICON/index.cfm

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The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or Kent State University Trumbull campus.
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Dedication

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Artwork

**Kent State Trumbull Campus Student Artwork Award**

Bret Matula front cover

Samantha Witte back cover, 11, 33

Jared Burton 12, 28

April Dunn 17

Jaime Shuster 18, 34

Christine Cook 27
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Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest 2009 Selection

James K. Zimmerman

Sisyphus

so here I am
    here I go
I'm gonna push this rock
    up this hill, see?
like, it's my job, y'know?
pushing this rock up this hill

actually it's more like a boulder
    than a rock, y'know?
it's big, so I gotta go to the gym
    a lot
maybe three, four times a week
    a real workout
you gotta have a major six-pack
    and awesome lats and pecs
you gotta be cut and buff
    huge tris and bis
and dude, you should see my legs
    y'know
from pushing this boulder
    up the hill

and check it out, the chicks
    get really mad stupid
    they sweat me
watching me push this rock
    up the hill

it's not a bad gig and
    I get good benefits
but sometimes I wonder
what the hell I'm doing
spending my days pushing this rock

James K. Zimmerman

up the hill
    even with the babes and the benefits
    and the six-pack abs

'cause every morning the damn thing
    is back at the bottom of the hill
and I gotta start all over again
    like a freakin' moron
pushing this huge boulder up the hill
and sometimes I think
    I must be some kinda real dweeb
pushing this damn thing
    up the hill
so it can just roll back down again

and then I get into like
    what would my life be like
if I didn't have the rock to push?
what if I get it to the top
    and it rolls down the other side?
what then?

what about the sweeties sweating me
    and the six-pack abs
    and the cut pecs and the buff tris
    and the great benefits?

and y'know it ain't so easy to get just
any job these days what with
the price of gas and the wetbacks
and all the banks so freaked out
you can't borrow no money

so then I think maybe I shouldn't push too hard
    or too fast
Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest 2009 Selection

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James K. Zimmerman

and so just about closing time
I get the rock about thirty feet from the top
of the hill
and then I go home and
pop open a couple brewskis
and watch the Cubs lose again

and wait for the rock to roll back down again
during the night

Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention

Maureen A. Sherbondy

Thief of Small Things

She takes sugar packets
from the coffee shop,
an extra cookie
from the neat row of white
circles displayed on a doily
even though the sign
explicitly states one per customer.
Will the world miss it?
A stray grape or cherry separated
from its cluster or crimson hill.
She plucks away a single fruit, slips it
between her lips, lifts a caramel
from the candy barrel,
pockets the cashier’s only pen
after signing the store receipt.
Why not? She thinks, the world owes
me something. Buy one take one.

Maureen A. Sherbondy

God knows the baggers frequently leave out
paid-for goods from her paper sack: the onion
for that holiday stew, the box of Kleenex when
she had a cold, medicine for her son.
She handed back the extra dollar,
even three pennies
when the cashier miscounted, removed
other people’s items packed in her bag.
Then came the disallowed coupons,
smashed bread found at the base of the bag,
milk claimed fresh, brought home sour, thick
with curds, incorrect higher prices charged for the roast.

She grew tired of doing the math,
after correcting the cashier’s numbers
for years, of standing in lines that grew longer and slower,
full carts slowing down the “10 or less” express line,
rules enforced by no one. Rule breakers pushing
their carts of injustice down every aisle.

One day the cashier erred in her favor,
gave back a twenty instead of a ten.
She said Have a nice day.
If they couldn’t add or subtract,
this was simply the price they should pay
for being stupid,
this was a middle-aged demand for balance,
a need for a credit on her final grocery receipt.
James K. Zimmerman

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Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention

Michael D. Sepesy

Cryo-Stasis

My Johnny Science Wonder Kit for Chemistry included plans to freeze a rose and shatter it like a boyhood crush, but my Johnny Science wonder wandered on to other things to icify—
a mouse’s pup I found—they’re mostly H2O like men, no more than fuzzy squids on liquid limbs,

and when the cold soaks in, they shiver, cringing blue, the smog of breath squeaked out, the jaws in chilly rictus. And through the chest, I crushed the crust of frost with tongs,

kicked out the heart, a shard, and heard the organ cry against the steel like frozen nitrogen.

And when I walk the streets among stalagmite men, these calcite mounds, stone dripped cold from heaven, each grimace rigid, postures clenched like Pompeii dead,

I grin, a Dante at the Devil’s gaping orifice nine circles down the wintered shaft of Hell, at those held floating dumb between a life and misery, suspended in solutions of routine, until celestial tweezers pinch them up—almighty fingers, rubber-gloved, dissect the guts

of lives long crystallized, just to hear the squeak of the tiny, tiny screams.

Kent State Trumbull Campus
Student Poetry Award, Spring 2009

Jaime Shuster

Alone

there is a chance
that we take

standing out
all alone

trying to be strong
willing to be exposed

yet deep down
fearful of
loneliness
and rejection

there are those
around us

who may try
and trespass
on our hopes

making us
feel that we
are powerless

no games
no rules

just know
that standing alone
does not mean
you are alone
Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention

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and when the cold soaks in, they shiver, cringing blue,
the smog of breath squeaked out, the jaws in chilly rictus.
And through the chest, I crunched the crust of frost with tongs,
tugged out the heart, a shard, and heard the organ cry
against the steel like frozen nitrogen.

And when I walk the streets among stalagmite men,
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John Sierpinski

"January Howl, Tonight"

Tonight, I’m in the basement. I hear the creak of floorboards above me as I have for the last fifteen years. It’s been ten days, but I still hear it: the scrape of my dog’s toenails. Just this afternoon I took a short nap, and had a long dream of Rex, a ball in his mouth, running. Our last house had an office downstairs. My buddy used to curl against my leg while I wrote. In this basement, the stairs are or were too steep and slippery for him. I can’t write tonight. I’m frozen. My heart feels like it has turned brown and curled. Now, the floorboards squeak, again. Again, I hear what sounds like Rex’s nails against the bare floor. One cold winter, years ago, Rex pulled the wooden sled with the weight of the kids. A couple of months ago he pushed his rubber bone toward me after I had had a rough day. Ten days ago he looked at me, looked right at me. Then he licked the shaved square on his front leg where they had inserted the clear plastic tube. He licked the veterinarian’s hand, he licked my hand. His head slid down.

It took a long time before I could use my thumbs to push down his eyelids.

John Sierpinski

Waupon with Ed, Christina, and Shelly

The gray cement wall is the first thing you see, that and the steel gate and guard towers. Stark, blank, a monolith in this small town. We are here to help inmates with their stories and poems. Shelly and Christina’s class fills up first. Go figure. Men without women. Ed works with Larry, a young guy (just turned nineteen), who killed someone: vehicular homicide while intoxicated. Larry writes fantasies, had one published in a men’s magazine. I look at it, and find it filled with summer, sweat, and high school girls. A heavy-set man settles into a chair across from me. He carries a big Bible with big print. “I like to write inspirational religious stories,” he says. I found out later from Ed, “He’s the Kenosha killer. Killed two, and was heading to a third when the police caught him.” From some chairs in the back row a few tattooed but normal looking men talk about trading Hershey’s for Camels. The day moves quickly. The guards reappear to escort the inmates out. Larry and the Bible carrier look over their shoulders and thank us. Ed and I are led down a concrete hallway to rejoin the women. Christina’s heels click, hollow. Close to my face steel bars slide open, slam shut. I smell a whiff of oiled metal. The sounds ripple, then disappear. Then the guard leads us
John Sierpinski

“January Howl, Tonight”

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John Sierpinski

into the courtyard, and finally through the main gate. I feel a snap of wind in my hair, and taste the dust. It’s now late afternoon. Children walk by the wall while a yellow school bus idles. Several cars pass. Shelly has an odd look on her face when she says, “I feel like I need a drink.”

Crick

1

Water among the limestone and granite rocks down the hill, the cold water runs over my seven year-old toes. The solid stones push up against my soft soles. The other kids, my sister, play in the water, water that mysteriously flows from under the shadowy bridge, ninth street.

2

A meandering jackass of a stream, oil ribbons mix with water, someone’s rust-red gas can. Now I’m twelve, and much further down stream, near a burgeoning airport soon to swallow the truck farms and the shrinking countryside. We try to smoke harsh tasting weeds.

3

I am fourteen, and two years over the limit to pay the child’s discount at the neighborhood movie house, “The Airway.” Afterwards, we sit in a tunnel, chugging cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon. A trickle of water soaks our shoes. Our minds turn metaphysical.
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B.Z. Niditch

Dylan Thomas’s Night

A wind riddled nightfall
by two drowsy glasses,
you devour hyperbole
from molehills of sleep
restless on an unmade bed,
full of swaggering pain
and thrashed out complaints
near a moldy basket
stuffed with last week’s worth
of unfinished plays,
you sidle into empty sheets,
red-eyed and buttonless,
between cadences and blackouts
in your disillusioned twentieth,
embracing mixers of words
from a shadowy lexicon
drunk with solitude.
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from a shadowy lexicon
drunk with solitude.
Lowell Jaeger

I Give You

to these toes,
suckled piglets.
I have jamm'd them into table legs,
stubbed them on stones,
suffered their squeals--wee, wee, wee--
all the way home.

I give you two heels, shod
in the dumb luck of having been stepped on
all my life. Nailed on rusty spikes.
The same heels scuffed
home angry after school,
outlasted leagues of athletic socks.

I give you my skid-stoppers: knees,
landing hard
that first time my balance wobbled out the drive.
How they picked me up and walked me home.
Mercuriochromed.
O the scabs and blisters we have known.

I offer my sex.
Useful tool.
Happy fool.

This congregation of digits,
palms slivered, blistered, burned.
Nails blackened in the habit
of scraping by. Shoulders like oxen yoked
under my cranium and its load of rocks.

I give you my gristle to mince. Scatter
my entrails; splatter my spleen.
My tongue and ears
--on the tin roof of your garden shed--to dry like prunes.
Unstack the blocks of my spine, loop the nerves

Lowell Jaeger

like twine. I give you, too, whatever pipes in me
this jig of the profane
as you cast my ashes at the mountaintop
in the first cold light of day.

I'd offer you my spirit's flame,
but it's not mine to give. No one
can take it away.

His Mother's Gown

I sat on the edge of my parents' bed
draping my legs
over the rumpled spread, letting my eyes
touch everything cluttered in that place.
My father's flannel work shirts in a heap.
One Sunday loafer upright, one overturned.
Coins and matchbooks on the dresser top, scattered
with check stubs and topped stacks of bills, bills, bills.

His worn bathrobe slung around the bedpost
and beside it the night gown I reached and held
to my face. I don't know why I did that,
why the smells of her bath powders and the sheen
of that delicate fabric spilled over me
with such longings I'd so long
kept out of sight, even from private view.

I recall looking up just then
into the vanity mirror, catching myself,
and in my hands the first evidence
I had a hole in my heart bigger
than the sort of hurt that heals over easy.
So many nights I'd lain sleepless, ears wide
in the dark, tuned like radar to the pitch
of whispers in my parents' bedroom,
every turn and sob and moan.
Lowell Jaeger

I Give You

toes,
suckled piglets.
I have jammed them into table legs,
stubbed them on stones,
suffered their squeals—w-o-0-
all the way home.

I give you two heels, shod
in the dumb luck of having been stepped on
all my life. Nailed on rusty spikes.
The same heels scuffed
home angry after school,
outlasted leagues of athletic socks.

I give you my skid-stoppers: knees,
landing hard
that first time my balance wobbled out the drive.
How they picked me up and walked me home.
Mercurochromed.
O the scabs and blisters we have known.

I offer my sex.
Useful tool.
Happy fool.

This congregation of digits,
palms slivered, blistered, burned.
Nails blackened in the habit
of scraping by. Shoulders like oxen yoked
under my cranium and its load of rocks.

I give you my gristle to mince. Scatter
my entrails; splatter my spleen.
My tongue and ears
--on the tin roof of your garden shed--to dry like prunes.
Unstack the blocks of my spine, loop the nerves

Lowell Jaeger

like twine. I give you, too, whatever pipes in me
this jig of the profane
as you cast my ashes at the mountaintop
in the first cold light of day.

I'd offer you my spirit's flame,
but it's not mine to give. No one
can take it away.

His Mother's Gown

I sat on the edge of my parents’ bed
draping my legs
over the rumpled spread, letting my eyes
touch everything cluttered in that place.
My father's flannel work shirts in a heap.
One Sunday loafer upright, one overturned.
Coins and matchbooks on the dresser top, scattered
with check stubs and toppled stacks of bills, bills, bills.

His worn bathrobe slung around the bedpost
and beside it the night gown I reached and held
to my face. I don't know why I did that,
why the smells of her bath powders and the sheen
of that delicate fabric spilled over me
with such longings I'd so long
kept out of sight, even from private view.

I recall looking up just then
into the vanity mirror, catching myself,
and in my hands the first evidence
I had a hole in my heart bigger
than the sort of hurt that heals over easy.
So many nights I'd lain sleepless, ears wide
in the dark, tuned like radar to the pitch
of whispers in my parents' bedroom,
every turn and sob and moan.
Mornings at the breakfast table, they'd perform as needed so the kids should never know. Mostly my mother. She was good at believing however she wanted to convince the rest of us. Except the clink of her spoon in the bowl and her refusal to meet his eyes when my father spoke softly his daily goodbye. Ever after I never asked

and no one told me. I never got closer than that: the few breaths inhaled as I fondled that gown. If it were sex I'd heard, I didn't know it then and don't believe it even now with all those years gone by before I'd dreamed the need to write this down. Sounded more like the bitter hiss of misery and blame. And the confusion I'd carried forward into so many other lives. All the wrong women who'd chosen me. All I've mistaken for love.
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Diane Webster

Frozen in Moment

Rising from melting snow bank
two white horses sculpted
in Colorado marble
quarried forever cold
but carved life-like
begging the hand to touch
smooth contours
like a snowball
before the throw
frozen in moment.

Steam Paths

In February frost as sunshine
struggles to penetrate the cold
in the pasture, weeds seem to steam,
release their heat like horse manure
deposited and left behind,
never noticed except for the steam
like the first time
I peed outside and watched it
steam a path to the ground
hurrying as goosebumps prickled
along my skin like blood rushing back
into a sleeping foot like steam
rising to grasp a ribbon of sun.
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rising to grasp a ribbon of sun.
David Sapp

Surface

I found you, 
your humid breath 
upon my cheek, 
as I pushed past 
the briars, saplings, 
the thick hulks of oak.

I found you reclining, 
an arch in your back, 
willowy arms and legs 
stretching like a lazy cat, 
your body slippery wet 
fluid rushing between 
a strewn gown of leaves, 
moss, fern, and loam 
and around mighty rocks, 
little trinket gifts cast 
carelessly from your bed 
after an outburst, 
a sudden summer storm.

I found the still place 
where your hips widen, 
your figure curving, 
your smooth, gleaming surface 
reflecting the sun and bits 
of blue thrusting through 
the fabric of canopy overhead.

I found and tossed 
a flat, polished stone 
with an easy, unhurried 
movement of elbow and arm, 
skipping it across your belly; 
with seven slight, fleeting ripples, 
my fingers traversed your form.

David Sapp

Hurrying Home

While hurrying home, 
fleeing from an uncle's funeral, 
the car twisting 
between steep pastures, 
accelerating through 
if-you-blink-you'll-miss-it towns, 
vibrating and rattling 
over washboard byways, 
I'm lost for a moment 
on Wildcat Road, 
the dirt track, 
on a canyon floor, 
its walls lush green 
woods, tall weeds, and briars; 
and as I slow, 
rotating a map 
sullenly in circles, 
a doe lopes casually 
across my path, 
unconcerned with my disquiet, 
and around the bend, 
three wild turkey hens 
with heads stretched warily 
skitter by loquaciously, 
scolding my impatience.
David Sapp

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David Sapp

finding navel, nipples,
and a few damp freckles.

I found you, my mouth
pressed against moist skin,
my head submerged,
plummeting within your breast.

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David Sapp

Quarters

After an endless Sunday
drive, encased within
the searing black vinyl
of the red Ford,
and with two kids fighting
and screaming in the backseat,
just out of reach,
Dad sped over the empty bricks
of Mulberry Street and braked
abruptly at the curb
of Victory Food Market
to pick up a bag of ice.
Unbending a stiffened spine,
Dad slowly arose from the car
and fed the mouth of the big metal box
four quarters; after angry,
vigorous kicking and pounding,
another four, but no ice appeared.

Dad ran Jet Cleaners
and used coat hangers
for every makeshift chore
from mending fences to tying up tailpipes.
He bent the wire for its task
and like a deranged dentist,
jammed the probe deep
within the machine's cold throat.
The ice slid down the chute
and coins spilled into his hands
and noisily onto the pavement.
My sister and I pressed our faces
against the window in wonder,
Mom couldn't stop laughing,
and Dad's smile
was thick with satisfaction.
We spent quarters for weeks.

Paul Sohar

The Truth about Judgment Day

An overflow audience blocked the newcomers at the entrance,
causing vociferous confrontations in the plaza in front of the huge
auditorium, but inside, too, the crowd was getting restless. The
long hours of delay made those sitting want to get up without
losing their seats, and those forced to stand were demanding more
seats. So temporary fold-down seats were installed on the walls, on
three or four levels, but the space between these tiers turned out to
be too cramped. Those caught below the highest tier had to stick
their heads out or else remain scrunched under the seat above and
curtained off from the stage by the legs dangling in front of them.
Voices of protest overwhelmed the speeches from the podium, and
finally, after hours and days of pandemonium, Judgment Day had
to be indefinitely postponed. The disappointed crowd slowly
dispersed, but not before tearing off the temporary seats and
breaking up the more permanent fixtures. But even then some
defiant ones remained huddled in the ruins of the darkened
building, still protesting.

Thus the news of the end of the world has only been released in
obscure official publications and has not gained universal
acceptance in the general population. People still go on fighting
and loving, loving and fighting as before. New babies are born,
more noses are broken, new mass graves are dug, and even the
prophets of doom are urging corrective measures of one sort or
another instead of the acceptance of the truth: it's all over and
nothing matters any more. Nothing.

We are all doomed, the babies as well as those on million-dollar life
support systems, those who sell doomsday-prevention devices and
those suckers they dupe, even those who are willing to kill the
dupes for those worthless devices. Might as well stop counting
years now. Leave it to the historians of a possible new world who
will have their own way of counting and imagining time. And
space. If they will still bother with such outmoded notions.
David Sapp

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William Dauenhauer

Of Skeptics Unafraid of an Angry God

Here's the heresy
that a few mutter:
Fear has kept the nations
in their ranks and files.
And the over-bold
were often burned alive,
that dread would endure
amidst the cowardly.

Skeptics unafraid
of an angry God
terrify the Seraphim
snug in highest heaven.
Should they be allowed
to enunciate
their brittle verities
holy fear would dissolve.

Lyn Lifshin

Just Weeks

Just weeks before my mother's birthday I
wear the flesh-pink rhinestone barrette.
Too often I look backward from where I'm going.
I think of women who feel guilty not grieving as much
after a year.
My blue couch is so much like my mother's.

Too often I look backwards, at loss.
Almost May, the middle name they gave her, sorry
she wasn't a boy.

My blue couch, color of the dark one we curled on.
We could hear Otter Falls, the voices from Main Street.

May in 4 days. Frieda May, not the boy
they hoped for.
After 65, she found the 28th wasn't her birthday.
Otter Falls and the traffic on Main Street blurred so much.
But not her father's disappointment on May 25.

After 65, she found out they hadn't hurried to register
her birth date, waited 3 days.
Even before she knew, she wanted girls she could
shower with love,
wanted to make up for her father's cruel disappointment.
She named me Rosalyn for my rosebud mouth
and because it sounded like a name for an actress.

Even before she knew her birthday was so disappointing
it wasn't reported for days,
she wanted girls.
She named me Rosalyn Diane, a name good for
the theater.
"Performing daily" the birth announcement said.
William Dauenhauer

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Lyn Lifshin

She wanted girls,
named her second daughter Joy, hoping she
would bring that.
My "performances daily" were what she
looked forward to the rest of her life.

As Branches Clatter

and iced limbs crack
something inside seems
as vulnerable, precarious,
a darkness I can't even
name though I feel its
beak and claws pull
fear from where it
was and bring it back
to where I live like that
bird that pulls a thread
from leaves of flowers
and with its beak
sews what wasn't
into his house
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Sharon Doyle

A Trick with a Hole in It

My mom used to do this
half smile of confidence
swooping in to show me
how to do a tough job
saying "Here—I’ll show you
a trick with a hole in it—"
and slip a yellowed lightbulb
into the cotton sock
I was darning
for Home Ec,
or burp the Tupperware
I couldn’t get the hang of,
or even out the rhythms in the treadmill of her Singer;

but now at ninety she's thoroughly sure
she never could have said that to me,
and she surely can't remember
a hole in any metaphor,
the alchemy of its solution,
or her own mother's half smile.
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Sharon Doyle

Les Deux Freres

– after a vintage French café advertisement

have need of chocolate.

They shake small fists
at the giant poster,
flare of French café where
a beveled table cradles mugs,
tempera steam rising over
copper cream, satin-thick--

curdles of the warming morning,
gold croissants
split and steaming,
butter slid off edges, brushing
the brothers' fists, now swelled in chocolate--
ambrosia brandishing
pretend wine on a red-check cloth.

Sharon Doyle

As Simon and Garfunkel did not quite say,
Where have you gone, Emily Dickinson?
A lonely nation turns its eyes to you,
woo, woo, woo.

“In pure song, in pure song, in pure, pure, song.”
-- “Aviary,” Mark Defoe

Is that what it is about the song
of your seventeen hundred poems, E.D.,
that it isn't politically Puritan song but
pure, pure song?
We go to lengths to hear such song;
why, we even feed the birds,
and we buy bird clocks to hear the song
when the birds are not nearby.

I wish, E.D., that we had your voice
on an old wax sound recording,
with its Yankee-reared thinking,
and no ambitions save broken plots--
blunt cut lines--slant/love/dreams,
and no possessions save poem packets
playing at bureau-drawer sachet.
Sharon Doyle

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Guy R. Beining

nuzzle 24

part IV

he passed a veteran's pit stop
& spotted a shell
April 18, 2009
of a man
waiting to be placed
back into his wheel chair.
there was a crack
in his speech
as he waited for
human pulleys to
set him back onto
his paved trails.
the day stops here
with his broken grin
& the note
at his side
that read: LIFT.
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that read: LIFT.
Lorraine Tolliver

Stalks of Logic

Let's think now
here in this wild forest
of leafy senses.
The tangle can distract
the spindly flow of thought.
Brambles
of fear and desire
can wrap around
the stems of logic,
cut off air,
dim eyes to see,
and dry up thirsty
tendrils of trust
so they cannot curl
around the limbs of reason.
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Fredrick Zydek

That Old Bully Doubt

That old bully doubt
has been nipping
at my heels again.
God, the cosmos,

and my place among
them are all dancing
in one enormous cloud
of suspicions, hunches

and question marks.
Maybe I'm just dust
wallowing in the wind,
what nothing does

when left to its own
devices? It has
a language of its own.
I do not know if it is

the tongue the angels
use or the mathematical
debris of time. Sometimes,
late at night, when I

remember your name,
I even doubt that what
we were was good
for either one of us.

Fredrick Zydek

Imaginary Lecture in an Imaginary Museum

Relics dating back to 3005 are housed here.
Nylon and plastic things line the shelves.
We do not know how they made them.
We think the plants from which they were
spun no longer exist. It was the year glaciers

swallowed ancient Boston and Philadelphia.
Ice pushed its way into the old Mediterranean
and as far south as Tucson, Arizona. Great
wars were fought when those who could not
escape the planet trudged south to take up

squatters' rights in what we once called jungles
and savannas. Not long after that, Earth shifted
on its axis and began to spin from north to south.
We've gathered much of their stuff since then:
ing-sized telephones and computers small

enough to be carried in a child's hand, wind beds
and fossils of things called cats and dogs.
Their was a crude moment in history. For all
their technology, they still lived by the work
of their hands. We have one room dedicated

to nothing but keyboards, some for music, others
for computers that ran their lives. I cannot
imagine a world less cerebral than ours—a time
when teleporting by one's honest will could not
be done, when energy still came from fire and mis-
treated rivers, a time before the sun and the winds
of the planet provided more energy than anyone
could use, an era which had yet to figure out that
the world did not have nationalism in mind when
it distributed its supply of natural resources.
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the world did not have nationalism in mind when
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The Spice Box

My father was a renaissance man. He could build anything, knew how to make confections like caramels and homemade root beer, played the guitar and sang I thought better than Gene Autry. He worked full-time, kept a garden and yard, rabbits, took his wife out dancing on Friday nights, volunteered for the fire department and sometimes tended bar at the Eagle's Hall on weekends. He was a hunter, a fisherman and one of those gatherer types who picked mushrooms, berries and flowers deep in the forests around town. When he bought his first home his wife asked for a separate cupboard to hold just her spices and asked him to paint it Chinese red because she planned to decorate the kitchen in an Asian motif. He was a man who could make a silk purse from a sow's ear, so he took a wooden apple box, sanded it down, attached doors to it, glued on crossed chopsticks for pulls, painted it bright red and mounted it above the sink in the pantry of the old railroad house he bought on the swamp side of town. It filled the house with the smell of fresh enamel.

Michael Skau

After the Bomb

XIII

Columns of drifters stumble across the plains. One pair limped, with rifles as alpenstocks, dragging a keg of what proved to be gunpowder behind them. They were clearly out of their minds: he, toothless and squat, kept swatting his hand at something we could not see, and she was babbling that she'd lost her trousseau. A man in bib-coveralls disarmed them, too weak from hunger to resist; he poured gunpowder into a pot, lit a shirtsleeve as fuse, and then tossed the whole contraption into the pond. Everyone got to eat fish that night.
Fredrick Zydek

The Spice Box

My father was a renaissance man. He could build anything, knew how to make confections like caramels and homemade root beer, played the guitar and sang I thought better than Gene Autry. He worked full-time, kept a garden and yard, rabbits, took his wife out dancing on Friday nights, volunteered for the fire department and sometimes tended bar at the Eagle’s Hall on weekends. He was a hunter, a fisherman and one of those gatherer types who picked mushrooms, berries and flowers deep in the forests around town. When he bought his first home his wife asked for a separate cupboard to hold just her spices and asked him to paint it Chinese red because she planned to decorate the kitchen in an Asian motif. He was a man who could make a silk purse from a sow’s ear, so he took a wooden apple box, sanded it down, attached doors to it, glued on crossed chopsticks for pulls, painted it bright red and mounted it above the sink in the pantry of the old railroad house he bought on the swamp side of town. It filled the house with the smell of fresh enamel.

Fredrick Zydek

When Mother put decals of Chinese temples on the box, we forgot the house was on a dirt road behind the tracks that led to the mill and would not have been surprised if House Beautiful magazine showed up to take pictures.

Michael Skau

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Richard Dinges, Jr.

Porch in Fall

A porch in fall
holds dust and dry
leaves, a glass
vase filled with
shriveled sunflowers,
a dirt-caked hoe,
and one black cat,
alert to what
wind drives across
warped boards,
waiting to pounce
on the last living
remnant of summer,
devour it slowly,
then curl up
for a long winter nap.

Richard Dinges, Jr.

Home Repair

Home creaks beneath
a leaking waterbed, embraces
burned out bulbs and broken
light switches. I know my way
through dark halls. My skill
to fix things defines walls,
 eternal lists that keep me
in need. Those others
turn to me with arms spread,
tell me what else is broken.
Arms fold around me even
when I am not the best one
for the job, just the first
to be told, holding us together.

Moving a Piano

Once more I haul music
in a great wooden box
through my door, heavy
as sorrow, yesterday a hope
that my daughter would master
black and white keys, soon
abandoned with its long
leering grin, a skull in our
silent room, now a burden
passed on to a neighbor
across the street, his own
girl with hands still
small enough to guide
across these teeth transformed
again into a broad smile.
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Holly Day

Minneapolis, Dead Winter

starlight and starlight stretches and
fills the sky, makes the snow glow white
like day. far away, the skyline glitters
casino-bright, buildings rise like headstones against the black
of the Mississippi, marking those lying
face down
beneath the pavement slabs of sidewalk

but I and only I
am alive with the cold, the snow
turns me quiet and still with sunrise but
makes my fingers tap nervous at nightfall. where and what is
hibernation? body aches and tinges and still I
can't get enough
of the cold

Minnesota

My friend in San Francisco sends me pictures
of her new friends, and I realize
how trapped I am here
how I can never really leave.
All the girls in California
are as thin as I used to be
and all this Midwest living
has changed me, man, I'm lost.
Boys still smile at me at the grocery store
and I feel so pretty here
a little thinner than the average
at my worse if I was young.
My friend in San Francisco
sends me pictures of her new life.
I tell her how I'm pretty here
and why I'll never leave.

Dennis Saleh

Orb

The breath of the moon
has fallen upon nothing
It is a sadness more than alone

Somewhere else there is
a hand mirror merely
a ghost of itself

This is the fated solitude
of spheres that they
be self-contained

Brian C. Felder

Being Pacific

Is not a poem
the distillation of some experience
written to please the writer's sense,
to tease the reader's senses?
A dose of smelling salts for the deadened soul,
in the way brine--
once smelled, never forgotten--
conjures all the oceans of one's memory and yet
clears the head?
Is not the poet but a sailor,
sailing forth on a sea of his own devise?
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Linda Fuchs

A Soldier's Last Day Home

lying suspended between two oaks
gently swaying she is as
unencumbered
as a child playing GI Jane

thoughts march to a tour of duty
and a future as bereft of
the things she loves as
a widow on funeral day

sunbeams filtering through lacy clouds
kiss her skin on their way to the garden
double hollyhocks replete with color
stand at attention like soldiers

babies’ breath and forget-me-nots
decorate the parade ground
tinkling brook in the background
whispers taps

squirrels chattering
of stashes hidden below
a brief interlude then make ready
for the changing of the guard

Linda Fuchs

Sunday School

skip Sunday school
sneak and slither behind screens
and stained glass scenes

high above
angels hang from turrets
blow their silent trumpets

walk down city streets
past the dirty book store
lonely to my core

across the park way
cold wind blows scattered
newsprint as if it mattered

why I absent myself
their god is not mine
with promises of hope divine

their god won’t
keep me warm at night
or chase away midnight fright

so I steal away
I choose this time
to be just mine
Linda Fuchs

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I choose this time
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Arthur Gottlieb

**Astronauts**

The amazed mouth of the moon swallowed
the bitter pill of our capsule.

Dust steeped in silence clawed our boots
as we skipped the waterless seas in our space suits.

Camera crews on earth focused on our miraculous walk visible to breathless millions.

But, cavorting close to the Creator, we heard
no voice other than our own crackling over the radio.
No visions of heavenly harps, no angelic saints orbiting the celestial emptiness.

Only the emptiness of stones. How far up do we have to go to reach heaven? Our intensely sensitive instruments showed no signs of supernatural presences.

Prayers here must carry less weight than those transmitted from earth. In the absolute clarity of the void nothing we knew lived or breathed.

Observing the world wandering in a sea of tranquil stars

---

Arthur Gottlieb

**Victims**

Standing around the pit of empty stomachs, so cold in prison clothes, they'd almost welcome being burned at the stake.

In the few moments left, they search the sky for saviors, paratroopers perhaps, who'd float angelic on some silky jet stream, with rescue weapons from heaven at the ready.

Common grave has been dug. Ordered to the edge, the doomed kneel down in a silence so profound

Hell could hear the click of the first bullet's loading.
Arthur Gottlieb

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Arthur Gottlieb

like a lonely drifter, we fired
our retro-jets to get home faster.

Can it be we wingless creatures
would be God to the men
on Mars had they lens sharp
enough and the vision
to see us?

Victims

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Robert F. Thimmesh

Who Is Present

If you stand in the same place
long enough you will learn to recognize
the one standing next to you
who sits nearby and becomes
your acquaintance, then a friend

and if the place holds together
a lover may emerge from the ranks
of the familiar which have painted
your consciousness with the presence
of others, an existence unknown
until its absence changes the landscape
you assumed would never falter;

presence disappeared, a holed
landscape where a friend once was
a presence of being which balanced
your own, which affected your
waked moments in an inexpressible
way, sometimes with pain often

with mystery, unnoticed until you
squinted at your hidden self
and stumbled on the change.