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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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Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest
Old Man in the Well of Souls
Ronald Bullis

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 prayers.

His long thin silence reaches out like an iris. His head raises and lowers with each of god.
Each name has a separate scent, some 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 books and the place is crawling with to
The words found their way there first, then the silence followed.
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.

Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Contest Winner
Selection (two winners)

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 syncopations, the terrifying steps to dis and back up to resonance all gig long ending as a squeal, axe tilted upright, 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
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hallways of bodies,
through rooms
of moans, vibrating window
panes out
into evening
velvet.

When the combo receded, he
went on
alone into syncopations, the tottering steps
to dis and
back up to
resonance
all gig long
ending as
a squeal,
axe tilted upright,
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 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.
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.
Portraiture
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
to 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 turmoils 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 fin
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

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

Not a revelation by any stretch of the imagination
Just a warless child seeking safety in blinding
And yet I weep
For my own lack of mobility or inability to reason
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 hotels
so that if people were genuinely having out-of-control
and hovering over their beds, they would be able to
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
and being me, this did not help.

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 challenge
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 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.

---

**Keys to Life and Literature**
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 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 fences.
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,
ermetically 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 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 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.
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 peachcobbersweetpotatech
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 peachcobbersweetpotatechnettedish,
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 Migliozzi

Beauty (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 Geoffrey 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:
blinding 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.

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 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 ther, too, struggling 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. We were her children and were taught well. But it 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 strength 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 opened the door of the parlor where my sisters and I stood and still body, drawing from each other what little strength we could of what little strength we had left just moments.

Tears streaked our carefully made-up faces as we had separatedly, we approached the beautiful casket (possibly be described as beautiful) where the body was now cradled.

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

We knew that they were all waiting for us.

We knew that they were all waiting for us. And leave? But we had to. But I still had not for

Unwilling (or perhaps unable) to pull myself carefully considered the once so determined woman who had given me life, totally aware that I was of the strongest woman I had ever known. I recalled the many times someone had remarked how 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 me
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 p
That human debris must have a meaning
And so the rocks are given to the Oracles On

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 r

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, w
I tend to think of things in perspectives not a
So my open heart relives only fantasy, that w

Across the euphoric Utopia, a field holds the d
Plants that spasm in euphoric sunlight, I see n
The jacket of velvet upon my back, I give t
And now upon my feet I see what was given
A fantastical arrangement of flowers, thrown v velvets f
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 for puppets.
All night the careless headlights whiz on past Freeze,
while a scarecrow stands beside the old state line
still trying to hitch a ride by sticking out and

A few years back, the ironworks shut down and
with fernlike shavings, thick enough, they built
a wormhole.
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 set
with muted snow, while the butt of a hand-rolled
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 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 Aqui”
R.G. Cantalupe

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
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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.
I Think We Knew It Wouldn’t Last
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 buttonpushcometoshove,
forever reinventing who knew what.
I think we knew it wouldn’t last.

Stuck
Kaye Bache-Snyder

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

When I get cabin fever, I often go to Toy
land. Poking around for bargains, I entertain myself
by watching shoppers and guessing their stories.
I see a coiled-up pair of panties and imagine her plump husband’s grave. I watch a pregnant teen find
her friggin’ panties and sense her regret for her bulbous
stomach. The frustration of a man with a beer belly, who’s
Stationary bicycle with fantasies of losing weight.

It’s as if I can hear such people’s dreams
muttering inside the bowl of a lamp. By the time
those sliding, automatic doors, I usually feel
much better off I am than most.

That is, until last Saturday afternoon.
I went to K-Mart and found a bargain
electronic bathroom scales that talks. It was
stepped on, but only fifteen dollars. Holding
my observations of shoppers. But with kids scre
bawling 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 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.

"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?"

"I'll race you."

"Not interested." The line inched forward with boxes of Mars, Snickers and Heath bars.

He persisted. "Not interested in your race of retired people who aren't interested in their health.

"Sir, I'm not retired." I gestured for him to avoid the gap in the line. I considered dumping him slipping past him and out the door.

"Forty pounds," the electronic voice reported.

He turned sideways again, still pedaling, that his morning jog inspired him to buy oil painting, "I'm going to do canvas board in his basket. "I'm going to do a painting," he said. "Running releases your energy into your spirits up. And really, a woman like you needs 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.

"Four pounds," the voice quipped. "Shut up, stupid thing!" I shook the scale. "Operator error," it said.

"Look mister, you take care of your body like mine."

He blinked behind his bifocals. "I live alone, too."
His voice faded, legs stopped pedaling, shoulderturned, paid for his art junk and headed out the door.

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.
Sunday’s Child
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eaten by its own cells. 
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.
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,
fall 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.