ICON

The Literary and Art Magazine
is student-produced at Kent State University Trumbull Campus. ICON
is published twice yearly at the end of Fall and Spring semesters.

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 submissions will be considered). Fiction and nonfiction
should be submitted in standard, double-spaced format. Send submissions
to:

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4314 Mahoning Ave. N.W.
Warren, OH 44483
Enclose a SASE (disposable submissions 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. 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 of ICON for $3.00, or subscribe for $6.00/year (2 issues).

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Virgil Suarez

Aguacero

These downpours of my Cuban childhood when my father loved to smoke a cigarette on the patio of the house in Havana and watch as the sheets of rain bent against the tin roofs of the shacks in the neighbor’s yard, the way drops hung from the wire mesh of the chicken coops and fell, one by one on the dirt, dampening, darkening as they fell, and he would remove his shirt after a long day’s work feeding the zoo animals and he would sit on his makeshift hammock, lean back, blow smoke up at the rafters, and he listened to all that rain as it fell on everything. He imagined it was raining all over the island, his island, and the sound of it drumming on the plantain fronds rose all around him like the clamor of thousands of cattle birds scattered-shot into the heavens, and when he closed his eyes he dreamt of a man, his hands buried deep into fertile earth, seeding a son, a wife, in new life from which so much hardship sprouted in this life, in the next, exile a possibility dripping from his fingertips--then the song of bullfrogs calling home the night.
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**Virgil Suarez**

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Virgil Suarez

Babalao

He sits on the hard packed floor, eyes closed, the smoke from jasmine incense cloudy in his eyes. He reads the cowry shells for a fee, though he cannot utter the amount, he can tell you when is a good night to leave the island, when not, in this ravaged land of scarcity, he can guide you to things, love, the woman upstairs looks down from her balcony, her next door neighbor gets drunk on aguardiente every night, dreams of the old house with the columns and treillis work. How ivy grows and grows, like his love for the young girl across the street. The old black man will blow into his hands and show you a map North, where the snow is so white it blinds, where in a warmer place, in a pasture land clearing there’s an echo which sends cowbirds skyward, a flutter of wings, like his heart beating inside the shell of Chambered Nautilus. He counts coffee beans, sprays water at the Saints, Las Siete Potencias, and it cools them down, it cools everything down. For the price of silence, he will draw you close, consume you, then spit you out in a million directions to freedom land, heavenly homeward.

(Babalao: a high priest in the Afro-Cuban santeria religion.)

M. A. Schaffner

Postmodern Spring

My dogs lead me through the neighborhood as redbuds and daffodils bloom and sway. My hands dance with the leashes, while my mood rises with the illusions of the day.

I wonder if perhaps I should do more: mentally solve a problem from the office, make up a list of something from the store, or think of ways I might get rich in business.

I should do something, I think, as I bend to pick up behind my beasts. Or should I? Each step on the sidewalk leads beyond the trailing end of history, each sigh of forsythia in its fullness betrays the promise of representation, and life -- with its unexpected, unexciting ways, and finales without wit or even strife refutes the lie of every tale and poem. Or so I tell my dogs as we head home.
Virgil Suarez

_Babalao_

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_Babalao_: a high priest in the Afro-Cuban santeria religion.)
William Dauenhauer

No Better Might You Flee from God

No better might you flee from God than from yourself. You have made Him from all you fear down the cyclets of your years. Sooner race your shadow or a freshening wind than skim from your Creator whom you—in truth—have fashioned.

However fleet-footedly you rush these cracked byways, your shadowy Creation clings to your heels. You might as well imagine outstripping winter wind than dart from your Creation whom—you fancy—fashioned you.

George Held

To a Young Girlfriend

Only a week apart and I lapse back
Into type—the solipsistic male,
Ironically detached, laconic,
Chary of touch, uncompanionable.

Then you, hot as lava, inexorable
As the tide, hug me hard and bring me back
From the missing, revive my pulse, my breath,
Detour my melancholic drift toward death.

Then solitary I becomes communal we—
Thoughts of us supersede the me, me, me
Of quasi-life defended against risk,
Against love, whose motto is Noli me Tangere. But touch me you do, my frisky Kisser, my caring sharer: that's the way.
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Nils Clausson

Carpe Diem, Per Diem, Ad Infinitem

The sun lays serrate claws on the startled street.
Wide-eyed as ingenues the windows stare.
Against the fences leans the summer heat.
A motorcycle hums into the air.

The movie stutters on at eight o’clock.
The air-conditioning heaves against the wall.
We feel the droppings of another stock
Thud like the Times on Sunday in the hall.

The day before invests the serious mind.
The evening stretches cautiously ahead.
We stretch as well, and, having anodyned,
Wait for the late night news to go to bed.

Michael R. Burch

The Poet

He walks to the sink,
takes out his teeth
and rubs his gums.
He tries not to think.

In the mirror, on the mantle,
Time--the silver measure
does not stare or blink,
but in a wrinkle flutters,
in a hand upon the brink
of a second, hovers.

Through a mousehole,
something scuttles
on restless incessant feet.
There is no link

between life and death
or from a fading past
to a more tenuous present
that a word uncovers
in a great wink.

The white foam lathers
at his thin pink
stretched neck
like a tightening noose.
He tries not to think.
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Jane Stuart

The Lost Forest Bialoswiego

Last night I dreamed that I had gone again
to walk in forests of dark glittering snow
through glistening drops of moonlight that fell
in the snowy fields of Bialoswiego.

I did not see your sleigh but I remembered
crusty wheels and swerving sides
sliding through old tire ruts
and vanished crevices,
twisting, sliding,
following the horse that breathed night’s
wild black air.

I found my way through grass that did not break
called by voices from the church that sang
its chants through opening cardboard windows
and angels holding sprigs of mistletoe
over unbowed heads of those who,
bowed in grief,
did not see me enter (I came home).

Later, in my hotel, eating chocolate bars
and dreaming of tea that came later on,
I saw glass cases rise to touch earth’s floor
that was a ceiling to the sky.
The carpet turned to tell me all was well,
my chair sank back in its repose

But I returned, at night, to walk again
through forests of white horseshoe wind
under the dark, rising moons
of Bialoswiego!

Anne Coray

Needing a Man

She sits on a pedestal
of blue motions.
In her lap, the severed head
of a bull.
She rubs its white horn
on her gums
until they bleed.

The blood runs down
her print dress,
saturates her shoes.
It trickles onto the floor
and forms patterns of lilies.
(For her to keep?)

She drops, then kisses the blood
with her knees.
She is somewhere in a vast field.
There is a wagon in the corner;
she crawls in and curls up
like a beast.

A shadow passes with no strength.
Her blood is turned to glue.
She flails her arms
and discovers that
the wagon has no wheels.

The shadow cannot be real.
She steps on his hands, his face.
She grinds away at his belly
with her left heel.
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Anne Coray

Ahead she sees a bright object.
It is a spoon; she starts the digging.
A bull’s head to be buried:
it has no body, it cannot feel.

From the barn the cow screams.
Where is her wagon
and where are her flowers now?
She runs on sore feet.

The body trips her.
She lies, prostrate.
It enters without asking;
she cannot breathe. . . .

She thrusts the dream from her mouth.
It slithers away, rotting.
Still a menacing snort, seductive,
is bedded in a latent sleep.

Anne Coray

Thief

When the hand
wedged through the gap
between the rough-cut boards,
forefingered and thumbed
the hasp, lifting it free,
crept beneath the casement,
over the sill, ran like antennae
on the dark ledge,
until it reached an object
of silken steel
did the man half-twist
with dread cocked in his eye
as a shadow winged blackness
over the crushed snow?

Did guilt click
in a memory, a story
with its own trigger?

Did he know,
perched now on a cut limb,
chulyin, the raven,
come again to teach him
right from wrong?

Could that black bird,
that trickster,
have made him see
the hand that held the gun
was his own?
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Of men who pine for women;
Or ponder mighty Zeus’s pow’rs,
Or souls who fly to heaven.

Still He is gone; and I have seen
At night, again, the coffin.
No poem that tells of forests green
Can offer consolation.

A Shadow of the Night

They who live by heat and light,
Ne’er can know the dark of night.
Those who walk among the throng,
Know not how the night is long.
Craving things in shadows found,
I’m to shadow always bound.
They who live by heat and light,
Ne’er can know the dark of night.

Ralph E. Pray

The Rescue

“Sam, the whole town’s on fire. We need help fast,” the sheriff shouted to me over the telephone in Pioche, Nevada, ten miles from my mining camp.

“I’ve got maybe ten or twenty men. Take us fifteen minutes to get there. Will that help?” I asked, figuring there were that many miners in the bunkhouse still awake at mid-morning coming off the graveyard shift.

We were in the remote southeastern Nevada desert during the summer of 1947. I had sixty men underground in the lead-zinc mine but couldn’t get them out in less than thirty minutes. A lot of the men hated the town so much they might not go anyway. The gambling tables, bars, and cribs took most of the miners’ money every payday night. More than a few of my men would chuckle happily at a big fire in town.

“Hurry,” the sheriff yelled. “Anything’ll help. The wind’s blowin’ the main fire up the street to the hospital. It’s all wood, Sam, the whole damn town, and dry as toast.”

“We’ll be there in two shakes,” I said, and hung up.

The company bus, a Navy surplus relic, sat outside the mine superintendent’s office, where I held forth at the Castleton Mine, operated by the Combined Metals Reduction Company. The vehicle was used daily to transport miners and supplies between the modern-day mine complex and Pioche, a town of several thousand.

I ran from the office to the bunkhouse, a V-shaped, single-story wood structure sprawled across the area between the open desert and our mine-mill buildings. Once inside, I yelled as loud as I could, “Pioche is on fire and needs help! Volunteers get on the bus.”

Running along the hall I hammered with my fists on each door and called out, “Get on the bus if you want to help. Hurry! Pioche is on fire!”
Richard William Pearce

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Running along the hall I hammered with my fists on each door and called out, "Get on the bus if you want to help. Hurry! Pioche is on fire!"
Doorways flew open to fill with wide-eyed men unaccustomed to any bunkhouse noise outside of payday nights, when drunken miners staggered noisily from the disgorging bus to their beds in the early-morning hours.

“What’s up, Sam?” voices called behind me.

“Pioche’s on fire. We’re going in to help. I need volunteers.”

I stuck my head in the reading room on the east end of the building, where five men were shooting craps on the floor. “Get on the bus if you want to help. Pioche is on fire!” I turned to run the other way. Footsteps pounded the plywood floor behind me as men ran to their rooms for shirts and boots. The miners living in the bunkhouse were all ages, from twenty-five to sixty. There were runaway husbands, ex-cons, broken-down prizefighters, one adventuresome school teacher, thieves, and honest miners who needed a paycheck. There were also veterans of the war, one a Marine vet who left part of a hand on Guadalcanal. Anyone who could walk could hire on. We were desperately short of bodies, even if they stayed only a few weeks.

I headed for the bus, then thought about gloves and a long-sleeved shirt in case I got around the flames. Ducking into my office I grabbed a light jacket, gloves, and my hard hat.

I started the bus engine, revved it up, leaned on the horn, and drove to the bunkhouse. A scattering of men ran to meet the bus and followed it, trying to hop through the open door as I made a U-turn. There were eight men, then twelve, then fifteen. A few more came half-way, not sure whether they had to go or were just asked. I tooted the horn again and again, hoping to rouse a few more volunteers or convince the fence-sitters.

“Sam, do you need me?” one miner, a young, weekend drunk, called out. He was the strongest man in camp. I motioned him aboard.

“Can I go, Sam?” the teacher asked, not sure if this
Doorways flew open to fill with wide-eyed men unaccustomed to any bunkhouse noise outside of payday nights, when drunken miners staggered noisily from the disgorging bus to their beds in the early-morning hours.

"What's up, Sam?" voices called behind me.

"Pioche's on fire. We're going in to help. I need volunteers."

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"Can I go, Sam?" the teacher asked, not sure if this
group, so hastily gathered without benefit of organization or union, could include him.

"We need every man," I said. "The whole town's on fire."

When I closed the door and popped the clutch there were eighteen men in the bus. "Hold on," I said. "Get ready for the ride of your life." There were laughs and guffaws, but the men braced for a wild ride.

We literally careened around the curves in that high-centered bus on the gravel road to the highway. The desert almost swallowed us up more than once as the rear end fishtailed on me in the vicious crosswinds. I've never driven so frantically. I was young, of course, and full of it. There's no way I'd even ride that trip now, not for any money.

No one on that bus owed Pioche a dime. Every man sitting on those worn, shiny seats had, more than once, dropped his own personal twice-a-month fortune to the wheel, the cards, or the dice. Or their seven dollars and seventy cents a shift went to the painted girls in the Pioche cribs, to the whiskey and gin, the wine and beer. Daily wages were gathered in by the Silver Dollar Saloon, the Pioche Club, the Last Chance, and six or seven other wood-front money-holes lining the dusty main street.

"Sam," one of the men yelled. "When did the fire start?"

"I don't know, but the wind's blowin' it up to the hospital."

"Jesus, is there anybody in it?" he asked over the noise of the straining engine and whining gears.

"I hope not. We'll see." The Pioche hospital was also the mine hospital and infirmary. All of our employee applicants were screened there, our injured cared for, our sick counseled. It was the most important structure in town as far as the mine was concerned.
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But to the men, the town of Pioche was a place to blow off steam after two weeks of work underground in the mine. For them the Pioche Club was the center of attention, where everyone went, where the drinks were free while you gambled, the floor was wet with spilled whiskey and littered with slumbering, besotted bodies.

"Hey Sam, what about their fire department?" one of the men asked loudly from the seats in the other aisle. "Are they any good?"

"It's volunteer," I yelled back. "Just the locals."

We made it to the black hardtop road. I pressed the gas pedal to the floor. The engine, whining like a siren, let me know it had reached its limit. The smell of hot metal and burning oil filled my nostrils. The dashboard gauges were going crazy.

We crested the last hill before town. There was the smoke, a huge, roiling, black cloud. Then around the last curve and starting down the hill. The town was on fire. The lower end looked to be a heap of smoking ash, and central Pioche, right up to the hospital, was a blazing, crackling torch.

"My God," a voice just behind me said. "Who'd believe this?"

"Holy Christ, Sam," another exclaimed. "What can we do? This looks bad."

"Just follow me, men," I said confidently, gearing down the engine and applying the brakes as we approached the old wooden hospital. We slowed with shrieking wheels amid the hissing of the radiator and shouts of men on the street. I stopped at the hospital entrance and opened the mechanical bus door. The men piled out as I set the brake.

I ducked my head and jumped through the bus door in front of the hospital. I'll be damned if every one of my eighteen men wasn't racing down the street to the Pioche Club to save the whiskey. Old habits die hard.

The hospital, fortunately, had been evacuated.

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Marla Lard-Minger

Deaf and Dumb--a Journey into Personal Pain

I heard you call me--Mar la, Mar la, but didn't answer, just like so many times before.

These ears have heard too many insults and are deafened when you call my name.

Your voice sounds like the ANNOYING noise from the television set that sends me deeper into myself.

I saw you looking at me, but as usual kept my eyes cast down.

I've seen way too much with these eyes and truthfully the pain blinds them.

For me to look at you would mean an acknowledgment that I see, and to see you means you must EXIST.

Yes, I know that it was you touching me, but I didn't allow my body to respond to a man that has touched me black and blue all these years.

I'm NUMB to your touch; it feels like a sweater or a pair of earrings on me now.

I tried to speak to you about the way you've been treating me throughout the years.

"Shut up, bitch! I don't want to hear anything you need to say," you said.

This started my descent into my mute world. I haven't spoken a word since that day.

I was certified deaf and dumb by a medical doctor several years ago and to some extent I am. It wraps around me like the flesh on this body; this certification protects me and excuses me. I hear people murmur, "She lost it a long time ago, I feel so sorry for Mar la, she had such a hopeful
Ralph E. Pray

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Marla Lard-Minger

future, what has become of her children, are they
going to put her into a home for the mentally insane?”
They act like I’m not even in the room

I am deaf to a kind word because I know it will be followed
by, “Why isn’t the house clean, bitch?” or “I don’t know
what I ever saw in you, you whore.”
I am blind to a smile, because I know the same tongue and
teeth will form words that cut like a knife or laugh at my
shortcomings.
I can’t feel a touch because it has been beaten out of me,
slow and deliberately, but none the less it is gone.
I am muted because my voice was never appreciated, so
therefore never heard.

I am closed to love because I gave you and only you that
power and like the rest of me you abused it and I am
incapable of loving myself.

I have willed myself deaf and dumb and this is the state of
protection that I have chosen to stay in, exist in, be
sheltered in and DIE in.

Kathleen Burgess

The vocal cords of wind

A map of blue-gray clouds,
some defined, against a shrouded sky;
others, indistinct as rumored continents,
and somewhere a myth before a conquest.

Any carrier will do--the speeding silence
strokes and strums
anything that moves.

Mute grasses speak,
but only in the millions,
beat their heavy heads
until their seed drops to earth.

I’m restless with the swell of an impending
storm I cannot see, can only hear
the leaves’ reports.

Trees chatter to trees,
a green-tongued chorus
on the rising of each hill.

Listen to the story improve from side to side,
and how the pitch of truth descends in lies.
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Michael McIrvin

Optimism Blues
And so many of the universe forget themselves
Who are the great forgetters
Who will know just how to make us forget such and
such a part of the world.
Guillaume Apollinaire

In the brisk and bluest corners
of my imagination the wild
heart survives yet in these creatures
who bask in their tameness
like old cats in late sun where it drains
through suburban windows,
imperturbable in their comfort,
sleeping...

In the corners of my imagination
where the west wind molests
the greening earth to shuddering
orgasm, the sleepers can still rise,
dance like leaves over the vortical
ground, whisper erotic messages
above the static that humps the airways,
can laugh even in their somnambulist dreams...

In the brightest corner where the sun
has been sentenced but hangs on tenuously
to godhead, where breath equals praise,
and all praise settles in the sun’s breast
pocket like a fancy kerchief, the human
heart has not forgotten its animal rhythm,
its corporeal thrum... thrum... thrum...
beautiful beyond all reckoning, sad
beyond all telling, glorious
like singing in the mouth of the eternal
and valiant sun as it strides toward decease.

Michael McIrvin

The Message
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun. Yeats

The solid leaf wall
of this tree is towering
injunction to a man
without nerves, mute,
violently silent except
for the tiny electric
sound of his skin
wriggling in the shadows
where fallen fruit
stinks like overwrought
wine... but this too
is a message
from the earth
even he can understand.

Love, the tree speaks
with its involute tongues,
can grow sad as metaphor,
turn, fall forever toward
the humus that begat it,
recede until all but madness
is equivocal, until
a man must turn inward
like the multifold whorls
of this cambial heart,
or die...

The man stares upward
at the impenetrable
exchange of shadow and light
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and tries to imagine a soul, mysterious and flammable, at center, maybe, already aflame.

For an Anorexic

She is the author of her own wounds, a subtle priestess whittling away at her body with abstinence, who, as she grows smaller, dreams of moving backward into the womb, of being dissolved there in her mother’s blood, to become once more someone’s idea of a person... ephemeral and shifting, but perfect at long last.

John Cantey Knight

Marbles

for Mike Payne

I never held planets and moons in my hand, nor collided universes with thumb stroke. Child’s foot never circled a galaxy on school yard dirt. His eyes animated I could see he had, as he explained to me the complexities of marbles. A small boy materialized within the man as he pulled a Mason jar from the shelf. He showed a dough roller large as Jupiter, tigers--chocolate brown and bright orange--crystal glass enclosing, blues, greens, and yellow cats’ eyes. Aggies, marbles made of marble, he’d touched a thousand times over, rubbed smooth as the flesh of goddesses. He caressed with a boy’s fingers, pee wees and solids like moons, Heaven-blue, Mars-red, Earth-brown. Day after day, he held a universe in his hands during recess on the playground at Young Cane... youth fled, he replaced them on the shelf.
Michael McIrvin

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The Old Man’s Wisdom

Friend, listen.
All things happening
have a purpose.
You may not
believe this so,
but it is,
and lack of belief
has nothing
to do with it.
Faith alone
determines the course.
Chance is a game
for fools
and young men.

My Garden

There are dragons
of ever-changing hue
and hunchbacked ogres
with copper eyes
deep within my garden
of squash blossoms
and hidden radishes.
To you and me,
toads and chameleons
these creatures are,
but go question the fly
or listen to a worm.
There are dragons
and copper-eyed ogres
deep within my garden.

Frank Van Zant

The Litmus Test for Hate in My Heart

It’s still there. I have not grown enough
to get beyond burning resentment, to forgiveness,
especially when there’s this lawyer living in my town on
Flower Lane

and one day my wife w/ 3 kids in tow taps—as in T-A-P-S,
fender lips on fender lips—this lawyer’s wife’s car,
and the lawyer’s wife jumps from the vehicle screaming
bloody criminal action

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER ARE YOU!, her way to
bully
some naive woman
into coughing up some quick cash. But my wife’s no fool,
she weathered
the harangue, waited for the police, monitored the officer’s
report:
no damage visible.

We cried in frustration for a week, the two of us seething
over their insurance claims, their nervy list of cases won
elsewhere:
falling soup cans, electric door closing, icy-walk slippings.
Their sheer indecent lies played out in phone calls and
phonied letters.
We even wrung hands over the way it bothered us that it
bothered us,
not them, the way some people never suffer Honesty &
Conscience.

Now I drive past Flower Lane on my way home from Little
League,
the library, some good neighbor’s home, hoping something
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Frank Van Zant

might grow from their bullshit: perspective, understanding.

But I still want to hurl one howling murderous brick through their fraud-bought new windows.

Daniel Green

Perfect Poise

She enters every room as though pausing 'til applause subsides. Peruses every mirror to be sure the vision of her beauty is intact.

On the streets, each shop window reflects assurance that her stride is right, hair not blown, gown modestly revealing.

Denies her age by tinting hair, face lifts, vigorous exercise, meager diet, betrays no hint of growing aches and pains.

Self-glamorized, her perfection scares away attractive suitors, choices dwindle, wonders why there's something missing.
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Wilmer Frey

Shameless

My friend Arvin said about being with a girl that he’d chance it—the fires of hell, that is. I knew what he meant by “being with a girl.” He meant to fuck one, only he didn’t phrase it like that until later when he was older, maybe sixteen or so. At fifteen neither he nor I used such words. We had just been baptized at the fore of the Mennonite church and for a long time we tried to make that water work, to remember how it dripped from the lobes of our ears to the bones in our shoulders and then how that dampness felt carried all the way home. But the flesh... Lo the flesh on its shadowy Saturday night run. That’s when Arvin and I slipped into our J.C. Penney red shirts and biked to the fair, his shirt checked, mine striped. We hid the shirts earlier so as to hide ourselves later, the idea being that when we walked the midway and passed the girls wearing lipstick we wanted to be seen in red, not Mennonite. Red was Arvin’s idea. He got it from the lipstick. He said that later on it wouldn’t matter so much what a girl discovered. But have that Mennonite showing first... forget it. There was no way. So we walked the fair in red. We waited for the sun to go down and then we went and made the slow rounds, around and around, stirring up lust and feeling no shame.
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around and around, stirring up lust and feeling no shame.
Brian C. Felder

ice blue eyes

at the yevtushenko reading
there was this girl--
easily half your age--
but she had your ice blue eyes,
your straight hair,
even that questioning look of yours.
She made me think of you,
made me realize how some faces are poems
just waiting to be written.

Jennifer B. MacPherson

Fear

It is a cornered man's grinding teeth
a desert mouth
a barren womb

It is cramped calf muscles
toes that won't straighten
a sawdust voice

It is eyes that cannot blink
sun striking matches on stone
guns in the hands of children

Bill Suter

The Old Country

All the answers lie before us
All the reasons that the earth
Begs the heavens to restore us
To the cradle of our birth.

Deanne Bayer

Gustav Mahler: 1888

Times when
I wake
before birds
and the stillness
is harsher
than pity, pierces
more
than forgetting, I lie
steeped
in the amniotic pre-dawn
exchanging lethe
for light, waiting
for the birth
of light
to summon sound.
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Erica Brazin

How Can I Let Go, When You Still Hold Me So Tight?

I never imagined how I would feel waking up next to you.
I never thought it would happen, after all that we’ve been through.

I told you I still loved you, though I’m sure you already must know.
I’m aware you stopped loving me a very long time ago.

I feel your arms around me, but it doesn’t mean a thing.
I know that tomorrow you won’t call.
I know what next week will bring.

Yet I love being in your arms.
I love your warm embrace.
I think of how things used to be as I gaze at your beautiful face.

I lightly touch your crimson lips. How perfect they seem to be.
Soon you’ll awake and be gone again, and I’ll only have the memory.

You didn’t see me watching you.
You were fast asleep.
I promised I’d always love you, a promise I’ll forever keep.

Erica Brazin

The Sky

When I think of you, I look at the sky.
I wonder if the Clouds rolling through once passed above your head.
Though we are miles apart, the same magnificent, azure Sky is perched above us.
As I gaze at the wide, expansive blue overhead, I feel the distance between us close.
Because I know you see the very same Sky--and you know that I see it too.
When I look at the Sky, I think of you.
When you think of me... look at the Sky.

Daydream

Today I awoke, and touched the Sky.
I held hands with the golden Sun, as the Wind softly brushed the hair from my face.
The Clouds and I played hide-n-seek while the Earth watched from the tallest mountain peak.

I was oblivious to the world beneath as the Sun began to leave.
My terrestrial home beckoned for me, but my friend the Moon came out to play, and the Stars begged me not to go away.
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Erica Brazin

Better Than Anywhere

When I dream about my favorite place,
Instantly a smile appears on my face.

Where is this place that evokes such splendor?
A place where I wish I could stay forever.

It’s not on a cruise ship, or a white, sandy beach.
China and Italy are too out of reach.

It’s not the top of a mountain, or along a peaceful stream.
Everyone goes to Disneyland, once upon a dream.

It’s not a park in New York City,
nor is it a field, with flowers that are pretty.

This marvelous place where I always want to be
Is in your arms, where I could spend eternity.
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Upon Losing My First Love

Without you,
my life is an eternal winter
that never ceases
to the new life Spring bears
It's as if my heart
were buried under huge drifts of snow,
never to be touched
by the sun's warm rays.
Just as a tree
that's lost its leaves,
my limbs are naked.
They no longer have you to embrace.
Like ponds that freeze
from the bitter cold,
My lips have turned to ice.
No one is there to kiss them.
As icicles hang,
frozen from housetops,
so do my tears,
as they roll down my cheek.
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Sleepless... sleepless... sleepless

Sleepless
Trudging
bed
sinks the man's
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where
blue beauties
whisper
then want
of wind
where the goodness
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red
fingers
oozes
like

g
e
n
t
l
flooding milk.

It Is Doubtful If You Will Meet

Have you ever been
in the presence
of someone holy?
One whose words
and countenance
radiated a presence beyond; one
who walks amid the notes of familiar hymns?
If you have known this experience
you are among the fortunate,
no, among the blessed
for such persons are uncommon
yet found if you listen,
however, if you possess the "true" way
it is doubtful if you will meet.
Sleepless . . . sleepless . . . sleepless

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J. L. Kubicek

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The Gift

There is a gift that you can give
A value yet untold,
Whose worth is more than diamonds
Silver and even gold,
It can be given by a rich man
Or poor man just the same,
It is the greatest gift
You can give yourself,
It is the greatest gift
You can give away,
It is good for all occasions
No reason too big or small,
It is the best-kept secret
That should be known by all,
It makes the load much lighter
An easier burden to bear,
It transforms all the sadness
To a joy that cannot be compared,
It returns potential to a life
That was thought to have been lost,
It repairs the soul renewing hope
An ever-shining thought,
The gift I speak of is forgiveness
So simple and so true,
May you find it in your life
May you give some away too.

Tell Me Why . . .

The walls are covered in paisley blue wallpaper
deroceptively soothing, reminiscent of a stately parlor,
the woodwork, dark mahogany, simple and solid
complement the tapestry chairs and loveseats,
except for the sadness hanging thick in the air.
would you ever think it was a room meant for mourning?
I keep it together, except for the knot in my stomach
until I see the registration book, in her name,
my hand shaking as I take the announcement,
unable to read it.
reading it would mean this is not a dream,
I am still in denial,
I stand rooted unable to move,
taking in the scene before me
feeling detached, the numbness overwhelming,
the room full of family, co-workers, neighbors, and friends
huddled in small groups talking in quiet murmurs,
some even smiling.
indignant and angry I silently rage, How dare they!
My God don’t they know why they’re here?
The mingling unavoidable, we desperately look for
someone we know,
the conversation begins with polite smiles and awkward
hugs,
we speak of rumors and theories, therapy for those of us
who remain.
we ask, “What could she have been thinking?” and
“Was there a note?”
The conversation ends with, “I guess we’ll never know.”
With tears simmering just on the surface, no answers to be
found
we exchange comforting hugs and convincingly promise to
call,
we’re all here together, mourning and missing her, now;
Jeanette M. DeAngelo

The Gift

There is a gift that you can give
A value yet untold,
Whose worth is more than diamonds
Silver and even gold,
It can be given by a rich man
Or poor man just the same,
It is the greatest gift
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why couldn’t she see that we were here for her then?
The numbness wears off, a thought occurs to me, the irony sickening, what good friends we have been.
I see the closed coffin out of the corner of my eye
almost relieved I smile, ah there she is
she is still with us, this is just a dream,
then grief overwhelms me when I realize she’s gone.
despite our grief, we can’t undo what she’s done,
she’ll never walk her dogs or laugh out loud again
her decision, a fatal one, a private moment of pain,
it’s hard to admit, we can’t help her now
our only prayer, that she’s with God now,
why did this happen?
Only God and Ellen know.

The Coward’s Way

Wistful thoughts put to paper
The heart’s desire coming through,
A secret passion for someone
Unknowingly close to you,
Secret feelings from deep within
Never spoken by the lips,
Thoughts expressed, meant to be shared
Forever lost to her,
Rejection his greatest fear
His feelings never to be shared,
Unrequited love, how sad it is
This is the coward’s way to care.

Chris Shreenan-Dyck

last words

up on the gallows
the noose framed
the killer’s last breath
in eminence
and grace
for he was the only one
there that day
whose soul conceived
what it is to die
and to be dead
and this truth led him
to utter no last words
for dying men know
there are none
for the unborn
nor the living
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Annunciation

I.
I hold the acorn like a talisman,
Golden goose egg stolen
From its mother.

Half smooth lobe,
Half rough tongue
Wrapped around the nut.

II.
The acorn has no possessions
Other than a small tree
Lodged like a sword in its heart.

III.
Round brown fruit.
There are drips of burnt umber,
Vertical stretch marks.

Brown sounds wet.
Like a seashell containing the sea's voice,
The acorn contains the rustle of tree rings
Widening.

IV.
Does the acorn feel a dark longing
For dirt, for the pious work of insects
Loosening a circumference
Of blind tunnels?

V.
If a tree is the acorn's mother
Who is its father?
The salacious soil? unfaithful sun?
patient air? merciful rain?

VI.
The shadow of the acorn:
Thick edges on white
Paper, the acorn's ancestor.

VII.
I carry the acorn outside
Back into the soft blue dirt.
My womb watches. The acorn holds
A star the size of a leaf.

A knot of light uncurls
And breaks me open.
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Rain Puddles Full of Circles

I

That September in Milwaukee
The plinging of rain filled puddles
And at dusk tiny bells of water rang

And made one think of skipping stones
And untied galoshes. Fluted grey
Gave an illusion of grandeur to the puddles

Which sneezed with each raindrop.
Each cough of sky broke like a dam above.
What in that cerulean labyrinth

Has found its way down to us?
Of what sorrow are you made?
Of what angels’ fearsome tears do you come?

Is this the day God brings
A pin of lightning and thread of thunder
To sew on angels’ wings?

II

That September in Milwaukee
The rain plunked down in a puddle’s pillow.
At evening gutters filled with grinding maelstroms

And made one think of a crowded rowboat
Caught in the churning story of a Swedish folktale—
An old woman, a boy, and a hoard of kittens lost at sea.

Grey pooled in the gutters like wheeling puddles.
Amber, drunken-seeming
The raindrops plunged down

Into no ocean or river. What then touched
The water’s braille
With its blind, printless fingertips?

What then decided it was time
To leave the confines of the clouds
To emerge like a story,

A Knight of the Water Table
In all his glory
To search for the grail below?

III

That September in Milwaukee
The ringing plings of liquid smog filled puddles.
The hallowed night rained shards of stars

And made one think of the Venus de Milo
Missing her arm
And all the statues of broken stone.

Did rain peck away their beauty?
Is rain the very henchman of time?
And phantom grey dropped

Overlapping circles in puddles of water,
Which in leaden repetition rose
To meet their comrades.
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Noelle Rydell

What in the downward motion of the clouds
Drops like a half heartbeat?
What saw in the stone gardens below

The need for nourishment and erosion,
The end of the parched,
Melodramatic overture of summer?

IV

That September in Milwaukee
The idea of rain plunked
Into a puddle’s ponderous thoughts.

The stars came, kneeling and voluminous
Upon the water’s reflected surface.
One thought of sunken pyramids of stone

And webbed feet. And a wishy-washy blue
Impressed upon the dewy grass of night.
Rubber wheels sliced puddles in a frenzy of traffic.

What would one wish for, if one could have anything?
If all the water-reflected stars had really
Fallen to earth

And each star called a wish forward
From darkness into light?
I think one would have to wish for sight,

To see as far and wide as the stars at night,
To travel deep as water,
To touch a love as great as a raindrop for a puddle.

Field

I Could Love You

I could love you a thousand times over
and back again,
Till the sun takes up its exhausted days

and the stars refuse to shine--

if for once I could but feel that kiss--
those hands--
your eyes upon my heart--

And know that I should never lose you--

No matter how far the world holds us apart.
Noelle Rydell

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And know that I should never lose you--

No matter how far the world holds us apart.
I Am

So near I am lost
and you know who it is I am.
A dauntingly brisk breeze
Leaves rustling in those trees
The dirt on the ground
That strange little man,
riding his bike around.
The wrinkles that replace
the tired expression on a newborn’s face.

I am the ocean
that carries adrift
the secrets of ancient times
never to uplift.
That beautiful white bird above you in the sky
Those people on that bus
simply passing by.

I am the love of your life,
physically exquisite,
with a mind so unique.
The luminous moon with a man for its face.
That one shimmering star directly at its peak.
I am those memories of long time that has passed
giving you the chance to see what you have.
The laughter and the joy of those little kids playing over there.
The tears and the rain
and when you don’t care.
Your friends and your parents
all of those who are dear.
The bridges that you cross
the challenges you fear.

The exuberance and relief of knowing what you want
That one damn professor who fails a heartfelt essay
because of its font!
That first kiss in Paris--
or wherever it may be.
That ridiculous girl who chained herself to a targeted tree
or the senseless maniac who bombs a government embassy.

I am the truth and the lies staring you in the face.
I am the existence at which time holds no pace.
The millionaire and the janitor
all rolled into one
The joy of a prisoner
when Freedom has been won!
The sun shining down on your face
The colour of your skin
The shape and the health
that each human body is in.
The drunk at the bar--
that fatal ride in the car.
The F on the report card
The relentless neighborhood egging your backyard
The air that you breathe
The voice that will sing
The wars that go on in the future because of the past
The hope of the Serene
and the peace that will last.

So near I am lost
and you know who it is I am,
I am the Reality that lasts forever
in the heart of every man.
Field

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embassy.

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I am the existence at which time holds no pace.
The millionaire and the janitor
all rolled into one
The joy of a prisoner
when Freedom has been won!
The sun shining down on your face
The colour of your skin
The shape and the health
that each human body is in.
The drunk at the bar--
that fatal ride in the car.
The F on the report card
The relentless neighborboy egging your backyard
The air that you breathe
The voice that will sing
The wars that go on in the future because of the past
The hope of the Serene
and the peace that will last.

So near I am lost
and you know who it is I am,
I am the Reality that lasts forever
in the heart of every man.
Alison Whittenberg

52nd and Spruce

An old man sits on the cement stoop
of the storefront
while Fred strums the strings of his guitar
with the tips of his
still nimble fingers
at the end of his song
he passes his hat, saying
‘You don’t have to be
Rockefeller
to help a fella...’
Meanwhile some other brother
from the kingdom of heaven and earth
hands me a flyer
like I’m really interested in the final call

Sisters wearing majestic robes
offer me dark wood statues
oiled with sweet perfume
in this loud market
their incense competes
with the musky smell of
sizzling barbecued meat
these women tie their hair
with bright printed cloth
yet it is the girls
with more bead than braids
on their heads
barely out from their momma’s apron
that remind me of the bygone time
when I wasn’t
just visiting

Alison Whittenberg

Jakarta

I

Many
Female faces
He
Reminiscs of hers
She was
Some place
South
Celestial was Savannah
When she walked with
That dress on
While Nat King Cole sang
“There will never
Ever
Never
Be an
Other...”

II

Well, he could
Meander every avenue
Hunting for those
Sad eyes
And that dark smile
Of that girl named
After the capital of Indonesia,
When he’d had her
He didn’t want her because
She kissed
Cancerously.
If she were his again
Alison Whittenberg

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To escape a tumor
He'd tell her, "Goodbye."
So he could meditate
And walk
Meditations rise each night
The Sequence of Dreams
Like shadows, moves
Stark
Blank

III

She's gone, forever.

Peter Specker

Twixt

Sometimes you fight for hours and in the
Last ten minutes a painting comes about.
Artmonks have meditated for decades
To make at the conclusion one brush stroke.
Between the extremes are other extremes.
Allison Whittenberg

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