We respectfully dedicate this issue to the memory of James A. Walker, our former Art Director at the Trumbull Visual Arts Center of Kent State University.

Dead he is not, but death for the artist never dies.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

— James A. Walker

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Dead he is not, but departed,—for the artist never dies.
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
The genius of the poet laureate of America, Robert Frost, provided the catalyst for the theme of this issue. The following excerpt stirred our contributors to express both the joy and grief over choices of Roads Not Taken.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

— Robert Frost

Commercial Expression

— Monica Wooster
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ICON, the magazine for literature, art, and photography of the Trumbull Campus of Kent State University, is sponsored by the English Department in conjunction with the Art Department and is funded by the Student Affairs Council.

Faculty, students, former students of the Trumbull Campus, all Kent State Campuses, and other universities are invited to submit poetry, essays, fiction, art work, or photography. We welcome submissions from anyone—student or non-student—in the Trumbull County area.

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Editor: ...................................................................... Jeanne Bryner
Assistant Editor: ...................................................... Leslie A. Sams
Art Editor: ............................................................... Wanda Kover

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The staff wishes to extend our appreciation to Carol J. Perich for continuing on her path of excellence in typing the ICON.
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Yesterday’s Pride

FATE TRAIN
—John Thorn

If you hadn’t been on that train .
   On that day .
If I hadn’t been seated behind you .
   That way.
If I hadn’t tapped your shoulder to say
   “Pardon me please . . . are you from Notre Dame?”
If you hadn’t turned around to smile .
   And if you hadn’t asked my name .
If we hadn’t laughed and talked for those few miles .
   Nothing would ever have been the same.
If we hadn’t written love letters each day .
   We would never have married that first day in May .
If only you hadn’t died at thirty-seven .
   If only you had stayed to raise our seven .
If you’re watching still . . . with love from afar .
   Then you know my heart aches to be where you are.
If I had taken a bus instead of a train .
   I know my whole life would have been lived in vain.
—Elizabeth Dohar

Spring 1988, ICON

THE HART CRANE MEMORIAL POETRY AWARD

Horses
Forty fathoms deep the ship lies sunk
with seven dozen horses in the hold.
The men who sailed the ship escaped the sea,
except the few who died exchanging fire
with the ship that sank her. The bending lens
of dark sea water makes the vessel bulge
from the bottom. On the floor the horses
tethered, standing patiently, softly
bump each other when a current glides
its hand along the swelling planks outside.
In even rows they move, their heads upheld
swaying, as if someone with slow intent
wafts his force through reins with gentleness
and patience that is terrible to see.
By rank and column ponderously driven
further, with deliberation, coldly
through the weighted wedge of water toward
thick chaos, they press with strength that spares
no sign of motion save, like silky gas,
the soft escaping murmur of their manes.
Pulling. Pulling. Booted, spurred and visored,
looking toward the gray horizon, we
await our missing mounts, fretting, stamping
with impatience, eager for the bugle,
lance and carbine crack. Ponderously
slow, their traces pull us. We show no sign
of motion save the murmur of our breath.
—Kent Gramm

The ICON wishes to congratulate Kent Gramm on winning the Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Award. Ms. Zell Draz has graciously made this award possible through the Helen Hart Hurlbert Foundation. The contest is coordinated through the efforts of Professor Mary Ann Lowry.

Spring 1988, ICON
YESTERDAY'S PRIDE

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   On that day...
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   I know my whole life would have been lived in vain.

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SPRING 1988, ICON

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Forty fathoms deep the ship lies sunk with seven dozen horses in the hold. The men who sailed the ship escaped the sea, except the few who died exchanging fire with the ship that sank her. The bending lens of dark sea water makes the vessel bulge from the bottom. On the floor the horses tethered, standing patiently, softly bump each other when a current glides its hand along the swelling planks outside. In even rows they move, their heads upheld swaying, as if someone with slow intent wafts his force through reins with gentleness and patience that is terrible to see. By rank and column ponderously driven further, with deliberation, coldly through the weighted wedge of water toward thick chaos, they press with strength that spares no sign of motion save, like silky gas, the soft escaping murmur of their manes. Pulling. Pulling. Booted, spurred and visored, looking toward the gray horizon, we await our missing mounts, fretting, stamping with impatience, eager for the bugle, lance and carbine crack. Ponderously slow, their traces pull us. We show no sign of motion save the murmur of our breath.

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SPRING 1988, ICON

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My Daughter and I

My daughter went to a dance last night,
The image of adolescent expectation and sweetness;
She wanted to dance with a boy.

My daughter came home a crumpled child on the front seat of the car.
Crying disappointed tears,
She said no one asked her to dance.
The restroom had been full of crying, disappointed girls.

Some things don’t change.

Didn’t I, too, spend my school years
Crying in the restroom at dances
Because no one thought me pretty enough to dance with?

Then I met a young man
With smiling green eyes
Who professed love for me.
So excited,
I “fell in love.”

Although just eighteen,
My fledgling common sense tried to surface and said,
“You’ll be sorry.
What about school and the things you want to do?”

Shut up, common sense.
I’m in love.

Besides,
He wants to marry me
Now.
I must marry him now, he says, or never.

Lose this person who loves me?

Married at nineteen
Mother at twenty
So aware at twenty that my options are gone.

Former friends are having fun and finishing school.
I
Do diapers
And sit by the TV
Eating for solace
And gain twenty pounds.

At thirty,
I’ve spent more years
Crying tears alone in silence
Than I can stand to think of.
To the world’s view
We are a happy family.
Just look how we love each other.

Trying to be happy,
I give.
Because good people give.
Good people
Stay married for life
And think only of their children.
Good people don’t fail.
Good people think of others first.

Sometimes,
Things do change.

Sick in my soul of wanting more,
I raise hell with the man who calls me “dear”
And go back to school despite his complaints.
It’s the first time I’ve had my way.

A taste of knowledge
And an ounce of freedom
Set me on fire.

Do I really matter?
Dare I do what I want?
My inward rebellion grows,
As does my guilt.
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Each night
Seeing cars stream down the highway
In the opposite direction
As I take my same road home,
I wonder
What it would be like
If I had taken a different road.

Of course, I'll never know.
There are "No-U-Turn" signs
All along the highway;
You can't change the past.
You can't change your direction.

But—
There are exit ramps.

My guilt-laden conscience
Says I'm an ogre
To want to take the new road.

"Shut up, conscience,"
Says my common sense.
I
Matter enough to exit.

I can dance alone.

*Anonymous*
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Anonymous
If We Would Only Believe

"Mommy! Mommy! Morlock just dried up the pond out back! It was great!" an excited young boy cried out. "I fell in and then Morlock . . . ."

"How in heaven's name did you get so wet?" the boy's mother asked, acting as if she hadn't heard what her son had tried to tell her. She shook her head from side to side, vexed and perplexed. "I'll never understand how you manage to get into so much trouble. Now go and get some dry clothes on before you catch your death of cold." Then she went back to preparing supper. "But the pond . . . and Morlock," the boy went on trying to explain, but to no avail. His mother was lost in a frenzy of cleaning and cooking. The disappointed youth stomped a soggy foot and left the kitchen, slamming the back door of the house as he went. His mother let out a sigh as she saw the trail of muddy footprints that he had left behind.

The boy was about twelve years old. He was full of energy and emotion, and virtually brimming over with imagination. The latter was especially intense; that fact was noted by friends, teachers, and family alike. It was also a wellspring of despair for the boy. For he would conjure stories of incredible adventures and distant lands. Likewise, these stories always seemed to include a mystical friend named Morlock. His friend would introduce him to magical creatures. One had the head of an eagle and the body of a lion, and Morlock called it a griffon. Also, this friend could do strange and miraculous things such as drying up the pond. But after more than a few earfuls of the unbelievable tales, the novelty had worn off and people began to grow tired of them. The boy's friends started calling him names and teasing him constantly. His teachers, irate at the amount of homework he was neglecting, begged him to grow up and be responsible. And when his attempts at maturity failed their standards, he was paddled or disgraced in some other manner in front of his classmates. His parents had no idea what to do, so they did nothing.

"Oh, why doesn't anyone believe me?" the boy shouted. He had retreated to the edge of the pond where the events of his previous tale had taken place.

"Because they have forgotten how to," a benevolent voice answered. "Troubles of the world have made them weary. They worry only about today and have no time to dream about tomorrow. No time to believe, for believing is something that requires energy and thought. It wastes valuable time that could be spent on work and making money. Because they have grown up."

The boy's countenance became confused. "What? Well anyway, so now you show up!" The youth sounded more than a bit perturbed. "Why can't you come and talk to my mom and dad or my friends? Then they would stop hating me and calling me names." The boy started to cry.

"Listen, Bobby; no one hates you. And I can't show myself to anyone; it would make things rather difficult . . . ." The voice started, but was abruptly interrupted by the boy. Pouting, he snapped, "Then why are you bothering me?"

"Bobby, I don't think you will understand this now or even when you are older,
ROADS NEVER TAKEN

‘The rush hour traffic
I’d just as soon miss
When caraftercarismovinglikethis.’
— Robert Lauher

Quite true, Mr. Lauher,
you’re right on the money;
and I, just like you,
don’t consider it funny
when traffic is whizzing along
at full speed
and whizzing right with it
is just what I need . . .

Except that—like you—
I’m more likely to be
ON ANOTHER ROAD
entirely!
— Pearl B. Segall

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by the boy. Pouting, he snapped, ‘Then why are you bothering me?’

‘Bobby, I don’t think you will understand this now or even when you are older,
but I'm going to tell you anyway. We are connected. We are related. We are the same. Though I was born in a place very distant from here, we still have something that no amount of time or space may ever put a permanent wall between. That is why I am bothering you." Morlock began to cough.

Bobby turned to look upon him. He had not done so since they had started talking; he had been too busy pouting. When his gaze fell upon Morlock, his eyes became wide with horror. His friend's hair, usually black as midnight, was now a dull grey. His eyes, azure orbs that were wondrously deep blue as the ocean, were now a lusterless grey. Dark circles hung around his eyes, and his face was pale and gaunt. Slowly Morlock sat down on the huge stump of an old oak tree that recently had been hewn down. Gently he pulled the boy onto his lap.

"I'm going to have to leave you," Morlock began. At hearing this, the boy hugged him tightly and began to cry even more intensely. A light smile crossed Morlock's face. "You knew I had to leave sometime."

Bobby wiped the tears from his face, but more fell. "Yes, but I'm not letting you go!" the boy shouted. "You're my only friend, and if you leave I'll be all alone." Then he buried his head in the thick black cloak that Morlock was wearing. Morlock looked down at the boy clutching him.

"No, Bobby, you have friends and parents who love you. And some day there will even be a girl." At that the boy squirmed. A small laugh escaped Morlock's lips. Then, all of a sudden, he began to cough violently. When it had ceased, he pulled Bobby from him and stood him up straight. "Now young one," Morlock began, "I must leave. I am glad I was able to reach you, even if it was only for a short while. Maybe some day, I will return, but for now, I must go." Suddenly the wind started to blow fiercely, and dust churned in the air. Some got into Bobby's eyes, and it blurred his vision until he could not see. Trying to clear his sight, he rubbed his eyes hard, but the tears and dust still blinded him.

"Believe in yourself, Bobby, and believe in your dreams..." The boy's eyes cleared as the voice of his friend faded into the wind. He looked about himself feeling very disoriented. And for some reason, a little sad, though he didn't know why. He shrugged his shoulders and began to walk up to the house. He was met halfway by his mother.

"I thought I told you to get out of those wet clothes, young man!" his furious mother began. The boy suddenly noticed that he was drenched, but he could not think of a reason for being so. "And I don't want to hear any stories about your imaginary friend spraying you down with the hose, either." The boy looked at her as if he had no idea of what she was talking about. And in all actuality, he did not know, for the magic that was his alone had gone. He had crossed the boundary that had walled in the wonders of childhood. He had begun to grow up. A mere boy no longer, he turned and continued on his way to the house.

His mother watched him finally enter the dwelling. She shook her head and proclaimed that she would never understand him. And while she stood there trying to reason and understand, as most adults do, she missed the magic that had taken place right in front of her. Just then, down by the pond, by the stump of the huge old oak tree, something captured her interest. Without hesitation she began to walk toward it. The woman smiled as she recognized her son's obnoxious red baseball cap. Bobby had worn the hat everywhere, never abandoning it. The mother remembered when it had been new, and how bright and clean it had been. Now it was torn, faded, and dirty. She smiled as she picked the cap off the ground. Maybe her son was vexing at times, but she did love him with all her heart. Then she began to walk toward the house, feeling very good about her son. Suddenly, she stopped and wheeled, now facing the pond. Her jaw dropped to her knees as she realized that the pond, usually overflowing with water that time of year, was completely dry. She walked to the edge, her mouth still agape. "But... but... how?" She slowly pulled the baseball cap from the pocket of her apron. Reverently, she held it close, still staring out over the waterless pond. Over and over she promised herself that she would listen from now on, and try to believe.

— M. E. Joseph

— Wanda Kover
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“1’m going to have to leave you,” Morlock began. At hearing this, the boy hugged him tightly and began to cry even more intensely. A light smile crossed Morlock’s face. “You knew I had to leave sometime.”

Bobby wiped the tears from his face, but more fell. “Yes, but I’m not letting you go!” the boy shouted. “You’re my only friend, and if you leave I’ll be all alone.” Then he buried his head in the thick black cloak that Morlock was wearing. Morlock looked down at the boy clutching him.

“No, Bobby, you have friends and parents who love you. And some day there will even be a girl.” At that the boy squirmed. A small laugh escaped Morlock’s lips. Then, all of a sudden, he began to cough violently. When it had ceased, he pulled Bobby from him and stood him up straight. “Now young one,” Morlock began, “I must leave. I am glad I was able to reach you, even if it was only for a short while. Maybe some day, I will return, but for now, I must go.” Suddenly the wind started to blow fiercely, and dust churned in the air. Some got into Bobby’s eyes, and it blurred his vision until he could not see. Trying to clear his sight, he rubbed his eyes hard, but the tears and dust still blinded him.

“Believe in yourself, Bobby, and believe in your dreams...” The boy’s eyes cleared as the voice of his friend faded into the wind. He looked about himself feeling very disoriented. And for some reason, a little sad, though he didn’t know why. He shrugged his shoulders and began to walk up to the house. He was met halfway by his mother.

“I thought I told you to get out of those wet clothes, young man!” his furious mother began. The boy suddenly noticed that he was drenched, but he could not think of a reason for being so. “And I don’t want to hear any stories about your imaginary friend spraying you down with the hose, either.” The boy looked at her as if he had no idea of what she was talking about. And in all actuality, he did not know, for the magic that was his alone had gone. He had crossed the boundary that had walled in the wonders of childhood. He had begun to grow up. A mere boy no longer, he turned and continued on his way to the house.

His mother watched him finally enter the dwelling. She shook her head and proclaimed that she would never understand him. And while she stood there trying to reason and understand, as most adults do, she missed the magic that had taken place right in front of her. Just then, down by the pond, by the stump of the huge old oak tree, something captured her interest. Without hesitation she began to walk toward it. The woman smiled as she recognized her son’s obnoxious red baseball cap. Bobby had worn the hat everywhere, never abandoning it. The mother remembered when it had been new, and how bright and clean it had been. Now it was torn, faded, and dirty. She smiled as she picked the cap off the ground. Maybe her son was vexing at times, but she did love him with all her heart. Then she began to walk toward the house, feeling very good about her son. Suddenly, she stopped and wheeled, now facing the pond. Her jaw dropped to her knees as she realized that the pond, usually overflowing with water that time of year, was completely dry. She walked to the edge, her mouth still agape. “But... but... how?” She slowly pulled the baseball cap from the pocket of her apron. Reverently, she held it close, still staring out over the waterless pond. Over and over she promised herself that she would listen from now on, and try to believe.

— M. E. Joseph

— Wanda Kover

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Back to Reality

Down the highway’s beaten path go countless cars.
Unexpectedly, vehicles jam the road like prison bars.
To escape the fast lanes, my mind recalls:

Harpersfield Covered Bridge
The wooden floors, warped and grooved from endless traffic,
shows
wear and tear
from the elements
and the human race.
Hearts were carved by lovers, when romance was at a high pace.
The worn and battered boards creak in the wind.
The hot summer sun shines through the overhanging trees,
steaming up the damp roof.
Visitors sneak a peek through the cracks
to view:
Swimmers swimming out to the nearby island;
Waders wading by the rushing waterfalls and
Sliding off the slippery rocks for lack of sand;
Fishermen watching ripples in the water
while waiting for a bite.
Time to release tensions—
not to fight!
An excellent place to go to while away the time.

Noisy horns whine—
back to reality.

— Joan Scott

Innocence

I kissed a boy good-bye
Who was going off to war.
His lips were not so different
From those I’d kissed before.
Freely did I give myself
When he pressed his soul to mine.
For love seemed such a small price
To a girl he’d leave behind.

I held him in my arms
As he wept and spoke of fright.
The darkness of it all—a small town boy
They’d force to fight.
Some classmates had returned,
Their stories etched in black.
For the others, we engraved
Their names upon a plaque.

I met his parents brave—
We shared dinner his last day.
Their faces were painted masks
For the son they’d send away.
He was headed for a place
With a name they mispronounced—
Across the huge blue ocean
Where freedom did not count.

I remember the starch of green
And the soft brown of his eyes,
The moistness of his palm,
The broken sound of his good-byes.
I recall his father’s handshake
Giving way to firm embrace.
Oh, I never shall forget
That frozen look—his mother’s face.
Safe, behind the glass, we watched
Him board the silver plane.
He hesitated only once, as he raised
His hand to wave.
No doubt he used that hand
To polish boots and give salute.
I’m sure they taught that hand:
‘‘Steady now, take aim, and shoot.’’

Yes, I kissed a boy good-bye
Who was going off to war.
His lips were not so different
From those I’d kissed before.
Freely did I give myself
When he pressed his soul to mine.
For love seemed such a small price
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— Jeanne Bryner
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— Jeanne Bryner
3:30 P. M.

Standing there, I sense your approach—feel your eyes gazing over my left shoulder, watching my moving hands with an intensity that is almost a caress. I wait for your touch on my arm and your soft, soothing voice.

(I'm still surprised at how you can raise that low voice to a mighty, many-decibled shout. Fondly, I think of it as your "Air Force" voice. That, and your mock salute and "Yes, Ma'am!" when I complain about something, remain from your service days.)

When you arrive, I feel secure—protected—because you are in control. I picture that self-confident grin you wear when you've solved the cumulative problems of the day. Eagerly, I start to turn to greet you. I stop. You'll never be there again, my worldly lion, to walk with me. And, with renewed pain, I remember that it was I who left.

I walked away—

—I walk alone.

— Lois Cline

SECOND ADVENTIST

She was called Shoe, long before five children, when Benny Goodman played
The Palace downtown for young
soldiers discharged from wars to families. Moving, she was solo,
rhythmic as a licorice stick in
eye-lined legs for silk stockings, second-hand heels on white ankles. Big Bands played
big cities, heels turned to
pumps for washing laundry, priming young, then to all day slippers
comforting sick and aged in bathrobes. Now she's old and sixty, far from jazz chords in
smoked hallways, bass lines pounding like buses on Wick Avenue, with children that fade like riffs of
Swing, walking miles with
the dead written on waiting soles like greetings
from friends on creased, yellowed postcards, dusted in drawers, wishing they were here.

— Brian Adrian Ritz

Waiting

— Marla Richards

Spring 1988, ICON
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—Brian Adrian Ritz

Waiting

—Marla Richards

Spring 1988, ICON
The Delusion

Somebody gave me a puzzle
A present—she said—
That would fill my empty hours
With self-accomplishment.

I took the box and thanked her,
Then I dumped the pieces out
On the unused breadboard,
Making little jagged mountains.

I set out to find the borders,
Turned the mountains into craters,
Then the craters into flatlands,
Some with colored fields, some without.
When all that mattered were the edges,
I found the edges,
All but one,
Whose parts were both male and female,
And which would make the link complete
Could it be found.

Then I decided it was hiding,
And, having no time for childish games,
I let it hide, ignored it
Until it found my fingers
While I searched for missing sky
That peeked through maze of crisscrossed branches.

The sky complete,
I searched for hand that fitted glove
And put the barn together,
Red and white
Beneath the sky and branches,
Everweaving to the border.

I took the blue-green that remained
And formed the ever-bounteous stream
That ran past non-existent house
And teased the non-existent children,
Yet incomplete.

I felt like God
Creating.
I could make the pieces fit,
Make sense of incongruity.
I plunged with fever soaring high
Into the placid stream
To catch the pieces
As they floated by.
Then, having formed the land
To make the nearest shore,
I connected house to children
And I wanted nothing more.

The picture was complete;
Yet on the breadboard lay
One more piece of puzzle,
Flesh-colored, more like clay.

"A duplicate?" I mused.
"This isn't fair—I did my part.
I strived for this accomplishment—I
Put it all together."

There was no other puzzle there,
And if there was, how dare it dare
Presume to be a part of mine?
I stared at it for longest time.

How impudent! It stared right back!
Immediately, I let it drop
- No -
Hurled it to the floor.
I could only take so much of this,
Then I could take no more.

I searched the cupboards for a match,
And when the match was found,
I struck it on the breadboard's edge.
And then I laid it down.

The barn was first to catch, I think,
And then the house and trees.
And then the wind began to blow
The branches of the trees.

I watched as the devouring flame
Consumed the puzzle, then the same
Leaped from the breadboard to the floor
Where it quick set out to devour more.

No shame I felt while I watched it burn.
I, the Creator, I had earned
The right to give and take -
But the extra piece remained, a flake
Of gray on speckled kitchen floor

Bedeviled, burned, then mocked no more.

— Margaret Pinkerton
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— Margaret Pinkerton
Because I Crave Perfection

Insensitive,
I arrived too late
to gather the fragrant viburnum.

Yesterday its scent
rose high
in the musky April air,
riding wingless
against the wind.

Today,
one day into
another month, it
shriveled, sat
crumbling and pale
in premature death;
dared my shears
to snip a single branch
despite its lack of vigor
or aroma

And I refused... . . .
— Pearl B. Segall

CROSSROADS

While sitting at the crossroads
Waiting for the light to change,
I observe the faces of those around me
Who also come to this point in time.

I wonder where each of them has been in life—
Where their paths will lead them.
What brought them to this very place
At this very moment?

The combination of our many histories
Creates a sort of tapestry of lives:
All the colors
All the differences
All the similarities
That make us part of the human race.

We are all brothers
On journeys of our own.

For an instant, we are together,
Bonded in this familiar circumstance,
Waiting at the crossroads
To continue on our way.

— Judy Terlecki

Sunset Pedestrians

— Jeanne Bryner
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Yesterday its scent rose high in the musky April air, riding wingless against the wind.

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Sunset Pedestrians

— Jeanne Bryner

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For Jewel, Dear College Friend
Who Knew the Joys of an English Major

I made no promise when I took my friend,
No sacred vows set this new love apart
From bare acquaintance. Yet the stubborn heart,
Admitting not that every road will end,
Went longing for the laughter that it knew,
The swift surprise when I would turn and find
You putting words to what was in my mind,
The mirrored self that I had found in you.
Now, turning once to take a backward look,
I thank you for a memory of light:
For sharing cadences that dreamed as bright
As motes of sunlight in the printed book,
For hearing what those words once sang to me—
And being as I wanted you to be.

— Elizabeth Hoobler

Cooking Lessons

Mother often warned me
And tried to make me see
That ingredients for pie dough
Would someday important be.
With her Betty Crocker cookbook
And five pounds of Robin Hood,
She would sit me at the table
And lecture me real good.

"Honey, this is simple
And all girls need to know . . ."
She would proceed with her lesson;
I couldn’t tie my apron’s bow.
"Now this is baking soda
And this helps biscuits raise."
"Oh God, please help my Mother,"
Was my only silent phrase.

But Ma, she hung right in there,
Not a teaspoon did she flinch.
She was sure I’d be a chef
Though my cupcakes made her wince.
With her index finger wagging,
Cutting wind beneath my nose,
She would shake her solemn head
And my spirit sat there—froze.

"Please use an iron skillet
To make chicken golden brown."
But despite my finest efforts,
My chicken made her frown.
"Ma,"
I finally said . . .
"This just isn’t working out.
The only thing that’s raising
Is your voice and my self-doubt."

Let’s put away the Crisco,
The vanilla, and the pans.
Wipe the flour on our aprons,
Wash the dishes, and shake hands.
’Cause whenever I grow up,
I’m gonna be an engineer
And I’ll have an expense account.
No need to worry . . . Mother dear."

— Jeanne Bryner
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— Jeanne Bryner
ELUSIVE PEACE
(To a Vietnam Veteran)

Where do you run to, my soldier, my friend?
Where will you go to find your road’s end?
How high will life take you before you can see
the depth of the bottom of eternity?

In the fury of your footsteps, you have passed me right by
to find other pleasures that have caught your blind eye.
You catch them and hold them ... but they’re tricky, you see,
for sooner or later they’ll possess thee.

Elusively you escape me, the faster you go,
running and seeking life’s pleasant flow.
You stumble and fall, the earth in your face,
filled with anger and hate for the whole human race.

Life dealt you a hand that some never see,
but the game’s far from over—from that you can’t flee.
Why must you look so hard and so far?
I’m here, among those tears that you bar.

I walk with you daily, my soldier, my friend.
I’m here deep inside ... helping you mend.
’Tis I ... Don’t you know me after all you have felt?
I am peace ... here to help your hard heart to melt.

You’ve searched hard to find me in all the wrong stops,
but I’ve always been with you in that whirling top.
Put your toys aside—unmask your false pride;
I’ll sit next to your heart and closely abide.

We’ll speak of life’s unending ride—
the joys, tears, and sorrows of my loving tide.
Some day the waters will tear down the shore,
but I’ll calm them, mend them, and make them once more.

I’ll cradle your painful, turbulent mind.
I’ll teach you that life still can be kind.
I won’t shelter or keep you from growing from the pain,
for even the flowers won’t grow without rain.

But I’ll listen intently and shed a few tears
if only you’ll stop and let me come near.
Don’t you know me? Are you blinded by flight?
I am peace, here inside a tomb black as night.

Open your arms, and give of your love;
I’ll enter your heart on the wings of a dove.
I’ll not run to stay close at your side,
but remain and pray you’ll find the right guide.

It’s easy to slip into the trenches of hell;
my soldier, you know this only too well.
Friend, go if you must ... to find your road’s end—
but remember the elusive peace you left ‘round the bend.

— Helen Holliday

Spring 1988, ICON

Solitary-Walk

— Marla Richards
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(To a Vietnam Veteran)

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— Helen Holliday

Spring 1988, ICON
Checkmate

Her hair was the blue-gray of midwinter clouds that are unable to decide between chilling rain or drifting snow. As if it were a trellis, the long braid fell straight down the backside of her flannel nightgown sprinkled with tiny pink rosettes. There was a telegraphic rhythm to her breathing; two deep breaths, one shallow, a long pause, and then repetition of the same. Under the lavender "Lone Star" pattern quilt, Molly slept and held stubbornly onto the morning’s fragile dreams.

Gallant Max lay curled at the foot of the four-poster cherry bed. The multicolored braided rug provided a comfortable buffer from the cool speckled linoleum. Max was very much a part of this house. Long ago, the gray brown and white kitten had been found abandoned and had been brought home by her son, Ben, inside his football jacket. Of course Molly had never objected to keeping Max. After several months, little Max had delivered four of the prettiest kittens most people had ever seen. And thereafter—her name had been Maxine. However, the old lady had preferred to call her "Max"; it sounded independent and "don't get in my way." To her, the cat was a symbol, and maybe a little mystical.

Dawn drifted quietly through the margin of the ivory priscilla curtains; Max started to dream of breakfast, and weakened bladder muscles urged the old lady's eyes to open. In almost one continuous motion, Molly tossed back the quilt, reached for her spectacles, and located her slippers. There were fifteen steps to the bathroom; Max was at her feet, and she sat down and relaxed herself.

While she washed her face, hazel-green eyes stared at the aged image in the mirror. Though her cheeks were wrinkled, they still held some natural blush. With a steady hand, Molly neatly wrapped and pinned the long gray braid in a crown around her head. Beneath the flannel gown her breasts hung in sagging melon-size mounds, as if someone had partially let the air out of them. The useless brown-pink nipples seemed glued to the centers of the breasts for lack of a better location. She had rounded out after seven children, and her navel boasted a small pot belly. She dressed in a loose fitting gingham housedress, her starched white apron, and a navy cardigan sweater. Molly's aprons were her trademark, and she had worn one every day of her life since her ninth summer.

A chilling rush of February wind greeted Molly as she opened the heavy kitchen door to let Max outside. Although most cats toileted themselves in a litter box, Max had never understood its purpose. Max briefly braved the rough weather and returned to the cozy yellow kitchen with Molly. She filled Max's bowl with bits of cat food, sat in her gray tweed rocker, and waited for the teakettle to whistle.

Molly looked around the naked dining room and felt the void of a person on a deserted island. On the fading pink walls, haunting shadows of frames demanded her attention. The absent pictures of family smiles forced her to shut her eyes, and only the blue calico curtains made the room look lived in.

The welcome sound of the whistle signaled her oasis, and Molly poured herself a cup of tea. She tenderly stroked Max in an absentminded fashion. From her apron pocket she lifted her mother's gold locket. Through cloudy eyes, she studied the youthful faces of her parents. Their eyes were stern and their lips seemed tightly drawn. The photos were yellowed from age, and her father's picture had wrinkled from moisture. She had snatched it from the mouth of one of the children—it had been so long ago, she could not remember which one. Molly gently closed the locket and kissed the worn gold heart the way her mother had taught her to kiss the crucifix on Holy Thursday.

With the locket safe inside her pocket, Molly's thoughts moved to her lifelong friend, Mary Catherine. She had visited her last week in the hospital, and in the fogginess of strange surroundings, Mary Catherine had barely recognized Molly. Mary Catherine had reminded Molly of a weary plow horse entangled with a new harness. She sat tied to a vinyl, steel-framed chair with her hair strung into her lunch tray. There were plastic tubes weaving in and out of her tired frame.

More than five decades ago, Molly and Mary Catherine had immigrated to America from the same small village in Ireland. Molly had been violently seasick for ten days, and Mary Catherine had nursed her through the horrible journey. "There, there, Molly; hold my hand, lass... it will pass." Mary Catherine's words washed over Molly as if she had just spoken them.

Last week Molly's lips had offered few words of comfort to Mary Catherine. She had held her bruised, shriveled hand, and brushed her hair back from her face. "Mary Catherine, now won't you eat for me? It's Molly... Mary Catherine, surely you know it's me."

Mary Catherine's blank face and blue eyes had remained empty; she had refused to eat, and had called Molly by her mother's name. In that room, Mary Catherine was a nameless passenger on a ghost ship. Molly had suddenly felt like a mouse in a shoe box; she had sensed the old nausea in her gut, and had tasted the bitter salts in her throat.

Molly had helped the nurses put Mary Catherine to bed and gently rubbed her bony back with lotion until she fell asleep. With the sound of defeat in her voice, Molly had called Steven to pick her up at the hospital.

Steven was her fourth son and the only redhead of the clan. Steven and his wife, Elizabeth, had been insisting that Molly move in with them. They had predicted surprise illnesses and sudden falls if she continued to live alone. For many months she had argued with them. After all, could they promise her that she would not meet with a similar fate in their home? In the end, the redhead voice of youth had won the debate. Steven had inherited her Irish temper along with his hair color.

Her mind's eye searched for the flickering candle memory of the rolling highlands of her homeland. Her husband, Sam, had faithfully promised to take her back, but she had always known it was just another pipe dream. Passionately Sam had dreamed, and passionately she had loved him. Though he had been gone eleven years, occasionally she called his name—wondering—would he answer.

Molly put on the teakettle, the old records, and rocked to the rhythm of the Irish ballads. As the records turned, she remembered how the music had magically soothed her restless toddlers on rainy days. She could see their bright-colored hand puppets dance about on top of her treadle sewing machine. Faint echoes

Spring 1988, ICON
Checkmate

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of their laughter mingled with the notes of the ballads. From her palette had
sprouted the curly cinnamon rolls, starched Sunday shirts, frilly pink dresses,
and lush vegetable gardens. She had been the hub of it then—the core of this
universe they had made together.

Now, she had to be pruned from a world where she knew every blemish and
could recall every happiness. Steven and Elizabeth’s well-intentioned rules would
slowly smother her. She would rattle and ramble in their house—a dismembered
stranger. Befuddled morning feet might forget the number of steps to the bathroom.
She wondered if her eyes would fade into blank pools, staring into rooms empty
of her memory.

Already in the night meadows of her dreams, Molly had seen Steven and
Elizabeth leading her about, making her rest, and she knew her lot would be no
to be moved about by another’s will was still to be a pawn.

The dark hood upon her, she observed her own hands as if she were seeing
them for the first time. Bitter tasting yellow-powdered dots and Irish tea fell into
the abyss of a universe. She pulled on her thick blue coat, called for Max, and
together they walked through the north pasture deep into the woods. Behind them
the wind mournfully howled its protest and erased their footprints from the earth.

— Jeanne Bryner

The Long Way Around

A newly single mother—existing
On a diet of four soaps a day
And an all-she-could-eat
Daily special—sat dejectedly
Before the tube,
Pondering her past,
Wondering what her life
Would have been like had she
Gone on to college
Right after high school.

Then she considered her
Present: not too bad, really.
But there was little there to
Challenge her sleeping intellect.
And she loved her kids dearly,
Wanting something better for them,
Something better for herself . . .

Imagining her future, she asked
Herself: "Where is my life going?"
Being newly single, her spirit was
Broken, her self-confidence, gone.

It was time for the pity party
To end. Finally, fortunately,
She decided where her life could
Go by going back to school, and
She trusted herself enough to
Make it on her own, if need be,
And never to allow her fear of
Failure and her lethargy ever
To control her life again.

She realized circumstances can alter
One’s plans and hopes and dreams
(Or at least delay them for awhile).
No, she didn’t make a wrong turn
So long ago, in her early years.
Rather she chose, directly or
Indirectly, to take a path other
Than the usual one—the shortcut.

She discovered, after all, that
It is sometimes more worthwhile
To take the long way around in
Order to better appreciate the view.

— Leslie A. Sams
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— Leslie A. Sams
All Alone

I see a man all alone,
No one in his life.
I see a sad face on him—
What has caused such strife?
I see him sit apart from all,
A man who has no one.
I see the expression he wears tonight;
I wonder where it came from?
I see he says nothing at all,
For no one is there to hear.
I see he looks neither left nor right;
I wonder what he fears?
I see he stares down at the table,
But nothing is there to see.
I wonder what it would be like
If he were to look at me.

— Peggy Kozarich

An Appeal to Time

With sudden, maddening desperation,
he rises and breaks the hands off the clock.
Give me back those youthful years
when I had no respect for time.
Those squandered hours, I hear them
crying out in a precious tone.
Let me tread on time
with backward steps—
Keep the wisdom I've since gained
as I gather those seconds,
those minutes, those hours
and refill them meaningfully.
I've built up pleasures—
I've built up treasures—
Now on my knees, I beseech time.

— Diane Marie Victoria
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— Diane Marie Victoria
Paths Taken and Not Taken

Searching for direction
  Getting lost
  Retracing to go . . . Home

Starting again
  Finding a path, God
  Leading, guiding me . . . Home

Glistening with dew
  Seeing a spectrum of colors—
  So many to choose from,
  So many possibilities,
  Opportunities to find a . . . Home

Searching for life, love, the
  Pursuit of happiness, the
  Search for something, a . . . Home

A tangled web we weave
  Searching for a home
  Finding life and love and a . . . Home

— Deborah Lowman

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

What could I have been . . .
  Had I chosen to go some other way?
What things could I have made?
  Was there really any other way?
Where could I have gone?
  Should I have chosen to go some other way?
If only I had said something differently . . .
  Would there now be some other way?
If I had looked in order to truly see . . .
If I had listened in order to truly hear . . .
Would I now be more of the person I was really destined to be?
And even if I had . . .
Would I still not wonder?
  Was there really any other way?

— Paul Raptis

When Grandpa Died . . .

When Grandpa died
  And all his kin gathered 'round,
  Somehow I felt the odd one out.
  He was not MY grandfather.
  (Can one mourn by marriage only?)

So I did the dishes
  While the others shared the times they'd had with Grandpa;
  But I didn't know him when I was five,
  And I'm not a very good guesser.
  When it comes to what Grandpa looked like
  Sixty-some years ago.

But I loved him.
  I loved the way he always thought before he spoke,
  How he'd call Grandma "Ol' Sal" just to make her mad,
  How he always had time to talk
  And even more time to listen.

No, he wasn’t MY grandfather,
  But that will never ease the pain.
  He was (just?) my friend;
  I hope I was the same.

— Margaret Pinkerton

Eternal Flame

— Monica Woonter
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— Monica Woolston

Spring 1988, ICON
A ROAD NOT TAKEN

"If I don't see you before you leave," I called to Jim, "have a nice summer." How many times I'd waved to him, or stopped by his office for a chat on my way to class. He cared about his students, and we often discussed how cavalier many of them were about their writing abilities.

As the semester ended, the incident slipped my mind. Perhaps I, too, wished that I could go to the shores of Lake Michigan for the summer. I never told him so, and didn’t stop by as he busily stored away the handouts and lesson plans for Fall Semester. I was on my way home, and would have to hurry back for graduation ceremonies that evening.

As usual, everything went without a hitch; but afterward, we learned that Jim Walker had died unexpectedly that afternoon. We were shocked and saddened by the news, and it took a few minutes to compose ourselves and adjust to the shock. The evening events continued, but a different, more somber air surrounded us.

I'm glad to have known Jim, and to have had those occasional short conversations with him. But I'm really glad I stopped and spent those few minutes with him that day before he left for his last journey. It was a road not taken before.

— Eula Hyer

HOW SUBMISSIONS ARE SELECTED

Works to be considered for publication are submitted to Ms. Shively, ICON faculty advisor. She substitutes, in place of the submitter’s name, a number; thus only she knows the identity of the individual authors. Each staff member is then given a xeroxed copy of each submission to be considered for the current issue. After final selections are made, the staff’s copies are returned to Ms. Shively and destroyed, thereby prohibiting the circulation of unauthorized copies of anyone’s works. The final step in the selection of material is the staff selection meeting, when the ICON staff in its entirety meets to discuss and vote upon the final selections for publication. This choice is the sole decision of the student staff. Only after the final selections have been made does the advisor reveal the identity of those individuals whose works have been chosen.

The art submissions are given a number, and at the staff selection meeting, each member rates them accordingly. The scores are then averaged and the highest rated pieces of artwork are accepted for publication.

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Tiamat

— Mary Brizzi
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Contributor’s Notes . . .

MARY T. BRIZZI, Associate Professor of English at KSUTC, has had fiction, non-fiction, and poetry published and a play produced. This is the first time she has had artwork published and calls her composition “photocopy art” . . .

JEANNE BRYNER’s work has appeared in several past ICONs. She is a Sophomore English major who “wishes right-brained people could rule the world, or at least make left-brained people listen to reason” . . . LOIS J. CLINE says she’s “reached the state of mind where she realizes the ‘roads taken’ are pretty good and that ‘the roads not taken’ probably wouldn’t have been any better.” She has had work published in several past ICONs, holds an Office Management Associate Degree, and is now working towards an Accounting Degree.

ELIZABETH DOHAR’s work appeared in the last issue of ICON. She is a freelance writer for the Catholic Exponent and is a Hiram ’82 Sociology graduate . . . HELEN J. HOLLIDAY, a Freshman Criminal Justice Major, is very active in community groups such as the Vietnam Veterans Association and the American Red Cross Disaster Action Team. One of her primary goals is to aid and educate women on their legal right to stop domestic violence. We welcome her first appearance in ICON . . .

ELIZABETH HOOBLER, Assistant Professor of English at KSUTC, has been ICON’s adviser for numerous issues. She is on sabbatical this semester; her cheerful presence is missed by ICON staff members. However, we welcome another excellent piece of her work into this issue of ICON.

EULA HYER is a Reading/Study Skills and English instructor at KSUTC and is Acting Coordinator of the Skill Center. She has had work published in previous ICONs . . .

M. E. JOSEPH’s work is appearing for the first time in ICON. He is a Sophomore English Major . . .

WANDA KOVER’s art has appeared in several past ICONs. She says her hobbies include paint fights, hunny monitoring, bumper bumping, and polishing moth balls. This Sophomore wants to remind a certain General Studies student that “she can never be right because she has two left brains” . . .

PEGGY KOZARICH is a Junior English Major in the College of Education. This marks her second appearance in ICON.

DEBORAH LOWMAN, a Senior General Studies Major, is a first-time ICON contributor. She believes that writing is an outlet too few people appreciate and enjoy. She enjoys “reading, writing, and harassing a certain local artist who is only half-witted and half-right most of the time” . . .

MARGARET PINKERTON’s poetry has appeared in several past ICONs. She was ICON Editor for the last issue and is currently working towards her second Associate Degree . . .

PAUL R. RAPITIS, an Rhetoric and Communications Major, says he loves challenge, setting goals for himself and attaining them! He likes being creative and enjoys discovering new people, places, and things. We welcome his first appearance in ICON.

MARLA RICHARDS is a Junior Journalism Major who is a correspondent for The Tribune and is currently editor of KSUTC’s News Leader. Although this busy mother of four is working towards her four-year degree, she is getting a General Studies Associate Degree this year. She has had poetry and photography published in several past ICONs . . .

BRIAN ADRIAN RITZ, a Senior English Major at YSU, has had work appear in several issues of YSU’s Penguin Review. He studies creative writing, is assistant speech coach for Warren J.F.K. High School, and has performed for the Youngstown Playhouse. This marks his first ICON appearance . . .

LESLIE A. SAMS, formerly Leslie Fisher, is an '87 Office Technology Graduate who is currently a General Studies Major so that she can immerse herself in a wide variety of mind-opening liberal arts courses. This newlywed mother of two thinks humor is the greatest quality one can have and wishes KSU offered an upper division course in puns. Her work has appeared in several past ICONs.

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NANCY K. STILLWAGON, KSUTC’s Assistant Professor of Art, has had art published in catalogues of group exhibits in Cleveland and Akron since 1974. We welcome her first ICON appearance . . .

JUDITH TERLECKI’s work has appeared in several publications in addition to ICON and was formerly an art student at YSU. She is married to a Youngstown city school teacher, has five children and a “big, ole dog,” and loves reading, music, art, and writing.

JOHN E. THORN, a Sophomore Art Education Major, has work appearing in ICON for the first time. He is a “fun loving person” and a soon-to-be-father who “is always running at full throttle” . . .

DIANE MARIE VICTORIA’s work has been published in several past ICONs, as well as in other publications. She is a Sophomore Journalism Major who says she is “an eccentric” who would probably choose death over conformity . . .

MONICA WOOFER’s art has appeared in many past ICONs. She is a Freshman Graphic Arts Major who also enjoys writing poetry.
Contributor’s Notes . . .

MARY T. BRIZZI, Associate Professor of English at KSUTC, has had fiction, non-fiction, and poetry published and a play produced. This is the first time she has had artwork published and calls her composition “photocopy art”. . .

JEANNE BRYNER's work has appeared in several past ICONs. She is a Sophomore English major who “wishes right-brained people could rule the world, or at least make left-brained people listen to reason”. . . LOIS J. CLINE says she's “reached the state of mind where she realizes the 'roads taken' are pretty good and that 'the roads not taken' probably wouldn’t have been any better.” She has had work published in several past ICONs, holds an Office Management Associate Degree, and is now working towards an Accounting Degree.

ELIZABETH DOHAR's work appeared in the last issue of ICON. She is a freelance writer for the Catholic Exponent and is a Hiram '82 Sociology graduate . . . HELEN J. HOLLIDAY, a Freshman Criminal Justice Major, is very active in community groups such as the Vietnam Veterans Association and the American Red Cross Disaster Action Team. One of her primary goals is to aid and educate women on their legal right to stop domestic violence. We welcome her first appearance in ICON . . . ELIZABETH HOOBLER, Assistant Professor of English at KSUTC, has been ICON’s adviser for numerous issues. She is on sabbatical this semester; her cheerful presence is missed by ICON staff members. However, we welcome another excellent piece of her work into this issue of ICON.

EULA HYER is a Reading/Study Skills and English instructor at KSUTC and is Acting Coordinator of the Skill Center. She has had work published in previous ICONs . . . M. E. JOSEPH’S work is appearing for the first time in ICON. He is a Sophomore English Major . . . WANDA KOVER’s art has appeared in several past ICONs. She says her hobbies include paint fights, hunny monitoring, bumper bumping, and polishing moth balls. This Sophomore wants to remind a certain General Studies student that “she can never be right because she has two left brains”. . . PEGGY KOSARICH is a Junior English Major in the College of Education. This marks her second appearance in ICON.

DEBORAH LOWMAN, a Senior General Studies Major, is a first-time ICON contributor. She believes that writing is an outlet too few people appreciate and enjoy. She enjoys “reading, writing, and harassing a certain local artist who is only half-witted and half-right most of the time”. . . MARGARET PINKERTON’s poetry has appeared in several past ICONs. She was ICON Editor for the last issue and is currently working towards her second Associate Degree . . . PAUL R. RAPITIS, an Rhetoric and Communications Major, says he loves challenge, setting goals for himself and attaining them! He likes being creative and enjoys discovering new people, places, and things. We welcome his first appearance in ICON.

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