To Chaucer:

upon an hyl of flouris

upon septure branchis
every bryd comyth swete melodie to make
before the noble goddess Nature;
that someris sunne shene, and eyr, and lake
and erthe, and euerych space of mesure
withinne the myghte temple wonderfull
it happede me for to beholde and telle ful.
This issue of the ICON is gathered and made in honour of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, and Dr. Mary T. Brizzi, his handmaiden.
This issue of the ICON is gathered and made in honour of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, and his handmaiden, Mary T. Britzi.
GEOFFREY CHAUCER  
(ca. 1343-1400)

The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but 'tis like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was [suitable to the ears of the time]: they who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical...

— John Dryden, 1700

Chaucer's name means "shoemaker," but he is the first great English poet. The son of a well-to-do wine merchant, he was one of the few exceptional members of the middle class to bridge the theoretically unbridgeable gap between the commoners and the aristocracy. He spent most of his life in close association with King Edward; his nephews, Richard II and Henry IV; and especially Henry's father, John of Gaunt. From birth to death, he dealt with all sorts of people, the highest and the lowest, and made the most of this opportunity.

In his Canterbury Tales, he presents this spectrum of characters, each according to his education, calling, age, and breeding. The pilgrims of the Canterbury Tales represent all of the vice, virtue, ribaldry, gravity, lewdness, and learning that existed in the population of 14th-century England; and their tales are a treasury of medieval literary genres. Romances, exempla, fabliaux, pious tales, and moral treatises are all included, embroidered with the lore, rhetoric, philosophy, and colloquialisms of the period, told by archetypical figures.

Chaucer stands apart from the mainstream of English literature. He makes fun of popular Middle English romances and often borders on burlesquing the moral treatises. He appears to be a man who had no illusions about his world and its inhabitants, but was nevertheless deeply fond of them both.
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world and its inhabitants, but was nevertheless deeply fond of them both.
ON A STROLL THROUGH THE BRITISH MUSEUM

I walked through time this day.
Images.
Images of centuries,
Blurred, fragmented;
Yet somehow alive.

The faces of women and men
gazing into eternity.
Did they once laugh?
Did they once cry?

For the moment I knew
that this age, too, will pass
and that we here will be
but mere images of time.

London
June 27, 1982

- John Allensworth

VICTORIA/WESTMINSTER: 1902

....And in those were the days of Colors Allbright,
where your turning over in bed and the sound of rustling covers
was muted beige and dusty pink in the rosemorning.

....the Breeze caressing the curtains was yellow,
as old wedding dresses and faded white roses.

....And the room was Victrola/old,
and gramophone static,
dripping down slowly in the candlewax evening.

....the procelain pitcher in its washbasin,
greenivyrose wound, candleflickered off the quiet night.

Simple pretty words together,
made a poem
....in those were the days of Colors Allbright.

- Jenny Blazek
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- Jenny Blazek
SPECTRUM

Color my world with
purple and haze,
subleties painted with
lilacs and greys;
concertos, cantatas and deft
arabesques;
white unlined paper on
black-lacquered desks.

Color my world with
pinks, mauves and greens,
ladder-back chains and
windows and streams;
pottery, poetry, velvet
and lace;
an end to disorder, each thing
in its place.

Color my world with
fragrance of flowers,
smiles and agreements and
laughter by hours.
With anger that’s muted and
hatred that’s tarnished
and all that is spoken is
truth that’s unvarnished.

Color my world with
gentle-toned hues
like salmon and ivory
and sea-salty blues;
with gypsy-like wandering
and fan-flung ideals
like saving the whale
and Alaska-bound seals.

Color my world with
colors so clear
that every thing sparkles and
hovers so near
to the surface reality
bathed in clean light
that will tell me, at last,
my world is all right.

- Pearl B. Segall
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"I have seen great things," said the old man. "Greater things than you can ever dream!"

"But I," said the lad, "have seen visions of even greater things that are yet to be!"

"Ah," said the oldster, "dreams are not flesh and blood. Your mind is young and keen my son, but of life you know little."

"Be it flesh or phantom," cried the younger, "I know what I have seen, and I know in my heart that one day I shall possess it, for I have only to stretch forth my hand to grasp the dream!"

in exasperation, the old man turned away from his mirror.

- Joseph Michael Dudley

ANOTHER HUNDRED LIVES

I feel that I have lived a hundred lives, yet I am only twenty-nine.

Every memory seems to flow from a different place and time.

My thoughts keep weaving in and out through faces from the past,

And ties I thought would never break just haven’t seemed to last.

For who I was at eight, I wasn’t at eighteen,

And who I was at twenty seems a strange and distant dream.

Sometimes a hand would seek mine and I’d no longer walk alone,

But when I’d want to run ahead I’d look back, and they were gone.

And though I long for friendship that would last for many years,

and though I seek the comfort from the shedding of shared tears,

I cannot stop my dreams from running on ahead,

I’ll live another hundred lives before I’m finally dead.

- Karen Derico
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- Karen Derico
THINKING OF YOU

After you leave
I do what must be done
And walk down
To the creek.

Two young girls
Catch minnows by the shore
While their mothers
Lying on the bank
Talk of how much more
They plan to do.

A bluejay screeches his challenge
From the blossoming buds of leaves
On a limb dipping down
To golden sparkles on
The swiftly moving stream.

Slowly,
Oh, so slowly,
Spaces you left empty
Fill.

- Mary Ann Lowry

NIGHT WIND

I thought I glimpsed her in the moon shadow
Tossing the silky curtain aside
Gilding her fingers through your damp hair
Climbing beneath the musk
Moist sheets
You cast them away
In the sticky heat
Muscles rippling, glistening
Sweat creeping down your temple
Stirring, she slid across your thigh
Running moist hands against fiery skin
Your dream eyes wandered
She sang with the willow
Squeaking against the shutter
And you rolled
As she licked the drop from your cheek
Twisting against your hot skin
One hand reaching, you sighed
She whispered in the darkness
Caught hold of the window ledge
And slid silently into the night.

- Susan U. Linville
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TAROT
(dedicated to Mitherian, the Wandering Wizard)

...He casually flipped Happiness into my lap one night, discarded it as he would an irrelevant thought, an intrusion of cosmic static, a woman.

...I picked up Happiness from my lap, and warmly held it in my hand, in my heart, to the Light, and discovered, I didn’t understand it at all.

- Jendriska

Adversity is what makes you mature...
The growing soul is watered best by tears of sadness.

- Bonnie L. Metzendorf
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THE POET
Collector of images,
Creator of schemes.
Banker, of sorts,
depositing dreams.
Framer of pictures
imbedded in minds;
Gatherer of courage of
varying kinds.
Scaler of mountains,
Climber of peaks;
whispering things of which
no one else speaks.
Grasper of facts,
concluding in tandem
the small tidbits garnered
and reached for, at random.
Trader of feelings,
Convincer of notions;
Translator attuned to
deciphering emotions.
Chooser of format,
Selector of sections
of history chosen for
new resurrections.
At all times, a Seeker
of finely-formed phrases,
expounding at length
in spurs and in phases.
A Blender of sounds,
A Discoverer of treasure... 
...all for your reading
delight
and your pleasure!

-Pearl B. Segall

POEM: DEFINITION OF
Passionate passages penned on paper by
Prestigious poets for posterity to ponder.

-Linda V. Gessner

AT THE CARLOS QUINTO
At the Carlos Quinto
tea is served only by order of the maitre d'
and the two gigglegirls who cofunction as something else
afterhours.
At the Carlos Quinto
only bribes and sweet talk
gets you te caliente unless you bring your own bag.
They lock it up like jewelry in the cupboard
after refusing you dinner
or anything for the weary bones.
So at night
Mama plot-plots silent as a lizard
down the back stairs to the kitchen
to find out where they lock those damn bags.
There is a cat (black--honest!) that weaves in and out her legs
making balance difficult in the pantry
of the Carlos Quinto.
And just when she's put her hand to the lock
of the cupboard where the holy teabags dwell
the cat turns into a big warty toad
and JUMPS at her heart
out of tropical darks.

-Mary T. Brizzi
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- Mary T. Brizzi
BIAFRAN SOLSTICE

I lie alone.

The vibrant sounds
of a tropical evening
come pounding through my window,

Distant music filtered
through an African jungle,
Rhythmic syncopation
of distant drums,
A euphony of singing insects,
A lone, melancholy call
of a tree frog.
Was this not a part of my past
somewhere on a Panamanian savanna?

The year is at its zenith.
Am I not also?
My life has come full circle this night,
Memories rushing headlong toward me
as I grasp at the scenes of my past.

A fantasy of childhood,
A dear friend of my youth.
For a moment she was here
And then was lost somewhere
in a southwestern desert.

I lie alone.

Nsukka, Nigeria
June 19, 1982

-John Allensworth
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THE ORB'S SONG OF SEVEN — Jefferson R. Weekley
"UNDERGROWTH WITH TWO FIGURES"
(after a painting by Van Gogh in the Cincinnati Art Museum)

I didn’t get to see you disappear into the wilderness, and I’m sure the guard couldn’t have noticed because guards don’t pay attention to people in trances in their museums.

Actually, I’d been wandering about in the Flemish bunch, tasting the absurd blue that comes only because lowlands grey does what it does to skaters on their iced-over canals.

So when you returned, I wasn’t ready for the deep-woods green that snared your Pacific-blue eyes and drew your body out of Cincinnati to join those two folks in France.

But it didn’t matter: we could play with the surface, recall your state, how that right corner captured you with its pointillist splatters that made telling sky from grass a task.

I, though, went for the left quarter, that river of path, the leaves that flowed like grass, like water past those two who seemed to hide in the aisle of trees, imprisoned and safe.

Perhaps it was then that we saw, perhaps at the same moment, the center, that line not sketched between the tree that slid from top to bottom, and the two people barely there.

What took the stage, then? Not the sky, not the tree; was it the color itself, the green, or that man in black to the left of the woman in white, that pair who could be us?

- Eric Horsting

The ICON would like to congratulate Eric Horsting on winning the Hart Crane Memorial Poetry Award. This award and the High School Poetry Contest are co-ordinated through the efforts of Professor Mary Ann Lowry.
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AN ODE TO THE GUINEA HEN

Guinea hen,
Guani hain,
Barking in my pear tree.
Meowing and muttering,
Old lady gossip,
in feather-fur coats,
and red dangly earrings.

- Jenny Blazek

CHICKEN SOUP

Egg
Warm fertile
hatching Mama's darling
feathering eating crowing crowing
suspicion running squawking
falling ax
soup

- Gloria Alden

SNOW ANGELS

Snow angels
Fox and geese
Wet towels
Sun tanned face.

Secret spots
Too much dirt
Wet kisses
The little flirt.

So much love
Given free
Hold on tight
Time will flee.

- Carol E. Farnum
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- Carol E. Farnum
My Master's touch is nothing like my own,
His househusbandry is lacking in finesse,
As his wont to lend a hand in our home
Can create, in the end, a sorry mess.
Laundry is dried, fluffed, and folded,
And then piled in small stacks about the house,
Dressers, chairs, couches—all decorated
With the washing done last week by my spouse.
Would he join me one day in the kitchen,
And perchance he could tell me, if he knows,
Is it under the spell of some magician?
Why the pots here are where the pitchers go.
Alas! My mate's domestic vocation
Is my pale and bloodless emulation.

- Michelle Griffiths

SATISFACTION

It's the feeling of accomplishment
after your job's well done.
It's the smile that crinkles up your eyes
when the game you found you've won.
It's the warm and happy solitude
you have the chance to savor
After you have taken time
to do a friend a favor.
It's that wild exhilaration
that sets your heart afire
When you've gone that one step further
and reached a little higher.
And when you've just been double-crossed,
it's the certainty of believin'
That come rain or shine, you'll find a way
to strike back and get even!

- Pearl B. Segall
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-Pearl B. Segall
MORNING

Just another few moments, please
under these covers
buried womblike
safe from the problems of the day.

Not for me leaping
from the bed
to do morning exercises;
bend and stretch, it's just not my way.

Nor is singing in the shower
at the top of my lungs,
off key,
like a love sick donkey's bray.

No, let me instead shuffle to
the kitchen with
just one eye open,
my hair in wild disarray.

Let me have that first
steaming cup of coffee
while still half asleep
in total silence, please, I pray.

Or better yet just let me
crawl back under
the warm covers
and just forget all about today.

- Gloria Alden

GIRL TALK

Pouring more wine, twirling hair
Tinged with grey, we meet again
To share
Sympathy and laughter,
Regrets and triumphs,
Women's lib and recipes,
Hopeless hopes and
Household hints.
Talking it all out.
It's good for the soul;
Essential for the sanity.

- Barbara L. Schmidt
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- Barbara L. Schmidt
I'D NEVER HEARD HIM CRY

My twelfth summer I was shipped off to help an older sister who kept foster children. That was how I met Ray, a solemn, blond, blue-eyed child of four. His hand was held tightly by an overly optimistic social worker. He tolerated her optimism with a timid dignity gained from living a lifetime within a short season. As he settled into our household, he ignored me completely; I was merely the sister of his latest foster mother. One day, though, while I read to him, he began to open up, talking softly about four-year-old things. Another day I put on a record and taught him how to dance. Dancing really meant swinging him up, down, and around. He didn't smile, he simply said, "Do it again." When I did, he finally smiled. From then on he was always with me. I didn't mind; we enjoyed each other's company, and a quiet understanding grew between us.

A few weeks later it was time for me to return to my parents. My sister and brother-in-law decided to make the drive home and stay for a visit. Ray enjoyed the visit with my family. Most of all he enjoyed our walks through fields spotted with daisies, buttercups, Queen Anne's lace, and Indian paintbrushes. At times he would still want to dance, which now meant swinging him around and around until the fields turned for us. It was the only time I ever heard him laugh. Other times he would just want to be held, and as I held him a silent communication flowed between us, a sharing of sorrows or contentment.

On one of our walks we were caught in a storm. The wind picked up, and the sky grew very dark. Far off we could see lightning flash. We climbed to the top of a small hill and faced directly into the thundering storm. We were an unlikely pair, an awkward, buck-toothed adolescent and a solemn-eyed cherub; yet we were in complete sympathy. Our own kind of electricity was raging through our souls; chills ran up and down our spines, and the wind whipped our hair. For one brief moment we stared Mother Nature in the eye. I remember glancing down at him; his blue eyes danced and a curious half smile touched his lips. I wondered how such a child could be unwanted. Then the first raindrops hit our faces, and we ran like crazy for home.

Shortly after that it was time for my sister to return home. The luggage was all packed, and Ray had said his good-bye. It was a long hug, no more, no less. Then after a piercing look with those solemn eyes, he turned and walked outdoors. I left the house to see him already settled in the back seat. His bleak blue eyes peered out the car's back window, and one hand, half closed, pressed against the window pane in a silent farewell. Then with tears in my own eyes I realized--I'd never heard him cry.

I watched the car till it was out of sight.
I never saw him again.

-Karen Derico
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- Karen Derico
A SONG FOR TAMMY

And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
At first, it was as if I were in a dream...  
having seen only fifteen summers,  
Could you possibly be mine?  
My very own tiny daughter?

And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
You are all-consuming of my days,  
I have lost my oneness...  
In the mirror I see only "Your Mother."

And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
They are full of advice about you:  
what kind of diaper ointment, when to take  
away your bottle, how long I should let you cry.  
They have forgotten me...  
How quiet are my tears...falling softly  
as I fold another load of diapers.

I heard Prom was last week...  
And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
What is it you are reaching for?  
Blue eyes study my face intently.  
A grin on your cherub face,  
three teeth peeking out.  
Shall I guide you through this crazy world?

I don’t even have my driver’s license.  
And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
When the questions of your parentage arise...  
Will you hate me?  
Will you curse me for an act of adolescence  
which produced beautiful you?  
Or will my ignorance be pardonable?

"All I did was love someone; can that be so terrible?"

And your tiny arms are always reaching.  
In the deepest depth of my soul,  
I wish I were--older, educated, ready.  
For those all-encompassing arms of yours.  
My arms are reaching too...  
though they now hang limp at my side.  
I thought I would soar...to the moon.  
They said, "The best years of your life."

Come, little one, it’s time for your nap,  
Give me a hug with those tiny arms...  
and a kiss for luck.

- Jeanne Bryner
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- Jeanne Bryner
MOM

Mom, I never meant to hurt you. I was rebelling against the world, You just got in the way.

Have I ever told you, How much love I have for you, Pride I've felt for you, Respect you have earned.

No, I guess I never mentioned it.

I was too busy complaining, or bragging, or borrowing.

But Mom, You are such an easy mark, So anxious to praise, to defend, to encourage.

And Mom, Just because I wrote this for you, Don't expect any big changes.

I'll still complain. . . Because you always defend and encourage. I'll still brag. . . Because you are always the first to praise. I'll still borrow. . . Because you always have what I just ran out of.

I just wanted you to know.

You are the best!

- Lynn Kalan

THE SPECIAL CHILD

The special child, whose legs are not so strong, loving hands lead and guide along an unsure path, helping the child as one step leads to another.

The special child, whose speech is not so clear, a quiet voice repeats a sound until the child can speak a word.

The special child, whose life will one day bloom, a miracle of rebirth because the loving hands and the quiet voice took time to care.

The special child, will have a chance to know a secret joy in trying, working with courage to reach a goal.

The special child, his life will find meaning, because with loving help one step led to another and the words became a sentence.

Dedicated to the Children's Rehabilitation Center's loving hands.

- Betty Hall
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- Betty Hall
A LAST PROMISE

When I was a child, they were always there. Aunt Carrie, with her gray hair and work-worn hands, had replaced the mother who died when I was only eleven months old. Uncle George, the “English Gentleman,” who always wore a pocket watch and a vest, took the place of the father I’ve seen only a few times.

In a world where promises are taken lightly by a lot of people I’ve met, it is reassuring to look back and remember my great-aunt and uncle and the times we had together. One summer Sunday afternoon stands out in my mind; I must have been eight years old.

As soon as school would let out, I’d be asking Uncle George when he would take us to Craigs Beach, an old rundown amusement park with gypsy fortune tellers, a penny arcade, and an antique merry-go-round. I loved to eat cotton candy and watch the red tilt-a-whirl--its red baskets looking for all the world like giant cherry coaches as they danced by all the excited children who were waiting for a ride.

Uncle George’s black 1938 Oldsmobile was polished and so shiny I felt that I was riding in a limousine. The tires made a humming sound, the way they always did whenever the car would go over the brick road that led across the bridge and out into the country. The air smelled fresh as the sun shone down on the Queen Anne’s lace, making the meadows look as though they were dressed for Sunday too.

Upon arriving at Craigs Beach, Uncle George pulled the car over to the side of the road and parked underneath a tree not too far from the flying planes. We kissed him goodbye and headed toward the amusement park. Strains of the ball game could be heard drifting from our car.

Aunt Carrie took my hand and together we walked along the midway. She walked slowly, her black heels clicking across the concrete. She wore very little make-up, except for a little bit of rouge, and her small cupid’s bow mouth would break into a smile as she watched me eat my cotton candy and eye the rides with the anticipation only a child knows. She stood by the merry-go-round and waved as I rode by on a pretty white horse. The merry-go-round was only a preliminary; I had saved the best for last.

The flying planes looked like an out-of-shape airplane with a sail you could steer to make the plane curve or go straight. Sometimes, if you were lucky, you could touch the leaves of one of the shade trees with the tip of your sail.

I liked the flying planes better than any ride in the park, and I felt better than a genie riding on a magic carpet as I sailed past the treetops. I could see Uncle George sitting in the car with one door open, his feet resting on the running board as he continued listening to the ball game. After the ride was over we bought some popcorn for my uncle, who promised to eat it later; it was time to go home.

Craigs Beach was the last place the three of us went together. Three weeks later Uncle George died of cancer--a disease I never knew he had. That day lives on in my memory; I guess it always will. He had promised to take us to Craigs Beach the first nice Sunday that summer.

Uncle George never broke a promise.

- Sandra Percy
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Works to be considered for publication are submitted to Mrs. Hoobler, 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 Mrs. Hoobler 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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PSALM 1 LIKE A TREE  — Jefferson R. Weekley