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To Betsy,

without whom, naught.
To Betsy,  
without whom, naught.
Words

John Downing

There are words
Which I believe are true,
And I have set them down.
They praise your beauty and your grace,
They call attention to your charms;
They are true words,
And I know they are good
Because I believe them.
Still--there are words I cannot say
That would carve for you the statue of my love;
And though I do not know them,
I believe them too--
They are truer than the others:
For beauty has a climax,
Love is but a dream;
And grace can die.
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And grace can die.
QUIETLY

Barbara Savage

I'm sitting here comfortably
Being nourished mentally
By Mozart musically
By words poetically
And by stomach with hot tea
Wondering wonders that are many
Like what do you ever see in me
Who is so dumb and is the epitome
Of all the synonyms to the word "ugly"
And what causes you to kiss passionately
And to hug very tightly
And to whisper words of endearment silently?

ELECTRIC BLANKET

Michelle Grifiths

The ultimate example of modern man's technological capabilities:
Soft,
Snug,
Sumptuous,
Self-indulgent,
Cozy,
Cuddly,
Comforting,
Luxurious,
Inviting,
Extravagant,
and
Solid State.

Three Cheers

Harriet Cerbus

A toast for the meals that never got there.
A toast to the never-found clean underwear.
Three cheers for the socks that never got mated.
Neither did you, but you seldom debated.
To dust on the tables, and junk in the drawers,
Dishes all cluttered, and dirt on the floors.
To my unsung husband, he'll give a big cheer
When his dear wife gets out of college next year.
But hang in there, love, don't celebrate yet—
I'm running for President first chance I get.
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Morningsstar

Inherited Factors

white genes
black genes
blue jeans

Mark Kinter

she is my mentor
before i was hers
the student has excelled
the teacher stagnant
i now must be led
by one i used to lead

A May/December Affair
Sarah Rider

Spring and winter aren't compatible they say
To be joined together in such a way
Where differences are as night and day
And idols with wings have feet of clay.

But the dawn is only a prelude to night
Where contrasts fade to those with insight
When idle chatter is seen as only trite
And what was thought wrong, now is right.

you don't want me
Barbara Savage

Sometimes I get almost desperately depressed,
Feeling as blue as indigo can be,
Wishing I were alluring, pretty and seductive
Instead of just a Femme Fatale-ity.

Kites
Mark Kinter

i think of us as a kite
starting very low
then rising to great heights
just like the kite
we are affected by the air around us
a kite will not fly without a breeze
our relationship will not rise
without love and trust
a kite cannot fly alone
it needs help
it takes two
it is the same with you and me
the string is its life line
feelings and emotions are ours
there is one difference
between us and that kite
it may only venture out on fair days
while we can brave
all types of weather
Morningstar

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A Place In Time

Patricia Smith

Infinitesimal as it seemed,
The mother sat with her children:
One, two, three,
Teaching and instructing them why to obey,
Their behavior was quite forward,
But the mother kept a calm attitude
As she reprimanded them with the back of her hand instead of threatening words.

Infinitesimal as it seemed,
The meagerly gentlemen regarded their change:
One, two, three,
After they had gobbled
The piece of pastry
That was pecan doubled
And very tasty.

Infinitesimal as it seemed,
The bank opened at nine and in went:
One, two, three,
Executives who upon opening the morning mail
Found to their expectancy
The sum of money
To fill each of their account’s vacancy.

Infinitesimal as it seemed,
The town clock rang:
One, two, three,
As two elderly gentlemen
Met once again
To reminisce the scenes
That once had been.

Intermingled smell and sight: an array of fresh-picked, colorful flowers,
Dirty subway stations,
Flatulent, smokey haze—a Havana at that,
Shrivelying sage in the hot afternoon sun,
Purposeful, depending upon one’s perception of Life.
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Quicksilver

Gregory Wayne Burkett

Elusive as quicksilver
My nature it goes,
And it’s a demon
I’m chasing when
Surely it shows;
To keep it
From spilling
Is a very neat trick;
It’s like grasping
At air when nothing exists.

Virginia Woolf

John Tamplin

Life complicates itself with
Knots, twists and trepidations
Which are ours to untie
And to straighten and to bear.

If we can, we are said to
Be clever. If we can’t,
No matter how much Genius,
We are said to be mad.

The world stands as judge,
Meting out madness and cleverness
As it weighs the knots and
Twists and their complexities.

And so the Goat was not
Clever, nor the world just.
The knot was too tight
And Virginia had genius.

From Now Until Then

Morningstar

All I need is time.
How much?
Oh, from now until then
To do everything
I need to do--
And want to do.

Time to make the night longer
If I want to hold you,
And watch you sleep a while
longer, if I want to--
From now until then.

The sky is so pretty
With clouds floating by--
Stay—rest for a time.
What was that you said?
From now until then
Just can’t be defined.

“Hurry up,” you said?
“Hurry! There’s no time.”
There could be--
There would be--
In days from now until then.

How readily I share
Other spaces
For what needs to be done;
But specialties I keep
From now until then--

If only you could see,
To hurry, there’s no need,
For time is what you
Want it to be--
From now until then.
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VILLANELLE

*Kirk Kupensky*

Sitting by the fire all alone
An image appears in my memory
Sparked by the scent of French cologne

My love, with impunity had grown
Resplendently, like the most verdant tree
Sitting by the fire all alone

Always, in the most fertile soil known
In my mind, the tree shall remain to be
Sparked by the scent of French cologne

Long ago the seed was sown
I remember its predestination to grow free
Sitting by the fire all alone

Through its branches a warm wind had blown
Its faint, fresh odor comes to me
Sparked by the scent of French cologne

And you, the anxious bird that had flown... I recollect that urge you had to flee
Sitting by the fire all alone
Sparked by the scent of French cologne

*Rex Brost*

Autumn is a season of glorious beauty.

When corn undergoes a shocking experience.
And leaves become better acquainted with their roots.

When Indian Summer barter and trades the days and nights with Jack Frost.

And chrysanthemums add a garnish of beauty to the season which so aptly displays the passing of time.

An Autumn Silhouette
Especially for Carmen

*Kathy Santone*

Ethereal clouds loll across the gray autumn sky and gently settle about crimson and gold-tipped trees.

A stray pair of dapple-gray geese glide southward. Wings stretched and tilted, one slightly higher and ahead of the other—nestling and cackling they traverse the heavens.

November

*John Downing*

A bird must light upon a limb —
Does it lean upwards in the night
And then follow the moon with prayer for Spring?

Come with me tonight when the wild November wind creeps on every little stream and screams till they are blue and stiff with fear.

We'll climb the hill—and lift the pasture gate and cross the field to stand beneath a pine.
At ten the call will come, lonely and clear, drifting through a gap where two hills meet.

The whistle of a train—loneliest of sounds, running lightly over the blue snow:
Breathe in the frosty air, blow it blue.
Peek in every silver shadow.
I'll kiss you once and race you home...

The November moon smiles a little...
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Peek in every silver shadow.
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The November moon smiles a little...
Morningstar

From the separateness of one on one grew a couple I knew.

Now today, under cloud of gray,
Silently I stare vaguely recognizing you; segregation of two.

Revelations

Sarah Rider

The love hidden in your eyes Is but a reflection of what I feel Of feelings not quite expressed Of emotions yet to be revealed.

The secrets that we keep Are our barriers from pain From rejection felt so long ago From memories remembered again.

The closeness that we share May some day be enough For bringing the past to light For learning once more to trust.

Déjàvu

Kathy Santone

For a moment, I had forgotten that you were dead—it gave me a strange chill— I sat and waited for your tread upon the stairs— white hair—smile— and “Hello.” Déjàvu! And the red geraniums are still beautiful.
Morningstar

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Window  
*Sharla Bodary*

David’s seeing, David’s touching  
Shadow Babies on the glass,  
On the window’s dusk-dark surface,  
Shadow Babies on the glass.

Two there are, that move together,  
Dark, from far they seem so clear;  
Dissipate when you draw closer,  
Fade away when you crawl near.

David’s seeing, touching, kissing  
Shadow Babies, barely seen,  
Cold upon the smooth, hard surface,  
Caught within the window’s sheen.

---

Cooking up the Image  
*Mary Brizzi*

words words messes of pottage  
the image is not there, the idea  
is not there on the page  
Betsy raise up, priestess, image  
out of the page, like a crystal  
goblet full of the sacrament  
together they are quite happy  
cooking up in the class there  
cooking up their own images out  
of the page words words words  
they are present and clucking  
pleasantly like little cooks at  
the sacrament, as Betsy raises  
the crystal goblet full of image  
like a childbirth out of the words  
out of the page, the image, they are  
glad they are entirely glad.

---

Of Robert’s Jeans

There in denim my Robert goes,  
As I wonder and he shows—  
How to walk in those skin-tight clothes.

And as he walks away, I can see  
the devilish body that befuddles me,  
Oh! Robert tell me—how can you breathe?

This is a parody of the poem *Upon Julia’s Clothes* by Robert Herrick.
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BOXES

*Kelly Woods*

Carton full of keepsakes
Tucked beneath my bed
Box full of memories
Reflect the life I've led

Photographs and ribbons
Certificates and such
Ticket stubs and programs
All that mean so much

Cards and invitations
Keys to things I've lost
Poems and verses I have written
Into the box are tossed

Carton full of keepsakes
Someday I'm sure we'll part
But the fondest of all my memories
Are safe within my heart

---

The ICON would like to congratulate *Kelly Woods* on winning the High School Poetry Contest. This contest is co-ordinated through the efforts of Professor Mary Ann Lowry.

---

*Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird*

*Shelley Popa*

Thirteen ways of seeing blackbirds
None to me are clear.
In this fourteenth way, excuse me,
If a Mockingbird you hear.

*Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird*

*Victoria Stewart*

Perched high on a straw-filled head
Frightening intruders
Delighting young children
The Scarecrow and Blackbird prosper
in Golden Harvest.

*Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird*

*Kathy Santone*

On a dead dark autumn day,
my yard becomes a sanctuary for blackbirds.

*Fourteenth Way of Looking at a Blackbird*

*Jeri Bidlack*

Then straight he rose, wings spread,
Etched eternal on snow-sullen sky;
While faint, beyond a mourning cloud,
The blackbird's cry.

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Gramma Goes to P.T.O.

by Gloria Young

Having finally gotten the grandchildren, ages seven and eleven, off for the school bus, I began to dress myself for the 9:30 meeting of the Parent-Teachers' Organization (P.T.O.) to be held in the Evamere Elementary School, grades kindergarten through second, where my granddaughter attends. Wearily thinking, "I've been down this road before," I fought down irritation at believing it my duty to go, when, on my day at home, I could have been alternating loads of wash with grading papers (I teach literature at a nearby university) and continuing my reading for a course I was teaching. "The Holocaust."

Arriving at the charming, rambling, one-story building, built low to the ground, perhaps so as not to be overwhelming to the children, also built low to the ground, I entered alone, although surrounded by groups of young mothers who knew each other. An abyss, a wall, a gap—whatever metaphor one might use—seemed to separate me from the mothers, due, of course, to twenty-five or more years difference in our ages. It seemed to feel a bit more rapport with the few fathers straggling in, since they, too, seemed to be a bit ill at ease, with a nervous "doing my duty" sort of look. As I entered the room, no one, not even the principal who was to speak, seemed to be within touching distance of me.

Looking around, I saw every type of mother—Spanish, Caucasian, Black, Indian—wearing every type of outfit: some looked as if they were headed for the tennis courts; others looked harried, as though they had not had time to dress properly, and others were spiffed up as for an occasion to be impressive. Some were pregnant, in various stages of ballooning. Some were carrying small babies, which warmed me up considerably. Who could resist the little baby girl in her ruffled dress, head bobbing, eyes brightly looking around; or the one with his mouth, like a bird, nuzzling for his next meal which seemed to him to be quite near and attainable, or another, sleeping on her mother's shoulder, with a small, delicate, rose and white face, blue eyelids, and fuzzy hair, resting peacefully in some other long forgotten world. Several of the mothers were trying to keep a precarious balance between controlling their pre-kindergartners from grabbing the refreshments too soon and, at the same time, appearing to have the situation well in hand; after all, mothers at P.T.O. meetings should seem to have it all together. And the active, young three-and-four-year-olds were lustily exploiting the situation, knowing that Mama was not really likely, at this meeting, to slap their hands, and so their hands could be very busy.

The babies, the youngsters, and the mothers—all looked healthy, happy, well-fed—some too well-fed. Why was my mood changing from a mixture of pique, chagrin, curiosity to one of something else—sadness?—nostalgia?—loss?—pain? What was it? The scene of the children and mothers assembled in a lovely, brightly decorated room, was a satisfying one; but the network of brain cells, synapses, electrical circuits of the brain was, like a computer, doing its own
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The babies, the youngsters, and the mothers—all looked healthy, happy, well-fed—some too well-fed. Why was my mood changing from a mixture of pique, chagrin, curiosity to one of something else—sadness?—nostalgia?—loss?—pain? What was it? The scene of the children and mothers assembled in a lovely, brightly decorated room, was a satisfying one; but the network of brain cells, synapses, electrical circuits of the brain was, like a computer, doing its own
unsolicited composing. One disturbing thing about the process of education—of putting more and more into the computer—true especially, perhaps, of historical and literary data—is that the information will not stay compartmentalized. It leaks out into other channels. It affects all that one is and does and thinks. And thus an overlay, like putting one transparency upon another so that the projected image is a combination of the two, was occurring, bringing a change of, a deepening of mood.

Last night's television news was appearing—the tiny, sore-covered starved baby in Uganda, who would not take the food when offered but weakly turned his head away. The nurse, representing the agency supplying the food, explained that having reached the last stages of starvation and anemia, appetite is lost and the child will not eat. A six-month-old suicide? A giving up on the world? An instinctive turning away from which is life-saving? Has the body already begun the shock/trance/anesthetic effect that keeps death from being too painful? Association—of course: the healthy, well-fed looks of the group, the sleeping child, the trying-to-nurse baby—overlaid with the starving Ugandan child.

Another overlay. Scenes of the Holocaust: the summer's reading, the trip to the concentration camps in Europe, the pictures pictures pictures, and the words; the children in this room juxtaposed with the children of the holocaust. Only this morning, preparing to teach my next class, I had read:

Most tragic of all was the plight of the Jewish children... The primary goal in the Nazi plan for total annihilation of the Jews was the cutting off of its progeny. Thus the children were the first victims in the Actions, Selections and Resettlements [all euphemisms for annihilation]. There were also special 'Children's Actions' during which they were seized and taken out of the ghetto to be slain.

At least one and one half million Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis during the Hitler occupation.

Floodling my mind were the words from the buried or smuggled out diaries of the murdered, the memoirs of survivors, the government documents, the ever-growing accumulation of holocaust literature—all reaching out to tell what had happened, to tell in simple language or sophisticated, in historical notes or in anguished poetry, in labored, uneducated sentences or in scholarly, philosophical language, but to tell. To tell so that the world would know what had happened in the twentieth century, in a civilized, humanitarian age. To tell so that we would know and would remember. To tell so that such a thing could never happen again. At Dachau and other concentration camps are the words Never Again in the languages of the world. To tell, so that children like these

The case of the child who lived to be three years, five months, and five days, who remained alone in the house because his father had been sent to a work camp and his mother, confined in the ghetto, had to work in a factory. He visited the neighbors and performed little tricks for food; he hid in the bed of a sick neighbor to escape the S. S.; he was seized and taken to the collection point; he stood quietly, without crying, until the cart took him away.

The children who were shot and whose bodies were fed to the circus animals.

The orphans who took their last walk with Korczak, the doctor who protected them as long as he could and who went with them to certain death when their time had come.

The children who lied about their ages, who tried to look older so as to be spared for the labor camps instead of killed immediately, but who usually died in the labor camps.

A literature of horror. Nothing like it has ever been—not Poe's grotesque, fictional horror; not Kafka's surrealist, metaphysical horror; not Conrad's "Heart of Darkness"; not anything the mind has been able to imagine. And thus, it is easier not to believe it. In spite of the weight of evidence, the pictures, the documents, the words of those who perpetrated the horror, it is easier to repress. The mind cannot bear to think about it. Yet the mind must confront what the mind has been able to conceive. To be human is to feel the pain of man's inhumanity.

The words of the lovely lady who is principal mix with my thoughts. She is saying, "Our slogan here is 'Evamere Cares': C for cooperation, A for appreciation, R for respect and responsibility, E for effort, and S for sharing." Lovely words. Beautiful words. Words to live with and by. She goes on: "When our children have been very good, we give them 'Smile-O-Grams' to take home. You parents must let the child know how proud you are. Little people have to feel good about themselves; they can't achieve unless they do. And when the children do not obey the rules," the principal continues, "they may receive 'Sad-O-Grams,' which must be signed by the parent and returned to us." And one thinks of the little people who were shot at the edge of mass graves and then burned, commemorated in a poem, "The Massacre of the Boys" by Rozewicz:

The children cried: 'Mommie,
I was a good boy, really...'
Oh, it's so dark—so dark.'

Look—they are going to the bottom
See their little feet
They have reached the bottom. Do you see these marks
tiny footprints here and over there.
Their pockets were full
of bits of twine and pebbles
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The case of the child who lived to be three years, five months, and five days, who remained alone in the house because his father had been sent to a work camp and his mother, confined in the ghetto,

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The vast plain is closed off
like a geometric figure
and a tree of black smoke
rises vertically
a deed tree
with no star on top.

Sweetly, motherly, smiling, the gentle face of the principal urges the parents
to take time with their children. "Sometimes," she says, "children come in
without their papers signed and we feel it is the child's fault, but upon
investigation, find that the mother was 'too busy.'"

Too busy. I had almost been too busy to attend this P.T.O. meeting. I had
had to remind myself that though this might mean little to me, it would mean
a great deal to my granddaughter.

And here I was, sitting apart, busily scribbling notes about the holocaust, so
that I would not forget the experience I was having, so that I would not forget
to be thankful—thankful—that my children, the children of America, can be
taught in a warm, supportive, loving, and attractive atmosphere, that they can
learn to appreciate and share and respect and love. Somewhere love should be
part of the slogan: "Evanere Cares and Loves": L is for love—compassion, concern; Q is for openness—candor, faith, lack of fear, trust; V is for valor—courage to stand up for what is right and to oppose what is wrong, whenever and wherever it occurs; E is for esteem—self-esteem and esteem for others, of all colors and races and religions and nationalities; and S is for safety—the safety of living in America, the safety our system of government provides, the safety provided in education in schools all over the land. And if Evanere Cares and Loves, if the child learns to care and love, then perhaps this generation of parents and the coming generation of children can make a world that will be
safe for all, in which the abomination of the holocaust, the darkest heart of
darkness, can never again happen.

The principal continues: "We are working with 'assertive discipline,' creating
the kind of atmosphere in which the teacher is comfortable with expecting the
child to learn and the child is comfortable with knowing what is expected of
him." Intently, earnestly, she says: "It is every teacher’s right to teach without
interference, and it is every child’s right to learn without interference. These
are basic rights."

Yes, I think. Rights. The right to learn, to be safe, to be happy, to grow up
unafraid, to love; rights and privileges which we must protect. When anyone
else’s right to such things is denied, our own rights are endangered. But we don’t
believe this either, as we don’t believe the smoke of children’s bodies going up a
chimney. We go on, not seeing, not believing, not caring, not wanting to know.
We go on being too busy, believing it can’t happen here, and not believing that
freedom cannot be inherited but must be earned and re-earned with each new
generation.

As the principal concludes her talk, my heart is filled with thankfulness for
the blessings—an old-fashioned, out-of-date word—the blessings!—of this room,
these mothers, these babies, these small children, the older children in their
classrooms, and these dedicated teachers. How lucky we are. And we don’t
know it. Our worlds are too small, unaware, sometimes irrelevant; too confined,
in-grown, selfish. We complain of inflation but our children are not starving; we
complain of government but we are free; we complain of too many taxes,
but our living conditions are luxurious compared to the other 99% of the world.

I leave the meeting, moved. Gramma has gone to the P.T.O. and has been
changed. I want to tell the mothers to look at their children, to look at their
lives, to look at themselves. Before they know it, their children will be grown and
they, too, will be grandmothers, wondering where it all went, what their
lives had counted for, what they had or had not done to make the world a better
place for all persons. A stray line appears from the computer, "Tis not too late
to make a better world," and I believe that it is not too late. Another line:
"Every man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." And
yet another: "Why don’t they look at one another?" And a phrase from a
song, written by someone I love: "Take the time to look around, look around. / Stop
and gather what you’ve found."

Yes. Gather and protect. We can begin with education, which means "to
lead out or up." We can work to educate our children and our young adults
and ourselves, not only in informational data but in the data of the heart, the
humanities. Such data will not stay compartmentalized but will permeate every-
thing we touch. We will not say "It can’t happen here"; we will say, instead,
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we will never let it happen here--or anywhere!
October Morning   
*Kathy Santone*  
Through a lacy moisture on the small window,  
I see the silver lamp-post glow. Center ring  
of violet, next—green, then—gold, last—white.  
Rings of violet, green, gold, and white spread  
gently into early morning light.

Glorious Day   
*Kathy Santone*  
Today’s a day for listening to loud violins  
and muted trumpets in the golden sunlight.

*Rex Brobst*  
Sweet silver singing.  
A cardinal in the springtime.  
Scarlet symphony.

*Rex Brobst*  
Summer is ending.  
I cry to the setting sun,  
Pleadingly: Encore!

Commute from Toledo  
*Betsy Hoobler*  
The land curves softly from the darkling West.  
Pre-dawn, the Pike streams golden in its flight.  
For all its sorrow, this bright world is blessed.

Low village lights on flat horizons, pressed  
Like pools of stars—stars fallen from the night.  
The land curves softly from the darkling West.

The radio blares on of sins confessed,  
Yet purely sweeps the plain: the barns are tight.  
For all its sorrow, this bright world is blessed.

The woods and farms, all winter-weary, rest,  
With fields combed into furrows brown and white.  
The land curves softly from the darkling West.

Now step the sheltering cedars from their nest  
Of shadows. Skies bloom rose upon the height.  
For all its sorrow, this bright world is blessed.

And now the full red sun rolls up the crest  
To hallelujahs! Streams of crystal light!  
The land curves softly from the darkling West.  
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From Texas Looking Home

Dee Phillips

There's a place for my existence, although it tumbles back and forth. Be it in this land? This vast land of sun, rock, shades of brown reaching and stretching to the barren bones of mountains; mountains that climb and extend to the crest, dropping again to the sides of mountains and the vast array of shades of brown, rock, and sun.

Or be it in a more compact land? A land of flowers blooming in spring—still there for autumn. A land of waving grasses, trees reaching for the sky, stretching for the sun. Shades of greens, golds, and greys—changing with the seasons. A land rolling easily, forming hills; hills barely looking like mountains, yet beautifully lazy with mountain streams.

My mind is reaching and stretching as the land of mountains and the land of changes—from one place to another. Tumbling like tumbleweed, last petals of autumn's flowers, rocks, blowing sands, mountain stream's froth. Reaching crests, crevices, rolling through green grasses, climbing mountains, tumbling through mountain streams.

Closing my eyes and sitting quietly, my body engages in repose—unbending, yet my mind at times feels the place for my existence reaching and stretching, pulling and tugging across some vast land of sun, yet barren; a vast land of green, yet grey. And through my mind's eye, reaching and pulling, the place for my existence somehow comes to me.
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Darkest Night

Ted Pawcio

Another bomb falls across my chest this night...
A child dies quietly in no loving arms.
Quickly now, the whistle will blow again
As another bomb falls across my heart.

Our people are not safe, homeward-bound today,
And again you drop your bombs, spread your manure.
Take heed that the black hand is touching and holding you--
Too soon your eyes will no longer be able to see.

Another and another bomb falls over us all...
Hate, outrage, fear, disgrace, are your children
And they drop this night under dazzling diamonds
As the final curtain closes on the dismantled set.

Simile

Life in a Hostile Environment

Michelle Griffiths

Life is like a winter day.
We try to warm it up
With love and hugs and care.
The center of life glows brightly
With goodwill, good cheer, and good intentions;
But life blusters icy cold around the edges.
We can never warm it up completely,
And if we stop trying,
We'll all freeze to death.

Holocaust Musing

Jeri Bidlack

If I were witness to the terrible torture
Where six million suffered, and struggled to survive
And failed; while I was left unharmed, alive,
Could I forgive?

If I had seen the faces of God's children
Starving--could I stamp them all as mere Non-Aryan "race"
And say it happened at another time and place,
And then forget

Those lost, who once were families, with fathers
And mothers with children, some nursing at the breast,
Who laughed and loved as freely as the rest
Of us who never knew,

'Til dragged, defenseless, bundled into boxcars,
Brutalized and mutilated, crucified in grief,
Bodies battered, bellies bloated, 'til zyklon¹ brought relief.
Did they forgive?

Where buried bone and broken teeth marked memoirs
Scattered in ashes that once held life and breath,
In testament of degradation and their death:
Who could forget

Those millions waiting impatiently for God's help
Where saving came in death from dangerous pit?²
If memory gives us record, who does our hate commit
To not forget?

Will God's rule of forgiveness³ guide my heart,
Erase eternal etchings from the chalkboard of my mind,
And forgive man's inhumanity to other humankind
While memories live?

Can forgiving quench the fire of memory's hate
While memorials of millions murdered still remain?
For if, from our own apathy, it should recur again,
Would God forgive?

¹Gas used.
²Psalms 40:1-2 Good News Bible.
³Ephesians 4:29-32 Good News Bible.
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Grandfather

Jeanne Bryner

Graying silhouette against the
weathered barn,
haziness in the blue eyes
as they cast slow surveillance
over the familiar ground of his farm.
Time lines etched quietly...
on his face.
And yet,
Rushmore cannot outdo his greatness.

A firm grasp with his calloused hand,
a slow drawl in his voice
as he greets a stranger
and gives him directions...
to the road that leads to town.

A proud smile as he lifts
his chubby blonde grandson.
A quick wink as he kisses
his ponytailed granddaughter.
A swift stride, without a hard drawn breath,
as he climbs his rolling hills.

Though he has seen more than
eighty springs...
Each one still holds him...
captive...
spellbound.
And as May gives way to June
he knows...
where the flowers will bloom first,
hidden deep within the forest shade.

When the leaves brown
and crumble under autumn’s frost...
his sons and grandsons will gather
to hunt his woodlands.
They will sit by the open fire
at night and tell of the buck...
that eludes their marksmanship.

He will listen,
smiling softly at their endeavors.
For he knows
the bedding place of the hunted,
the favorite crossings...
of the soft brown doe,
the tall oak that bears the rub...
of the ten-point buck.
All these signs,
which taunt man and his gun
he will share only with the wind.

Through the white of winter...
he is up before dawn.
Dressed in worn bib overalls
covering the plaid flannel shirt,
he will don his great coat
and check the livestock.
He will fetch supplies from town
that his garden did not
provide last summer.

He will come home and sit
by his fire,
he will glance at his wife
of more than half a century...
She will smile and call him “Charles.”
His room is surrounded with
pictures of his family.
His life is surrounded with familiarity.
His mind’s eye travels quickly
over his day.
His head nods gently to his chest...
The peaceful nap of contentment,
that so few of us know...
is felt throughout his being.
Grandfather

Jeanne Bryner

Graying silhouette against the
weathered barn,
haziness in the blue eyes
as they cast slow surveillance
over the familiar ground of his farm.
Time lines etched quietly...
on his face.
And yet,
Rushmore cannot outdo his greatness.

A firm grasp with his calloused hand,
a slow drawl in his voice
as he greets a stranger
and gives him directions...
to the road that leads to town.

A proud smile as he lifts
his chubby blonde grandson.
A quick wink as he kisses
his ponytailed granddaughter.
A swift stride, without a hard drawn breath,
as he climbs his rolling hills.

Though he has seen more than
eighty springs...
Each one still holds him...
captive...
spellbound.
And as May gives way to June
he knows...
where the flowers will bloom first,
hidden deep within the forest shade.

When the leaves brown
and crumble under autumn’s frost...
his sons and grandsons will gather
to hunt his woodlands.
They will sit by the open fire
at night and tell of the buck...
that eludes their marksmanship.

He will listen,
smiling softly at their endeavors.
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