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Coe Review are online at
<http://public.coe.edu/coereview/>**

**Submission guidelines may be found at
http://japicx.com/coereview/writing_guideline_page.htm**

Joshua D. Kalscheur

Cantrip for Invincibility

Sweat from the back of Mike Tyson's knees, pureed pigeon peas,
Gonads from Pamplona toro, Tora-Fugu cooked by a dyslexic teenager,
Canaan water, packet of Chilli-O, whisker of sleeping cheetah,
Red Lobster dumpster slush, drumstick of passenger pigeon,
Golomyanka from Lake Baikal, Gethsemane sweat,
 all this I have gathered,
And I have fueled a small, Nicaraguan uprising,
pulled the shell off of a Hawksbill Turtle,
but I cannot stop the blade of a wind turbine.
So I have raced strangers up stairs, outmuscled Siberian winters,
I have unsnapped bras with my pinkie, pierced my Achilles' tendon,
fed Hebrew Nationals to Grizzly Bears, tinkered with plutonium compression,
I have drag-raced drunk, caught John Rocker without a cup,
I have trusted Ted Kaczynski with my bag lunch,
I have played paintball at Guantanamo,
I have window-shopped the Baghdad strip,
I have spoken Arablish and ran towards whatever made a sound.

Joshua D. Kalscheur

After the Hanging Video

January 15, 2007 - Several boys banged themselves to death after watching footage of Saddam Hussein's execution.

Did they see a miracle in their own bodies,
a Jacob's ladder staircase to the noose?
Was a crowd drummed up in their brains,
a small coliseum of cellphones?

Below a bunkbed in Webster, Texas,
hanging from ceiling fans in Multan, Pakistan,
and Kolkata, India. Just below a loft
in Harborcreek, Pennsylvania,
swinging.

And is this what Pandora wanted,
this monkey-see monkey-do ending?
These chairs kicked away, trapdoors
opening to the world?
Can Prometheus return the fire,
can we go back, smash every computer screen?

The fuzzy video clip
told us death sways and pulls on us,
it leaves life a foot away,
it lifts us up.

And was it by a window,
or was it in front of a mirror,
was a dog leashed and staring in the corner?

Did they hear what he heard?
The indecipherable screams,
the clicking of lenses,
the ticking flashes of light.

Stefanie Wielkpolan

Vision

When we made love you put your glasses on so that you could see me. And now, when I watch another man dress, I think of the way you would tuck your work shirt into your pants. You would sit down on the corner of the bed, grab my foot and tell me to sleep until the eggs were done. I always kept my glasses on your nightstand, dressed in the bathroom and walked out the front door.

Stefanie Wielkpolan

The Netherlands

I stumbled crooked streets with a bald
twenty-one-year old addict rolling
down the light.

He smoked
a joint in the church courtyard and yelled:
You're a slut. The only one who loves you is me.
Sweat around his mouth.
The smell of warm vinegar.

His hand
 dirty from falling, from piss
wiped his face, held out
 a blistered palm
of expired threats and curdled
defeat.

Not even your parents. No one will ever love you.

I thought about his family in Kentucky
 their prophecy, their bible
that plate of bacon
I never finished as his mother
told me stories
 about the devil
and tried to scare the free out of me.

You said you would marry me. Raise our kids in Kentucky.

At the center of a Dutch church
I knew there would never be
southern mud in my toes
or children with a father who was unattractive
 especially in Europe.

It would never be.
No matter how many times
 I love you
echoed down the light.

Gary Lehmann

Fur Trapper Descending the Missouri

The cat looks Egyptian with his pointed ears and watchful pose. The boy hunches over his rifle seeking fish just below the surface. The father scans the horizon with searching eyes while resting on his paddle. He knows how easily a cat, a boy and a fur trapper with pelts can disappear. The cat, indifferent to all these dangers, simply looks Egyptian.

Connie Hershey

Skeleton, Seated

the bones have thickened
new layers of calcium
are wrapped around the marrow
obscuring the original essence
the skeleton of this marriage
weighs heavy, awkward

it lacks an organ of imagination
to rouse the bones of the feet
the arms no longer swing
in counterpoint from thin tendons
gone is the fruit-like gland of hope

the skeleton sits
collapsed into a chair
a brittle remnant of a life
the smooth skull stripped of duty
reason emptied out
this is the final pose

Molly Fisk

Women at Forty

Women at forty
stand in supermarkets listening
for the voices of children
they never had.

Behind them doors close softly.
They walk steadily forward
into the next day and each successive week
as if they didn't notice.

Men turn less often to watch them pass,
although the younger ones, still almost boys,
narrow their gazes, noticing something
and wondering if it's valuable.

They stand in front of mirrors
but not to draw the familiar picture
with lipstick and shadow.
They look at themselves. They are used to
the silent bell of the telephone.

It is their mothers' hands now
folded in their own spacious laps.
The tiny diamond lines
patiently etched into the skin,

and the skin beginning to loosen its hold
on the muscles. As if the spaces
between things were widening
inside their bodies, making room

for something entirely new.

after Donald Justice

Stephanie Woolley-Larrea

The Women Writers Talk Trash in Heaven's Locker Room After a Tae-bo Class and a Smoothie

Virginia Woolf is all for oral contraceptives. She keeps next month's supply in the drawer of her desk. Anne Bradstreet thinks that's appalling, remembers the eight downy bodies who slipped from her world into the new one. Mrs. Bradstreet won't even sit next to Anne Sexton, finding her views on abortion much too vulgar. "Puritan," mutters Mrs. Sexton under her breath, wishing she hadn't given up her cigarettes. Sylvia Plath chooses to stay far from them both. Conversations about lost children bring back that faraway look in her eye. Phyllis Wheatley pats Syl's hand, "I know, sugar," she says, soothingly. Dorothy Parker thinks Pills are only for the monogamous. She likes rubbers, especially the neon ones. Amy Lowell and Hilda Doolittle nod, sitting a little too close for Anne B's comfort. They're in the corner, giggling, near Emily Dickinson, who Doesn't Say a Word.

Carol Steinhagen

Another Country

In photos of the 30s Mother's eyebrows
arch like Claudette Colbert's—
thin wings of anticipation.

Hideous flowers of black smoke
pour down the screen
again
and again.
Firemen's yellow stripes
cut through the haze.

She looks toward the stricken faces,
her gaze inscrutable,
then retreats to her album—
what is left of her world.
In its small white-bordered places
she is one of the girls
who tilt their hats over the right ear,
wear Katharine Hepburn pants
and pose on fenders of Plymouths and LaSalles.

Before us, Toyotas and BMWs
rest mired in ash.
In her book cars stand ready
to drive girls out of the dust
into the city
where elevators can lift them
into the clouds.

Through our silence
inch the ghosts of used up years,
tracing the hazy path
toward another country.

I retreat to the screen's obsessive repetitions
where dirty flags droop in an alien place
and grief assumes the pure look of agony
I want to feel.

Carol Steinhagen

Some Unfinished Business

In his tenth decade he took off
his glasses, put down his books,
and began his inspections.

This little man in overalls washed to faint blue
rolled back the stone,
dragged the iron cover from the well,
and declared too low.

He carried a ladder half again his size
to the apple tree, climbed to the top,
and started sawing.

His children sighed
from the safe houses of their middle years
while the old man looked deeper into the well,

traced in its oily shadows
the wild curls of his daughter's red hair,
the madness that would submerge
her in thirty years,

descended into the sediment
of his son's last days—
a narrow bed
in a small white space.

From the tree he watched clouds float
over green hills, silos and windmills
pinning them down to the earth he'd worked.
Too low, he said,

and kept climbing.

James Doyle

Elegy for a Poet

Because his eyes were grains of wood,
the windows in every house were oak.

It is vision's thickness that brings
the glaze of a new season closer.

He knew this more than four times a year.
Glass breaking could be ice husks, sprung

seed, a dry river, corn stalks. If only
bone had pores to dam up

what passes through. It is as if time
has all the rights and earth

no franchise but its graves. Though,
if the ways to know are counted,

memorial by memorial, it is time
he left behind, a special knack

he owned for growing out of the obvious,
dead or alive. And he had us cold.

Wherever we exhumed, he was not
there. This happened so often

we began to suspect the earth
itself. So we gave it the monument.

Amanda Nowakowski

The Ladybugs

This year we had a ladybug infestation.
They littered the floor of my daughter's room,
dirtying the carpet and sticking to the sills,
their enamel bodies cracking at touch.
It would have been alright had they lived,
flying in a whirling hump, revealing the miracle
of movement in a thing so round and small.
We could have held them out the window
chanting the incantation to fly away,
fly away, fly away home, but they
swarmed to the bedroom and died,
testaments to the brittle dome of the sky
and the immobility of those no longer alive.

Katie Stine

Wanted: Companion for my Cynicism

I'd like to say I eat men for breakfast.
That I crunch their hopes like toast, that I
Smear their dreams like a pat of butter
Melting across my pancakes. I sip on their love and
Desire as hot coffee, and when I reach the bottom of my mug, I signal the waitress
and I get a refill from
A different pot.

But that's not what happens.
If you want to get all psychoanalyst
Let's trace it to my mother deciding, post-menopausally,
She's a lesbian. She divorced my dad, all smiles, though,
Still friends. They still go out and have
Beers together on Tuesdays.
My mother never had a beer in her life before she decided she was a lesbian.
She cut her long hair short,
Hiked up her pants above her belly button,
And decided she did, after all, prefer
Beer to a strawberry margarita with an umbrella in it.

Since my mother has determined what was missing in her life was a little girl-on-girl
action,
I've become what she used to call "loose."
I hold court at different bars, handing out my phone number like royal favors.
I know it's just to spite my mother,
But at least I'm getting laid in the process.
I take home the ugliest man I can find.
I don't do plus sizes. Too much weight on top.
I'm scared they'll have a heart attack, flop down on me, and it'll be like an
Old lady stuck under a fallen bookcase, trapped for days, trying to
Survive on the saltine packet she just happened to have in her pocket.

Ugly guys treat you like a Faberge egg.
Delicate, breakable, a beautiful crystal to be handled with careful attention.
They don't do any, "This is the way I am, baby, deal with it," crap
That guys who use Product in their hair do.
Ugly men are usually grateful,
Want to be your boyfriend,
Fix you breakfast and
Pick you flowers.
It's kind of nice, and you feel like a queen for a day,
Your ugly man trailing after you
Yours and unchanging, for as long as you'll let him stay.

Kyle Mangan

All my sixth grade friends grew up and became marines

Sometimes people,
when I do something
particularly sweet,

like drive with them to New York
so they don't have to be alone
or bring them chocolate ice cream
to eat on their futon

smile and politely
confess with a bright orange
sincerity behind their back teeth
that I'm their hero

I tell them
it's what I do
instead of thanking them
because I'm not brave enough
for that sort of thing.

Wesley Durham

The Fox

It was my uncle's night to feed the rabbits
but he was out with the neighbors on bicycles
so my mother was sent out to the yard
with a milk jug of water and a pail of dry food
to find a hole ripped into the rabbit cage
and a sticky confetti of blood and fur.
She held her breath and stared down the residue
reconstructing rabbits in her mind's eye.

A neighborhood bookstore shut its doors this year
choked out by the forest sized amusement mall.
I'm standing by its skeleton with my mother.
She didn't believe me when I said it had closed.
It had been part of her routine, a comfort.
I don't like it when they do that, she said.
My mother stares down an empty store front
reconstructing rabbits in her mind's eye.

Wesley Durham

Adulthood in the Tomatoes

In the arid ever after
 of this tightening suburb
those few of us who are left
 behind are beaten into a red state
of static and accept that we are past surprise
 because the surprises and surprisers
have escaped to bluer pastures
 but our surprise children
and our worn addictions
 our sick and our crazy
hold us here, like individually
 monogrammed spider webs
so we wait our tables
 and take our medicine
and pay our child support
 and go to our meetings
and do our time
 and circle around the same streets
we were once so hopeful on
 before the drugs started to
make us mean and paranoid,
 before the girls of summer
moved to Brooklyn,
 before money was the only thing,
before we were the leftovers
 growing colder and greyer
in suburban Tupperware.

Julia Klatt Singer

How to Bone a Fish

My skin sensed you first. Felt the
ripple of air your body made,
walking. I swam toward you
moved down that hallway of sunlight
and polished wood.

You are far enough away
that I can see you walking.
See how your shoe hits the floor firmly
yet lingers, sole to wood, before touching
air again.

I see how your hips
tilt with each stride
how they carry you
closer now
I follow the row of buttons on your shirt
(cream colored, four holes each)
to your throat. You are talking
to a colleague.
You are talking about music. The importance
of the adagio. The slow movement
of things.
I cannot look at your
lips. Your mouth. For
I would want you
to devour me.
I would let you
devour me.

Your eyes now. On me.
Unblinking unswerving.
My bones, soft as a fish's bones, my flesh
as sweet to eat.

Julia Klatt Singer

Cerulean

There was a time when she thought
the world was made of right angles,
metal bent and wood carved for her.

There was a time when she felt the wind
lift the hair on her arms, small
tentacles too blond to see, but she felt
it, the wind, and how it moved her.

There was a moment when she felt the world
stop when she found in the grass a blue
egg and she believed for an instant
it was her. Something beautiful, misplaced
and forgotten.

There was a day when she became
water, let herself sink to the muddy
bottom and breathe like a carp. She
was tempted to swim into the weeds
lose her way.

A small voice said leave and she did.
Shed silver scales as she swam,
broke the surface with her teeth
and saw nothing but sky.

Julia Klatt Singer

Closing Time

She sits in the park on a bench
lost to the darkness, with her best friend
after bar closing time smoking a cigarette
wondering where all the other women are
where all the other mothers are
for certainly it isn't just the two of them
up at two a.m. on this summer night
nearly one of the last nights of summer.
The moon is full and the air sweet on her skin
surely they aren't the only ones
who find themselves here, find themselves
up and unwilling to go home now—
not when she can light a match
watch the tip of her cigarette glow
not when she can laugh in the dark
with her best friend, both of them
praying the police don't come & harass
them—how would they explain this
to their husbands, to their children,
surely they aren't the only ones
who see the freedom night offers,
the elasticity of time
how some nights you have to
pull it, let it stretch and give,
some nights you can let the music
pulse and the darkness swallow
everything about you. Some nights
you just have to be a voice, a shape in the dark
with your best friend at your side, laughing,
as the match bursts and flares, trades gold
for blue.

Michelle Brooks

Tailhook

Every night the dark comes earlier.
Fumbling with my purse from the car
to the door, I hear the warnings — wedge
your keys between your fingers, carry
lemon juice to squirt in your eyes, pick
up a handful of gravel to throw in his face.
Above all, run. Don't get caught alone.
You know better. That's how the world
becomes a gauntlet. Welcome to the Las
Vegas Hilton! Unless of course, the men
label you a dog, unworthy to be assaulted,
telling each other "wave off" meaning,
This bitch isn't worthy to be touched, thrown
to the ground, stripped. For years, I lived
in an apartment where I had been raped. It
had a loft, and I was loathe to part with a loft.

Susan H. Case

Zen and the art of Watching Sports

I share a wall with the living room
of the apartment next door, never see
my neighbors. I hear him watch

a game on TV most nights — he calls out
bring me a beer. Never hear her.
There's a professor in Ohio, an expert

on the history of beer and sports,
who calls watching a Zen proposition; each path
to enlightenment, individual. I agree. Beer

may just be a way to balance the loveliness
of the buzz with attention to the plays; a fifth
of scotch would put one in the zonked zone

too soon. And surely a scholar of paradox
somewhere has studied the koan
of why anyone would watch athletes while guzzling

calories that bond to the waist, creating paunch,
creating the urge to pee right in the middle
of the sports action, right in the middle of the gorgeous

Klimaszewski sisters' cheerleader ratings-breaker
ode to love and twins, breasts
I'm sure any student of form wouldn't want

to miss. One day, I'm reading Zen and the Art
of Picking Stocks, searching for a path to wealth
when he does his bring me a beer

and then the other, now a rasp
of steel, finally shouts
get your own beer, moron.

Rochelle Jewel Shapiro

Second-story Porch

I tell Mom I want to go the beach.
She tells me stop whining,
there are kids stuck forever in iron lungs
that breathe for them and only their heads stick out
and other people have to wipe their behinds.
I have to stay on our second-story porch
because polio is in the gutter water
I swear I won't drink.
Even up here, I have to wear a bulb of garlic
tied over my throat in a red bandana
because polio is in gnats, flies, and even sparrows
who can find their way to me.

Climbing on the first rung of the rail, I cling
to the China-faced doll my big cousin Leo
sent me from Korea where he's fighting Reds.
He's so lucky he doesn't have to stay on his porch.
I ask Mom if only children can get the polio.
She says, "No, FDR got it from cheating on Eleanor."
Here comes Joel, the summer boy, who used to shinny up
the tallest tree on Eightieth Street. Now he swings
his skinny polio legs on silver crutches.
If only I could go downstairs,
I bet he'd let me try them.

Katherine Edgren

Bikes Locked

Remembering
the way he locked our bikes together
and how he's the only one who's ever done that,
and he's been doing it for nearly thirty years.

Passing the wrapped chain around and through
two sets of wheels, joining the loops together,
threading in the lock. Side-by-side, touching,
our bikes are two aluminum animals.

The first time he locked them, we met for lunch,
he brought me Dorothy Sayer's *Gaudy Night*—
the end of the series where Peter asks Harriet to marry him, again,
and she finally says yes—

and the ease he has with bikes,
and his beautiful, mechanical hands,
his quads outlined in his jeans,
the way he leans over, the care he takes.

Katherine Edgren

Details

They start out so small,
insignificant,
subordinate.

Trifles, dots, jots,
flecks, iotas, tittles,
scraps, snippets.

Only minim.
 Feeble, puny,
 meager.

But stubborn like a stain.

Mud-rollers in the daytime,
at night, they are slippery, devilish imps
who hide around corners, and

 leap out to startle
with their googley eyes and dripping tongues.

Greedy feeders on haste and forgetfulness,
they grow fat and fatter,
until they are obese, imposing,

 and then march their muddy feet
 all over what you thought
 was nearly done.

They leave wide wakes of humiliation and regret.
They make you mistaken,
require apologies,

force you to rope and corral them,
break and smooth their rough edges,
and de-tail them,

detach their heads from their necks and
de-liver them with delight, diced and cut,
into the smallness of their little souls.

Nick Bertelson

The Band-Aid

I picked off an old scab
stuck on my knee,
and once I was done
I couldn't stop the bleeding.
I was hesitant when I put on the Band-Aid,
worrying about the hair on my leg,
but I shouldn't have picked it in the first place.

I think my injury came
the evening you asked me to ask you
to stop drinking, again,
as you proceeded to get intoxicated.
Maybe I tripped
carrying you to your bedroom.
I guess I'd had a couple too.

Now, you call me past one in the morning
to say you don't want to be a burden,
and you ask me why I talk less.
Why I seem uninterested.
It must be because I'm thinking
of any possible painless way
to rip off this Band-Aid.

Gina Ferrara

Transparent Fear

Nana never swam with us
because it was water
that killed her mother.

Her mother who came
from Sicilian rock and soil,
Aetna's rumble heard in the distance,
her silver dollar face prominent as a stamp,
pleated skirts, painful ankle boots,
eternal matriarchal stare
from a mother of pearl frame
on the breakfront next to the clock
stopped at random hours.

Nana became a rhetorical question,
an echo across sheared sugar fields
after her father broke the news of her mother
drowning in the body of Bayou Black.

She never learned to swim,
remained on the beach
safe from the water's edge
where wind stirred grit and sand.

Joyce Janca-Aji
Return

And this is how you begin:
First the endless reach of road
drifting, lost to cloudy hills,
the long loneliness of a voice
waited for, perhaps only imagined,
then the dry bright savannahs
eerily quiet, eerily empty,
filled with unseeing, unblinking eyes,
then the low sea murmurs:
the not-here, the not-yet,
the despair of maybe-never,
then the giving of yourself
to that which only asks from you
when you don't know and can't give,
then in the undertow the floating islands:
wanting, remembering, wanting, wondering, fear...
drown, one by one, dark,
then the clear fine whistle
of an ancient bird you've only imagined
nestled closely under your window,
then the why me, why this, why now...
and finally from some new ground,
rising up under you from nowhere,
the deep inarticulate rumbling
of why not.
And so you begin.

Joyce Janca-Aji

Innumerable

Every morning I rise
then slip back behind
the deep veils of sleep,
never imagining
in that dull thud
how the wind strums
the down under the leaves
and calls to it
with tongues of light
to the hidden, dark places,
never imagining
the slow parting of the sky,
the blue-black waves yielding
to the ordinary silk
of cornflower blue,
or the reverberating chants
of innumerable small bodies
of armor and antennae
living their holy, unseen lives.

Bart Galle

What I Believe

Airplanes should tear the sky as they pass through,
great folds of blue flopping to earth,
not pretend that flying is an easy thing—
as we leave signs of our relationship
so as not to wander off, forgetting,
in our ant-like comings and goings.

I saw your note on the counter—
at the store. It was enough. I pictured you
turning a peach on its cushion of fuzz,
holding it to your nose to test its heavy scent.

I don't believe the world's a round and spinning thing,
as they say it is. The water in the children's pool
sloshes only when they play in it. Groceries
don't tumble from the bags on the way to the house.
When you get home, I won't have to brace my legs
to kiss you.

Bart Galle

Coming of Age

The third time I had pneumonia
was the worst. Despite my mother's
ministrations, I would not be consoled.
The gauzy tent that hovered over me
was not at all like camping. The moisture
of the vaporizer collected into a slough
around my bed and entered me like a snake.
Confined in my basement bedroom—
no house on top yet, just a flat tar roof
that bubbled in the summer and a window
at lawn level—I whined to go outside.
Just put me under the cottonwood, I said,
as if I were dying and needed to be buried.
I wanted to listen to the pick-up sticks
of the leaves and pop open strings
of green and sticky seed pods. It was
beyond me to imagine being twelve,
living in a built up house, when I could
open my second-floor window,
breathe in the soft summer air
and watch the city lighting up—
especially the tower with the neon sign on top,
the red one that pulsed into the night.

Bart Galle

Poems on the Obituary Page

Just next to the current losses
and memos to grief
like blankets over heads and toes
lined up on the page,
are rooms with black borders
for those lost earlier.
Here is where rhyme is found,
brought out for the occasion
like the finest china,
and antiquated words
like "thee" and "thine",
tarnished heirloom silver.
There is an idea of what
a poem should be,
especially for the dead,
and it is not free verse,
not everyday dishes.
Imagine people gathered together,
laughing about
The Road Trip from Hell,
and Summer Camp 1969,
handing around
Styrofoam Christmas balls
with pinned-on sequins
and a dog-eared Mother's Day card,
opening the caskets
of their sorrow
by a picture of a boy
squinting into the sun,
straining to hold a stringer of pike,
proud and eager to please.

Sherre Vernon

Brother Stone, Sister Rain

You ask me if I've known love, what it's like to sing songs in the rain -
Well, I've seen love come, I've seen it shot down, I've seen it die in vain.
— from the way you sang Bon Jovi's "Blaze of Glory"

There is a time warp / behind the stars,
a temple built of red clay and glass;
over the cliff / an electric sea,
cast out from shards of bottles.

I will sleep / on park benches,
as you bleed the horizon red:
These are diamonds / for your sister.

The middle child / a quiet man -
he sings to console the day.
I name you / with dusty palms,
and the six hours pass like breath.

The sun steals the neon twilight:
rain forms in your sister's hair, / the pulse
of the ghetto/ beneath your knuckles;
you have only a room / with a draft,
a door / that doesn't close.

This / the brotherhood of priests
blessed by American rock:
twelve beers / and a pack of cigarettes,
a conscience, and soul / slivered
to skin and tar, black / and raw
like everything I have loved.

Gay Baines

I Write Poems to You

addressed more to the face
in the newspaper
or on the book jacket
than to you, the one I once knew.

I write poems to you safely:
conversations we didn't have,
the dreams I did have,
feverish, wild.

I write poems to you,
imagine them thin
columns of ash rising,
falling on you lightly,

unnoticed until you're
just outside your door.
You turn and gaze to the northeast,
sure that you smell burning.

Sandra Kohler

How it Januaries...

this morning: the old snow on the hills powdered with new, lacy, openwork through which we see the landscape that's been and the one to come; the sky's gray blue shifts back and forth through Janus' white door. We wake before the alarm to the groan of machinery from the cellar. Each of us feigns sleep, the deep breathing of oblivion, giving ourselves away with sighs, shifts, our bodies' self-conscious motions. We are living in and for a different age, dawn and twilight at once, a day, a life. Greed for what we've never been, never had comes over us. We buy new clothes, we change the brew in our cups, darkening it with foreign roasts. We shop for oranges sweeter, more pungent than the handsome thick-skinned globes that lure the eye. We write away for passports, we send strangers' photographs to authorities who will decide if those faces attest to our existence, we prepare to fly west in order to go east. We back into decisions the way we lie against each other nights, spoon-cupped. We listen to music written at the end of his life by a man living in hell: clearly and precisely elegiac, delicate music that knows our longing, limits, suffering. Let the music end, the snow sift down, let the furnace in the north cellar grind like the gears of the future, this is our hour, poised on the fulcrum of January.

Chris Ransick

Dream of the Dying Soldier

You know as soon as the bomb explodes
that you'll never lie again on the grass
in your father's back yard, stroking that faithful
old dog and listening to bad pop music
spilling from the window of your sister's room
on a warm June night. Bright flames
sear your eyes shut as an oceanic roar seals
both ears. In such silence and darkness,
the faces of children surface, a boy
who chased after your patrol that first day,
until he turned into a sparrow hawk and flew
high above dusty alleys where you now hover
watching a frantic medic holding your
guts together with his bare hands.
You want to tell him it's OK, he can
just let you go, but your whispering lips
won't form the words you want. When he
starts to weep, you want to comfort him
but one arm won't respond and the other
is over there. What was the name
of the first girl you kissed and wasn't it
really about her sister's glossy black hair?
You wish the column of smoke, the smell of
burning oil would turn into chocolate
and it does. Maybe any minute, seventy
dewy-eyed virgins will pile out of that
Humvee, readying a litter for your trip.
You try to remember your absentee ballot
and whether you checked the box marked
Crusade. Look, there's Muldoon, lost
on his last day in country and he's
coming toward you, smiling.

Timothy Martin

Black Widower

The man who once had a gold ring slipped
from his finger in broadest daylight
takes a Louisville Slugger to the visitor
presumptuously unpacking in the backyard.
There, spinning silk where the line
syringes electricity into the house.
Who'd ever accuse him of cruelty?
His kids play there, and it's allowed
that you reduce things to finest print when
debating real estate with something
that's deadly. No one counts
whether the bat comes down once, twice
more than necessary, and to measure
degrees of upward arc past the point
of efficiency would take a geometrician
bathed in philosophy, and
there's no one like that here. He
crushes the hourglass on her back,
sees to it that her surplus legs
get glued to the June grass.
Afterwards, he wipes blood and venom
from the bat, a job well done, turning
the wood in a shirt that smelled
of lilacs once. He walks to the house,
to boil potatoes until they sigh
and give up their skins.

Timothy Martin

Trustee

The bride's posy hangs from a basement nail,
upside-down, brown, a clutch of dead tied sparrows.
Lack of romance is not to be inferred; just haste,
to move cross-country, whether we were to have
sent it by delicate, but most urgent, post. Three
anniversaries, and several shades of intensity, ago.

Dear friend, all must be well. It must be
that he does not yet resemble these, rising
from bed in the morning. Nor that his relatives,
staying the weekend, occupy the house
like hippos in a birdbath. Nor that he has
driven a fiery red sports car to the door
as you were counting bills on the kitchen table
to have the bellicose woodchuck removed from the attic.
You do not wish to have this thing,
mournful, redolent of regret,
to diminish the measure of your fresh-cut days.

For your sake, I have forgotten your address.
I have affixed all my stamps to the bottom
of the coffee table. I have slit my packing-boxes
with an assassin's swipe, and moved half-
a-gas-tank's ride from the closest post office.
And so know that all is well here too.
And I will bear this talisman of dismay for you,
because it was my charge, because I am
beyond its effects, because it takes up no space,
because you have not asked for it.

Roxeanne Halpine

New Jersey in June

The moon lights the beach like day
for a dozen of us celebrating summer at nineteen.
Our faces bright with moon-sheen,
we drift down the beach, and I walk next to Dan,
whom I've known so long I remember
when he got that mole removed
above his eyebrow.
The moon must strike me funny,
because out of nowhere
I lean over and kiss him,
and he kisses back, holds my hand
as all of us drift back together.
He thinks this means he can keep kissing me,
even when we get back to the guys' beach house,
and, feeling bad, I let him for a while,
but he's climbing all over me
in the stuffy apartment, too many people,
too much beer, the guys watching porn
or playing Sega in the next room,
the girls out on the deck more than ready to leave.
Even when I shove him off me,
Dan walks back with us to the girls' beach house,
fumbling for my hand and not finding it,
asks what I'm doing tomorrow,
and I don't even know what I tell him
but then I'm walking with Lauren,
her eyebrow's raised at me and we're all saying goodnight.
Dan never mentions any of this
again to me, but once later that week
we're all at the arcade, and he looks over at me
and then we're both laughing,
he's telling me a story about the bass he caught
deep sea fishing yesterday, it almost took his head off,
and everyone says he's lying.

Jason Bradford

Yeah, I'm Weird

My doctor informed me
I'm not going to die, yet,
I should consider the possibility
of signing Do Not Resuscitate papers
and car shop for a trache.

I refused.

Wearing oxygen at night
gave my nose a pressure sore
instead of energizing my brain,
not to mention I spoke like Darth Vader.

So I refused.

Nature lead me to believe
music was for the ambulatory,
so I sing,
nature told me to hate Spinal Muscular Atrophy,
but my limitations define me,
so I refused,
and found (im)perfection.

Lois Marie Harrod

The Plumber

The plumber understood what was
public - the water main, the cleanout,
the building sewer line, service pipe,
and outdoor sillcock, but he loved
the private, and so he allowed the town
its dwelling assessments and dog licenses,
even the water meters that measured
his privileged domain. Why should he
mind when he governed the concealed:
the double basins in master bathrooms,
the bathtubs plugged with confidential
hair, sometimes fine and silky,
often roughed and kinked. He had shower
fixtures that dripped so loudly children ran
to parents' beds, toilet tanks that filled
and overflowed, undisclosed waste
that suddenly slopped onto shaggy rugs.
He knew which diapers and sanitary pads,
pregnancy tests, cotton balls, grapefruit
peels and solitary socks had been hidden.
He like the overflow bends and tricks
that snared partial plates and diamond rings.
He loved to explain P traps and waste stacks
to woeful women and deliver lectures
on stack vents and roof flashing
to distraught men. And when the hot water
heaters burst and basements were flooded
and the laundry lay sorted and soggy
on the floor because some dumb Joe
had tried to fix it all himself;
the plumber was there to explain why
copper was better than PVC and how
closest bends could so easily dam.

Lois Marie Harrod

The Quart Bottle Playhouse Hoax, 1749

Belief is a man leaping into a wine bottle: he slips in like a sampan;
a delicate hook inserted through the long glass neck flicks the sail.
The Duke of Portland bet friends that if he advertised a man
would jump into a bottle, he would find enough believers to fill

a playhouse and pay to be there. So the London papers advertised
that on Monday, January 16, on the stage of Mr. John Potter's Playhouse,
a man, fully dressed and powder-wigged, would jump into a quart bottle in sight
of all. Need I say the playhouse was crowded to suffocation with those

who shilling up? When the man failed to appear, the believers went wild,
pillaged the theatre, plundered the velvet, burnt it to the ground. The end
of one world, you might say. Yet when the duke and his friends advertised
again that the man would have appeared if someone, watching him run

through his act, had not corked him up in the bottle and stole him away.
Some believed. This is the bottle, this is the cork, you were inside - briefly.

Lea Marie Taddonio

Winter

I am writing this poem in air.

You stomp between words
out the backdoor to chop wet wood.

The rain has been beating since Wednesday and every fire
we build smokes.

The cold is stoic.

Maybe you will burn me in that squat black stove
that spits with every tindered word you swear.

I hear the thud of axe and creep toward the window that faces the
neighbors.
Press nipples hard against frosted windows, a pink beacon
to cut the wind and raze the possumshadow
but their house is dark

Probably propped in a warm bed with quilts and hot water bottle reading another
sensible chapter of historical fiction.

Such nice people.

They have two sheep, some chickens.

Lea Marie Taddonio

Ablution

I walked barefoot over
cool, damp grass to
slit my belly in the night
beside the quiet river.

I removed stones stained with the ache of earth
and held them down beneath the water
until white again.

Placing each back properly
I stitched the wound with careful thread.

Shanti Weiland

I Know Why Buck Rogers Got Fat

At 300 pounds, the weight
of his past became
a balloon, light and
slippery. It was pink,
his memory, like sudden euphoria
after a binge. The tough
pecs of his past were formed
in space, in a time not unlike our
own: women smothered
in gleaming, tight pants, and machines
that break. It was this recognition
that invited the last 50 pounds to his
former, Captain-of-Cuteness
frame: that eventually, it all
breaks. His damned shipped, his hope
of return, his pull with the ladies, gravitational
as it was. And with this thought he ate
the last chocolate éclair, licked
the airy whipped cream and felt
the kind of sweetness that lasts
all night.

James Norcliffe

the man who burnt his hat

because he had shaved his head
it seemed a good thing to do

when he flicked his lighter
like a sudden thought

the idea flared and flamed
and the fibres took it on

there was a scent
of possibility in the air

acacia blossom pork crackling
watch glasses turning reaching

new beginnings perhaps
so that when the woman returned

he saw tendrils curling from the ashes
fronds lime-green and gentle as a caress

but she saw only the ashes
a wisp of smoke as from a cigarette

in a black and white movie
and one scenic calendar
frozen on the wall

Gillian Wegener

Smoots and Dooley Architectural Salvage

That box of glass doorknobs. That box of hinges. That box of sturdy screws.
The iron gates to a hundred different gardens - now a hundred gateless gardens.
Everything's homeless here, singular and naked. Limbs without bodies.
Doors lean like tired men against the long wall, knobless and patient.
Windowframes divide the world into quarters or eighths and miss the old views.
All those wrought-iron flourishes and curlicues, the alluring texture of rust.
Paint peels into little curls of faded blue and yellow. Even white can fade.
In a chipped enamel bowl set on a stove with no oven door, a cat sleeps.
Everything's homeless, bodiless, so many mix-and-match puzzle pieces on display.
Commodes lined up so daintily they can only be called commodes.
The box of glass doorknobs catches the light and breaks it into a million pieces.
Even white fades, becoming less and less itself, becoming a thin wipe of dust.
Does the window know its housemates? Would the door recognize its hinge?
The old views over the gardens, the plumbago near the painted gate.
The little paint peels and falls, yellow and blue doll curls, sharp and sad.
Texture of rust, flaky, gritty, that metallic smell, that dangerous color.
The screws, long as fingers, thick as fingers, clack and murmur to each other.
One gate has a key stuck in the lock, too stubborn to give up on purpose.
The cat wakes and stretches, steps out of the bowl, jumps into sunlight.
The bowl is white with a blue rim. The commodes, so white they glare and stun.
I'd carry this box of doorknobs to my grave if they'd get me where I want to go.

Gillian Wegener
City of Richmond

a river splits it, serrated water, a few barges
fireflies along the edges of parking lots, like runway lights
vertigo from looking up at Jefferson Davis
the museum guard shouts in a room full of swords, "The war ain't over yet!"
the water in the river is the color of tobacco spit
the vines spring up flamboyant, waving little kerchiefs the texture of damask
not the rattley brown of California
after work hours, the abandoned city doesn't feel like entertaining
burning oil, honeysuckle, the scent of rain soon
the river holds itself still, on the river the shadows of clouds
pinkish smoke makes its way delicately among the barges
grits heavy on the plate like a city in the process of melting
antebellum houses ache and fail, paint peeling back like bible pages
Jefferson Davis' monument swells in humidity, his sword is chipped
it's like breathing someone else's breath, someone you don't love
after work hours, the city dresses down, buses run backward or not at all
at the Canal Walk, groups of black people, separate groups of white people
more monuments: Jackson, Beaumont, Lee, Fighting Joe Hooker
the edges of the city are being consumed quite thoroughly by vines
like someone you don't love, but maybe could get used to
at the end of the street of Civil War monuments, a marble Arthur Ashe
the pale-haired bouncer slaps bat in hand, wooden smat-smat, checks ID
in the abandoned city, after work hours, a tourist turns a map over and squints
even the green beans taste like cigarette smoke, but not in a bad way
he can't read the map when the streetlights keep flashing out

Gillian Wegener

Funderwoods/Micke Grove Park

The woods are oaks and spread their woody fingers over us.
The paint peels on the aging signs, this one a toothy squirrel
holding up a paw: You must be this tall to ride alone.
The girl running the carousel is a madonna, that serene.
Tickets are 10 for 10 dollars and curl in the hand like a pet.
Music falls out of the smaller trees, splashes and evaporates.
You must be this tall to ride alone on the child-sized roller coaster,
the tilt-a-whirl, on mini airplanes, on dervishing tea cups hot to the touch.
The bumper cars are broken, heaped together in a junk yard pile, and
the painted eyes on the squirrel are the almost-blue of skim milk.
The boy running the roller coaster can't stop looking at the carousel madonna
while her horses lift up and down, leather reins worn to brittle strips.
The airplanes have names like Thunderbird and Thundercloud and
there's no waiting in line here. Two kids on that ride, one on this.
Under the roller coaster, weeds with feathery leaves bend and flower.
Music falls out of trees and into our laps, a little sticky, a little cool.
The rides click and whir, creak to stops and jolt to starts.
The oaks spread their woody fingers and pattern the pavement.
The roller coaster boy has left his post and is whispering his plans
into the carousel girl's benevolent ear. She smiles, still serene, and
takes the curled ticket of a child who runs to find the perfect horse
and who cannot imagine a more shining moment than this.

Kim Jensen

The Curse

It's easy to fall
into self pity
 when you're bleeding
 and cramping
 and your pad is leaking

and then (to top it off)

The corpse of your
 least favorite uncle
 starts speaking.

He's lying in state
on a raised platform
 like a Vladimir Lenin
a monumental human slab,
 a horizontal expert

in all things seen and unseen.

Your poems used to be better, he says
 without lifting his head; his eyes
 face the ceiling.

It's all in a sort of
 Vito Corleone whisper — without moving
 his lips.

And it's just you in there
 alone
with this colossal hulk
of an omniscient dead critic

And there's nothing you can do about it
but to inquire discretely
for the nearest
exit.

L. Carol Lappin

Next Mourning

Strolling from Ram to Regal, from Regal to Ranger
I kick a tire. Man... I'd like a Hummer.
All that square-jawed, slick-suited or ball-capped
Hunting and bragging herd, are selves I can ignore.

Yet somehow, I stroll through all these lots,
The saleswoman steers me to the Windstar!
Can't she see who I am? If only she knew me then.
I was young and poor, I craved
What all men crave: a bigger dick...

Now that I'm old, my needs are pitiful:
I just want that saleswoman schmoozing that punk
To want *me*. I can't believe — she ignores me.

Was a time, I couldn't keep my wick dry.
The chicks dug me daily and begged for more.
Ah but I bit the bullet, settled
- like dust

I can't believe it — now that damn sales chick is trying
To sell me a Volvo! And she pats my wife's dog.
Forget it. *Cuddles and I are going home.*

My last bit of wildness a vapor in my long forgotten past
(NOT by my wife with the memory of a friggen elephant)
But — today I miss my boy away at school
And I wish I had *my own* dog. Maybe a bullmastiff!

I look at my life and am afraid
It will get worse, my stocks will plummet,
My social security already spent.

Pretty young things calling me Sir
And I awake to my father's face in the mirror
But with a look I never saw.

It was at Harold's funeral last night
His stucco face in blank acceptance
All that Rogaine wasted on a dead man... I knew
It could have been me.

I beat him at cards last week, I was at the top of my game!

And now I think ... when I die
I'll go with cremation
I'll be the big brass urn on the damn nightstand

Ann Struthers

Floating at Carthage

We wander among the ruins, the foundations
of little houses, floors of terrace,
some still intact, one with black and red
Greek key borders; we find
the forum, the baths,
the present President's compound on cliffs
above them, so we must not point
our cameras in that direction.

Having seen enough toppled pillars,
we pause at the cafe and sip our sodas,
among the fallen, fluted marbles,
and think of the woman who lived
in that little house, who put yogurt to set
in the evening, in the morning cooked flat bread
on a heated stone beside the doorway, washed
olives and grapes for the children,
and looked out at the sea below,
waves coming in languidly,
bearing the boats of the Roman army,
floating innocent as leaves
on the turquoise water.

Linda Caldwell

A Famous Young Poet

lived in this house, but it wasn't me.

The boy who hid his shotgun
under my mattress is gone,
the one who held hands with the girl
that could be my daughter, has slipped
the traces of Paint Lick Creek off his shoes
but not from his poetry.

The man who sang "Carrickfergus"
and played the tape of "Joshua Tree"
left not a note in the house.
There are a few possessions here mingled
with mine that are still his,
but I begin to forget which was whose.

Once in a while a kitten shows up in a litter
with the mask of a Siamese and I wonder
if his cat is there watching me from the
ironweed and goldenrod..

Since you lived here,
sprouts of locust and walnut have grown into trees.
My hair is all white now, but I think I am no wiser
for its turning.

The June grass your tires pressed down
has burned the color of El Diablo.
Something inside me is that color and texture, too.

Crystal Robinson • Sweet and far more delicious than a plum

Crystal Robinson

Sweet and far more delicious than a plum

I have taken
That boy
you kept in
the darkness.

I suppose
you were probably
saving
your love.

Forgive me;
I am relentless,
so sweet
and not cold.

C.W. Owens

Apostrophe to Toilet Paper

You come packaged
proudly as cookies
with your claims to preferment -
three-ply, baby-soft,
forest friendly - ferried
toward the scanner with bananas,
wine, dental floss. Even
your last name puts you
in the family privileged
with Shakespeare's art.

Alone, for relief,
all are grateful for you;
all pay close attention
to the signs they write
on your detachable panels;

and though frugal armies
urge your scanty use,
one wants your thorough services,
for you take upon yourself
a burden we don't wish to bear.

Yours is a sacred intimacy,
so far from degraded that only
loopy teenagers would think
to use you to bedevil neighbors,
bedecking evergreens in front of schools
but there you are,
long and naked testudo,
draping the raised arm
of the founder's statue
like the napkin of a maitre d',
your cylindrical origin

at his foot, a waste.

Paul Hostovsky

Big Man with Little Lunch

The big man with the little lunch
in a brown paper bag
folded neatly at the top
no doubt by whomever
made the little lunch
for the big man crossing
the street on his way to work perhaps—

must have eaten lots of little lunches
just like this one
over a lifetime
to have gotten so big.
The little lunch looks
so small in his big hands
which take turns carrying the little lunch

not because it's heavy—it isn't heavy at all—
but because his big hands
can't get a handle
on the neatly folded ridge
of the brown paper bag
which holds the little lunch which
the big man has been carrying since he was small.

Where are you going with this, you want to ask
about the big man
with the little lunch
crossing the street on his way
to work perhaps—we don't
know. All we have is the big
man switching hands, and the little lunch which isn't heavy, at all.

Paul Hostovsky

Breasts Poem

He went up to the poet after her reading
and told her he loved her breasts
poem. He paused after the word breasts
as though it came at the end of a line
in a poem about breasts. He was being
silly and also serious the way
breasts are silly and serious but she
didn't see it that way. She was
a very serious poet and she didn't
crack a smile. But her breasts poem
was full of the pleasures of connotations,
which he couldn't get out of his head--
jounce, for example, which sounds like
joust, which carries with it pictures
of women bouncing up and down on horseback
carrying poles under their armpits
called lances in the parlance of knights
at a tournament—the perfect word
for when a female passes by like
a song, like a poem with all the right words
in all the right places and he can't
get it out of his head, and he wants
to bash his head against another male
head, just to get it out of his system because
whether he dies or whether he gets the girl
with the jouncing breasts, either way,
he will feel a hell of a lot better than
sitting around at a lousy poetry reading
in a flimsy folding chair, squirming
with desire for those lovely breasts rising
and falling, the lungs beneath them filling
with the poem, the poem filling his head.

Paul Hostovsky

Driving to Work with Britney Spears

I don't care what anyone says,
I've had to pee so bad in traffic
I've pulled over in the breakdown lane
where the courtships of small animals go on
in the ravines. I've been so full of shit
I've had to turn the radio on
just to drown me out. But I like
her voice. I like her signature
low note, that guttural thing she does
that sounds like pushing. Like she's
climbed down into a ravine and she's squatting
there among the animals, pushing.
It could be a bowel movement. It could be
a baby. It could be a second baby. Baby, baby,
it's very effective, whatever it is, and I don't
care what you think because I'm happy
singing along on my way to work,
my thumbs keeping time on my steering wheel,
my head full of bullshit and beauty and Britney
Spears pushing and singing and making babies.

Michael Hettich

The Toupee

For years I've collected teeth in a glass
peanut butter jar I keep on the mantle
or use as a bookend: tooth-fairy teeth
from my children's childhoods, a shark tooth I wore
on a lanyard around my neck a long

time ago, dog teeth and cat teeth,
a broken incisor, fossilized manatee
molars, a dangerous-looking fang
from some wild creature I can't identify—
the jar is almost full. And every few months,

on holidays mostly, I unscrew the lid,
spill out a few teeth and fit them up into
my own aging mouth, jab them up into
my soft gums and smile, then walk around shaking
hands and bear-hugging relatives and old friends

I hardly recognize, kissing all the women
on their perfumed cheeks, hoping my teeth
will stay up in my head, trying not to lisp
my witty repartee, hoping they'll see me
as wild and still virile, with a nasty set of teeth
to go with my stylish toupee.

Fernand Roqueplan

Getting Stoned in the Pioneer Cemetery Bulldozed for the Westgate Shopping Mall

Kinship with the past—bland & boring,
like cornbread without salt or soda;
grief for homeless squirrels, Mickey's Bigmouth
empties tossed atop collapsed coffins: 420
Swizzy Preston sez and though it's cheap smoke
it's sweet smoke; tell the judge
we'll see him later!

Last week a cemetery beautiful, a park;
Methuselah roses, lamp-post trunk honeysuckle
vines, shotgun shell pecans—nutmeats buttery sugar
thudding atop broken marble & crumbled granite—
statuary so ancient names and dates flake
from the stones; everything smooth,
grass trampled by hail. Waiting for the storm
to pass we kiss: Swizzy's lips a cold scar,
breasts harder than mine—Iraq 3-tour veteran,
I never served, she doesn't care—those who
abhor war & those for war: Americans learn.

Swizzy hates the fat rich chickenhawks
who started it all and think it's fantastic; careless
hands fed rapid flame: I'm a fool & a murderer,
but that's just me Swizzy sez. She doesn't despise
the soccer/safety moms, so soft and sweet
like near-rotted peaches, nor disclaim marriage,
though we'll never marry since we all know
about it are our absurd parents, or refuse
to work, when a job is chronic, or blame God
who only fails as a dream of mankind,
like communism or democracy

John Thornburg

Sunday Morning Flux

Sitting against the screen: staring
into the singular digital eye
of monstrous mechanical intelligence
wondering as always, what to write.

this is where all the dust in my room congregates:
piling up like dunes in a massive micro-desert
this creature's cadence is the keyboard,
a brick wall of sounds and of serums
of puzzles and of possibilities

this is where are the protests aggregate
a flesh-eating empire of amorphous things
waiting to rip me from sleep
to tear me from my pillow
hospital-white, careful-blue

there's no honey in the honesty
no Homer and no Odyssey
but still a sightless Cyclops built of
nearly ethereal masonry
coffee-black, and ghost-gray

Brent Fisk

Biological Clock

A boy's virginity is never lost--
it's more a coat cast off in heat,
a firecracker flicked away.

Mine I could have given to a timid smoker
already two months pregnant,
but waited, not for love, but out of fear.

Her shyness was the moon behind clouds,
but a hunger also made her shine.

Now I watch for her at class reunions,
imagine frosted hair, bulky sweaters,
her eyes a washed out blue so good at drawing in.
When I'd say goodnight, the storm door scraped the stoop.
And through the picture window I saw a cuckoo
clock, its weights near the floor, the chains run long.

Byanka Romero

Accidentally, I Became the Other

Accidental touches exchanged between us
Both of us know we have to stay apart
Consequences await if we cross the line
Double-dealing with love can result in loss
except if you're good at the game
falsifying your true intentions
Generally, I'm the one in her position
Hoaxing me was what my lover did
Impalpable, this feeling I have now
jeopardizing my morality
Kryptonite is what you are to me
lessening my self-control
making me want what I can't have a little more
neverminding her
One too many times, I've chosen different sides
playing my own heart leaving myself confused
Running around the truth
Shit, I'm afraid I'll give in and now I'll be the other girl
Tender kiss, tiptoeing across my lips, we don't have to go all the way
Unscripted, I didn't expect this
vacuum in my chest to be filled with warm breast again
What do you think we should do?
X out what we're trying to hide
yo-yo with my feelings and hers
zero-option it and let our guards down?

Cassie Schmitz

The Recurring Death

I knew her as a honeycomb,
one fallen, unhinged from a branch,
an orchard half-buried
in the earth, her chambers
still wet with the trace of honey.

I saw her after midnight,
felt my nerves roll down
through each leg, stones
plunged through the lake-
water of my body.

The first time there was white
foam pooling on her lips,
a flight, the sharp dice
of helicopter blades,
the oxygen evacuated
from her blood, her brain.

I stood listening to the ventilator
push her lungs up, push down,
a patch of blood like a thumbprint
on her cheek, her head shaved,

I saw the past, the trail of dead bees,
I saw the future, the hive
dissolving, burning.

Matthew Vetter

Hunger

The past is brought up in the things I ate,
boxed macaroni, the orange powder
dusting the old linoleum,
mulberries from the broken tree by the river,
ketchup sandwiches,
the sweet bellies of black ants.
I sucked at watermelons on the back porch,
spitting the black seeds into the cracks of the driveway.
My father's fireman's uniform,
its smell of smoke and fried chicken,
I ate this and more.
I ate the piss-sour clover that my father ate
as a boy in a greenhouse.
My mother insisted I eat lima beans,
I ate her instead.
I ate the scabs and veins of her legs
when she maintained the only way
to wash floors was on hands and knees.
I ate the slump of her shoulders,
the sound of her screams on Saturdays.
I licked Comet from grimy tubs
and sinks full of my brothers' whiskers.
I sucked Windex from second-story windows.
I lapped up Pine-sol like a dog from wood floors,
ran a finger along the mantle for a taste of pledge
with its lemony zest to cleanse the palate
and moved on to the second course.

Matthew Vetter

The Fruit of the Roach

Roaches broke my mother.
Once strong, her face turned
cowardly at the sight

of their eggs like
miniature dates
or figs nested beneath

a mattress or fortified
in the dark recesses
of the pantry. How

she screamed to see
the female scuttle across
the kitchen sink, swollen

with new fruit on her back
or the male crawling up
a bedroom wall, flailing

his drippy antennae
in arrogance. She came
with toilet paper, steadfast

in her hate. She came
with bombs and spray.
She tried everything

but always came back
to me beaten as I bent
to hold a dustpan

against her broom.

Matthew Vetter

The Workshop

They will probably say things like,

"The punctuation is too complex."

"I think you have to break this line."

and

"Look at the varying line lengths and haphazard shape

of the poem. This is an indication that the poem

is leading you, and not vice versa."

"Less is more."

or

"This one feels like it wants to continue."

"This type of ending will work,

but not this exact ending."

"There is not enough to go on here,

I need some insight as to why or how

the speaker comes to this conclusion."

"Too abstract."

Perhaps,

"This is a very vague way to end,

maybe try ending on an image

that conveys this same message."

"It is okay to use abstraction,

as long as it is anchored by concrete images."

"What if you somehow split this into couplets?"

"I still think it needs a more definite structure."

"It could use a bit more imaginative pushing."

"There's room here, too, for another turn,

digression or aside."

Let them.

And let yourself

walk away,

out the side door

if necessary.

Get in your car,

piece of shit that it is,

and drive out to the cemetery,

any cemetery will do but

the kind you find in the country is best,

a dirt road leading up to a gathering of stones,

a rudimentary fence or wall,

encircling a small family.

Say, "Hello!"

Tell them, "This type
of ending will work,
but not this exact ending."

Contributors' Notes

Alonso Avila gets to be the first name in the bios. Also, he's the Mexicutioner.

Gay Baines lives in East Aurora, New York, and is a member of the Roycroft Wordsmiths. She has been writing since age eight. Her poetry has appeared in *RE:AL*, *Rattapallax*, *Cimarron Review*, *Slipstream*, and other journals. She is co-founder and poetry editor of July Literary Press in Buffalo. In 2002 she published her first novel, *Dear M.K.* The latest version of her collected poems, titled *Walking After the Blizzard*, is still looking for a publisher. Her favorite writers are J.M. Coetzee, Joan Didion, Eavan Boland, Carl Dennis, Edward Hirsch, Sharon Olds, Donald Hall, and Emily Dickinson. Among many, many others.

Lauren Banos is a senior at Coe College, majoring in sociology. She has made her journey from the Windy City to the cornfields of Iowa in search of enlightenment. In her spare time she likes to rock out at the House of Blues.

Lidia C. Batista, from Chicago, Illinois, is currently a senior at Coe College. She was born in the beautiful Dominican Republic. She grew up listening and dancing to Spanish music. She loves to cook, and she enjoys a cold Corona.

Nicholas Bertelson believes there is a persistent sense of vagueness in contemporary times. Most modern artists want to talk about every problem currently plaguing society all at once, but they don't actually seem to say anything. They are also very good at pointing out problems without proposing any solutions. There is no man guiltier of these minor perpetrations than myself. Now, since this publication is only allowing me to use one hundred words and as of now I've used exactly eighty-five, I will put forth six straightforward words to describe myself. Substantial. Material. Nonaligned. Subjective. Formed. Considerable.

Rose Black lives by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks in Oakland, CA, where, together with her husband, she operates Renaissance Stone, a studio and supply source for stone sculptors. She has a passion for the prose poem, and has read her poetry in major venues throughout California. Some of the publications in which her work has appeared or is forthcoming are *Runes*, *Spillway*, *Slan*, *The Hampton-Sydney Poetry Review*, *Hubbub*, *RiverSedge*, *Owen Wister Review*, and *The South Carolina Review*.

Katie Blanchard was the coffee bitch. She was also moral support. She is short, and she acts.

Aubrie Boniface is hot. And her hair is hot. Yes, she knows it short—that's how she likes it. She likes to sniff squirrels.

Jason Bradford, 20, lives in Center Point, Iowa with his mother Shirley Nie

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dermann. He currently attends Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, majoring in English Literature and Creative Writing: Poetry, and plans to obtain an MFA in creative writing through whichever school accepts him. Jason is blunt, concise and honest. Afflicted by the neuromuscular disease Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Jason sees the world from a different angle every day. He has had one other poem titled "A Portrait of You" published in a pamphlet called *Coetry*.

Michelle Brooks has published work in *The Iowa Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Orchid*, *Phoebe*, *Gargoyle*, and elsewhere. A native Texan, she now lives in Detroit.

Linda Caldwell is a poet and playwright from Paint Lick, Kentucky. Among her credits are the journals: *Prairie Schooner*, *Chaffin Journal*; *Appalachian Heritage*; *Tears in the Fence*, and the anthologies: *Poetry as Prayer*, edited by Denise McKinney, and *Of Woods and Waters*, edited by Ron Ellis.

Susana H. Case, Professor at the New York Institute of Technology, has recent work in many journals, including: *Cider Press Review*, *Diner*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Mochila Review*, and *Slant*. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, she is the author of *The Scottish Cafe* (Slapering Hol Press, 2002), *Hiking The Desert In High Heels* (RightHandPointing, 2005), and *Anthropologist In Ohio* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2005).

James Doyle's new book, *Bending Under the Yellow Police Tapes*, was published in June, 2007, by Steel Toe Books. He has poems coming out in *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Pinch*, *Common Ground Review*, *Slipstream*, *South Dakota Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *The Chaffin Journal*.

Wesley Durham is a teacher and writer from Cleveland, Ohio. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Kenyon College, and is working toward a Master's degree in professional writing from the University of Southern California. His poetry has appeared in magazines such as *Persimmons* and *Cherry Bleeds*. He is currently living in Los Angeles.

Katherine Edgren is a 57 year old social worker from Dexter, Michigan who works for the University of Michigan's University Health Service. She was awarded first place for the Writer's Digest non-rhyming poetry contest, and her poetry appeared in *The Year's Best Writing* in 2005. She also received third place in the Current contest. She has been published in various journals including *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Barbaric Yawp*, *Main Channel Voices*, *Oracle*, as well as the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Kaitlin Emig dreams of vagabonding the rest of her life to far off countries with luxurious beaches but the stinging reality of student loans holds her back, temporarily, until she figures out what an English major, Writing minor, overly-committed student-athlete can show for a resume. Her biggest fear is sharks, a

reason why Kansas is a safe place to call home.

Gina Ferrara lives, works and writes in New Orleans. Her poems have appeared in numerous anthologies across the country including *Poetry East*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, and *The Litchfield Review*. Her chapbook, *The Size of Sparrows*, was published by Finishing Line Press in December, 2006, and she was recently awarded a grant by the Elizabeth George Foundation to study and travel in Ireland.

Brent Fisk, a writer from Bowling Green, Kentucky, has work appearing in *Rattle*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Fugue*, and *Cincinnati Review*. His work has received three Pushcart nominations, and he won honorable mention in this year's Boulevard Emerging Poets contest, as well as the Willow Award.

Molly Fisk is an NEA fellow in poetry. She's received a grant from the California Arts Council and won the 2007 Dogwood Prize and the 2005 Robinson Jeffers Tor House Prize. She's the author of the poetry collection *Listening to Winter*, and a commentator for NPR and community station KVMR. She teaches the on-line workshop Poetry Boot Camp and lives in the Sierra foothills.

Bart Galle is a medical educator and artist. He has self-published *Continuing Presence*, an artist's book of paintings and poems, and has recently published poems in *The White Pelican Review* and *Main Channel Voices*. He lives with his wife in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Iris G. Garcia decided it was her turn to edit. It's her senior year at Coe, and she told herself she might as well. She's been published in *The Coe Review*, *The Pearl*, and as an Honorary mention in the ACM Nick Adams contest. She still writes her I as an upsidedown T. The Midwest has made an impression, as she now finds herself saying the word "pop" instead of coke.

Roxanne Halpine received her MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She lives and writes in Philadelphia, PA.

Lois Marie Harrod's *Firmament* has just been published by Finishing Line Press. Her *Put Your Sorry Side Out* was published by Concrete Wolf in 2005, and she won her third New Jersey Council on the Arts poetry fellowship in 2003. Her sixth book, *Spelling the World Backward* (2000), was published by Palanquin Press, University of South Carolina Aiken, which also published her chapbook *This Is a Story You Already Know* (1999), and her book *Part of the Deeper Sea* (1997). 300+ of her poems have appeared in various journals.

Connie Hershey of Concord, Massachusetts, is a poet and book artist. Recent poems have been published or are upcoming in *Yalobusha Review*, *Perihelion*, *Atlanta Review*, *GW Review*, *American Writing*, *Worcester Review*, *Hubbub*, *Tightrope*, *Onthebus*, and in seven anthologies.

Michael Hettich's most recent books are *Swimmer Dreams* (Turning Point) and *Flock and Shadow: New and Selected Poems* (New Rivers Press), both of which were published in 2005. A chapbook, *Many Loves*, was published in 2007 by Yellow Jacket Press. He lives in Miami with his family, and teaches at Miami Dade College.

Paul Hostovsky's poems appear in *Frigg, Fringe, Slant, Slab, Swink, and Oink*. He is trying perhaps to make a poem out of his publication credits. Spring is a perhaps tongue in a perhaps cheek, rearranging all the saliva. He works in Boston as a dog, sniffing Earth's crotch, especially in spring, season of salivations.

Emily Ingalls is a sophomore psychology major (for now) from Minneapolis, Minnesota. When she's not ill, she loves being a part of AOII, CESAW, and the Vagina Monologues, and listening to Celine Dion. She's really enjoyed getting to know everyone on the Coe Review and drinking Becca's "coffee."

Samantha Jacobo is a freshman at Coe College from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She likes music, and may someday ride in the pouch of a kangaroo in Australia.

Joyce Janca-Aji, besides her day gig at Coe, studies the secret poetics of *Thomas the Tank Engine* with her son.

Kim Jensen is a writer who has lived and taught in France, California, and the Middle East. Her first novel about a turbulent affair between a Palestinian exile and an American student, *The Woman I Left Behind*, was published in 2006 by Curbstone Press, and was a finalist in Foreword Magazine's Book of the Year contest. In 2001, Kim won the Raymond Carver Prize for Short Fiction, and her writings have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous publications. She is on the editorial board of the *Baltimore Review*, and is Assistant Professor of English at Community College of Baltimore County.

Joshua D. Kalscheur lives in Northfield, Minnesota. His poetry has been published in *Words On Walls* and is forthcoming in *The New Delta Review* and *Ruminate Magazine*. Joshua's poetry was nominated for an AWP award in 2006.

Julia Klatt Singer writes fiction and poetry. She works as a visiting writer through COMPAS. She is one of four writers who collaboratively wrote *12 Branches: Stories from St. Paul*, published April 2003 by Coffee House Press, which was nominated for the Minnesota Book Award. She is a regular contributor to the *Talking Image Connection* series, in which writers write in response to contemporary artwork. Her stories and poems have appeared in over three dozen journals. Ms. Singer lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Sandra Kohler's collection, *The Ceremonies of Longing*, winner of the 2002 AWP Award Series in Poetry, was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in

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November, 2003. An earlier volume, *The Country of Women*, was published in 1995 by Calyx Books. Her poems have appeared over the past twenty-five years in journals including *Natural Bridge*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The New Republic*, *Diner*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Colorado Review*.

L. Carol Lappin currently teaches English at SJSU and is on the Board of the Poetry Center San Jose. She is a native of San Francisco.

Gary Lehmann has been twice nominated for the Puchcart Prize. His poetry and short stories are widely published - over 100 pieces per year. *The Span I will Cross* [Process Press, 2004]. *Public Lives and Private Secrets* [Foothills Publishing, 2005]. His most recent book is *American Sponsored Torture* [FootHills Publishing, 2007].

Kyle Mangan has failed as an artist. He's settled for writer. Mostly he's selfish and bitter, but often times he's an angry misogynistic hypocrite who hates to be alone. He's lost hope for humanity and can't imagine spending another sixty years doing this. Also he could stand to get some exercise in.

Timothy Martin is a Michigan native, with degrees from the University of Kansas and the University of Michigan. He is currently residing in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and working the computer software industry. His work has appeared in several journals, including *Comstock Review* and *Slant*.

Mel Mickael is awesome. That's right. And she's a senior at Coe. She's in love with Leo. She knows he's a turtle. She doesn't care.

Heather Mitchell is a junior at Coe, majoring in English and Creative Writing. Sometimes she misses the sight of the Rockies back home in Colorado.

James Norcliffe is an award-winning New Zealand poet and fiction writer. His fifth collection, *Along Blueskin Road* (Canterbury University Press), was published in 2005, and in 2007 Auckland University Press published *Villon in Millerton*. His young adult fantasy novel, *The Assassin of Gleam*, this year won the Sir Julius Vogel Award. Recent work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Nimrod*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Poetry International*, *The Harvard Review*, and *The London Magazine*. Work is forthcoming in the *Iowa Review*, *Alimentum*, and *The Literary Review*. He is poetry editor for *Takaha Magazine*.

Amanda Nowakowski grew up in rural East Tennessee, attended the University of Tennessee and then went to Leningrad State University and UCLA to complete a PhD in Russian Literature. She now chairs the English Department at Viewpoint School in Calabasas, California., and her poetry has been published in *The Chattahoochee Review*, *The Mochila Review*, *The International Poetry Review*, *Red Rock Review*, *The Jacaranda Review*, and *The White Pelican Review*.

Contributors' Notes

CW Owens lives in rural Ohio. His poems and short fiction have appeared in *White Pelican Review*, *The Cimarron Review*, *The Cape Rock*, and elsewhere.

Becca Pfenning is the managing editor of this here magazine, and is damn proud. She did not have mono this year.

Anson Poe is a Junior Literature and Speech major from Cedar Falls, Iowa. His official biography is forthcoming pending further material. Also, he would like you to know that this is NOT his first bio.

Chris Ransick, Denver's Poet Laureate, won a Colorado Book Award in 2003 for his first book, *Never Summer*. His collection of short stories, *A Return to Emptiness*, was a finalist for a 2005 Colorado Book Award, and in 2006 he published his most recent collection, *Lost Songs & Last Chances*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Notre Dame Review*, *The Denver Post*, and *The Paterson Literary Review*. He is a member of PEN USA's Freedom to Write Committee, and works in his local community to support literacy and freedom of expression.

Crystal Robinson is a freshman at Coe College. She is originally from Kansas City, and loves it! She also loves writing and reading poetry. She enjoys doing many things, meeting many people, and going many places.

Byanka Romero is a big fan of Karma. She's a writer. She hates socks that fit her big. Croutons in her salads catch her off guard. She's 5'3"; it's the perfect height that tells her she'd be eaten up in the corporate world. That's why she wants to work with little kids. She loves to cook. When she's stressed, she picks at her toes. When she's happy, she touches her nose. Her grandmother told her not to stare at the moon because it drives people crazy, so she stares at it. She doesn't want to get married, but she wants a fake wedding for the party.

Fernand Roqueplan works as an interpreter for social services and, seasonally, as a steelhead fishing guide. He has published with *The Indiana Review*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Poetry East*, *Greensboro Review*, and *The Florida Review*.

Froilan Sanchez is a senior at Coe College majoring in psychology with a minor in Spanish. He hails all the way from the heart of the White Sox hometown in the Southside of Chicago. He is currently both the rush and philanthropy chairs of the Pi Kappa Tau fraternity. You have questions. He has answers.

Cassie Schmitz is from Florida.

Rochelle Jewel Shapiro's novel, *Miriam the Medium*, nominated for the Harold U. Reibelow Award, was just released into paperback by Simon and Schuster in the U.S. and the U.K. It has been translated into Dutch, and is currently selling in

Holland and Belgium. Like her main character, Miriam Kaminsky, she is a professional psychic and has chronicled her experiences in *The New York Times Lives*, "The Medium has a Message," and in *Newsweek*, "Out of the Candlelight and into the Spotlight." And I've been profiled in *Redbook*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *NYT Long Island* section, *Jewish Week*, and more.

Vivek Shrestha lives in Cedar Rapids and likes chopped liver.

Carol Steinhagen has recently retired from teaching at Marietta College to pursue the uncertain but rewarding life of a Poet. While contemplating the pros and cons of undertaking an MFA, she has completed an online mentorship with the University of Minnesota's Split Rock Arts Program. Recently published poems may be found in *The Comstock Review* and *Poetry Midwest*.

Ezra Stewart-Silver is dainty. And delicate. Maybe even handsome. He is also one of the most awesome poetry editors of all time. The man worked hard. He's been published in *The Coe Review* on several occasions because he writes awesome poems. Oh, and he's from Virginia.

Katie Stine received her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. She was a freelance music reviewer for *Anchorage Daily News*, and a member of the Alaska State Arts Council Talent Bank. Her work has most recently appeared in *Atlanta City Magazine*, and has poems forthcoming in *The Cherry Blossom Review*, and the *Tipton Poetry Journal*. She now lives and writes in Atlanta, Georgia.

Ann Struthers is the Writer-in-Residence at Coe College. "Floating at Carthage" grew out of her travels in the Middle East when she was a Fulbright Fellow in that region. Just outside modern Tunis are the ruins of Carthage. In ancient times Carthage opposed Rome, and the Roman government took its revenge by destroying the place and spreading salt on the soil so nothing could grow there. She publishes in various journals and has two collections and two chapbooks.

Lea Marie Taddonio graduated from the University of Montana-Missoula in 2003 with a degree in English, Creative Writing. She currently lives and writes on the island of Kauai. She also is lucky enough to love her day job at a botanical garden.

John Thornburg is a first-year at Coe College from Colorado who enjoys running, writing poetry and fiction, watching movies, listening to music, and brief walks on the beach. John struggles daily with the haggard, overgrown beast known as common poetry cliches and its surly comrade, overused rhyme schemes. He often ponders the fate of the music industry, and is a steadfast believer in the power of rock 'n roll. John has a long list of heroes that would

probably include the likes Eddie Vedder, Conor Oberst, Martin Luther King Jr., and China Mieville.

Sherre Vernon teaches at Camino Nuevo High School in central Los Angeles. She earned her Master's degree at California State University, San Marcos and was named a 2006 Nevada Stars Fellow at UNLV's Black Mountain Institute. Her writing credits include poems published in *The Oyez Review*, *Tapestries*, *New Writings*, *Perigee*, *Eclipse*, *Red Hawk Review*, *Heartlodge*, *Susan B. alnd Me*, and *Freshwater*. In 2008, her first poetry chapbook, *The Name is Perilous*, will appear in *Ruah* as the New Eden Chapbook winner. *Green Ink Wings*, her first work in fiction, won the 2005 chapbook award from Elixir Press.

Matthew Vetter is a student at Spalding University's MFA Program, and grew up in Maysville, Kentucky. He earned a B.A. in English from Morehead State University, where he studied poetry under George Eklund. He lives in Morehead, Kentucky with his wife and two sons.

Gillian Wegener has had poems published previously in a number of journals, including *RUNES*, *americas review*, *English Journal*, *Quercus Review*, and *The Ledge*. This year her poems were awarded a top prize in the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Contest, and her first full-length collection of poetry is forthcoming in Spring 2008 from Sixteen Rivers Press. She also had a chapbook published by In the Grove Press in 2001.

Shanti Weiland is author of the chapbook *Daughter En Route*, and winner of the Joan Johnson award in poetry. She received her Ph.D. in English at University of Southern Mississippi and currently teaches at Yavapai College in Arizona. Her poetry and essays are featured in *The Cherry Blossom Review*, *Broken Bridge Review*, *The Rockhurst Review*, *Mochila Review*, *The Alembic: An International Magazine*, *The New Delta*, *Dispatch One*, *Plum Biscuit*, *The Gibon Review*, *Rio: A Journal of Arts*, *Steam Ticket*, *Diceybrown*, *Seven Seas Magazine*, and the anthology *Great American Poetry Show*.

Stefanie Wielkopolan, a native of Michigan, is working on her MFA in Poetry at Chatham University. She grew up watching cartoons in her parent's bowling alley bar, and credits her eccentric upbringing as the catalyst that developed her love of writing. She loves to explore the small neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, eat potato pancakes, and in her spare time, dreams of having her own talk show on NPR.

Dave Woehrle, the man of gas, is a student at Coe. He helped with the Coe Review. His opinions are always unfounded. If you smell something, it's him.

Stephanie Woolley-Larrea's writing appears in *Sentence*, *Mipoesias*, *400 Words*, *Lipservice*, as well as other publications. She shares her smoothies with her five year old triplets.



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