

Coe Review

A vertical strip of yellowish paper with red stains and a white object, possibly a pen nib or eraser, against a blue and white background. The paper strip is slightly curved and has several irregular red stains. The white object is positioned in the lower half of the strip, with a circular white mark at its base. The background is a gradient of light blue and white.

Volume 39, Number 1
Poetry Issue
Fall 2008

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Coe Review

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Joyce Sutphen

Looking Up

The bird, a small flicker of gray and white
in the winter branches, is just
what I needed to take my mind

from shadows on the wall, all
those weary nothings, dreary notes
knotted up into crumpled sheets of paper,

improbable answers to a question
no one asks, not once or ever.
I try to remember why I love you

and see us on a curving road,
fence-posts ticking by like comb's teeth,
making that rippled whirring sound

and then the seashell's roar, short
and sure. Even if I knew what never
(whatever) was coming, what else

could we do (you and I going, coming
as always) than be like this bird,
small flicker of gray and white?

Joel Solonche

Japanese Water Iris

The directions say to dig
a hole three times the width
of the root ball. Which I do.
The directions say to place
the plant so that it rests just
above ground level. Which
I do. The directions say to fill
the hole with potting mix.
Which I do. The directions say
to soak until the soil settles.
Which I do. The directions
say to not tamp down. Which
I don't do. The directions say
to add more potting mix if
necessary. Which I do. The
directions do not say to say
a prayer. But I do: *Live, you
skinny purple bastard, live.*

Joel Solonche

Lecture Down The Hall

We anthropologists
have to be as gender
neutral in our language
as possible. That's why
I say *critters* a lot.

Christina Burress

Like Bob Dylan Plays It

Last week I dug out the kids' harmonica to play it like Bob Dylan plays it. I played it while I sat on the pot and I played it in the kitchen and I played it on the walk to school and while I loaded plastic bottles and aluminum cans into my blue pick-up truck and I played it at the recycling depot in front of Tim the cute Waste Management worker and then I played it while driving on the 5 freeway south with my windows down but everyone laughed at me and shook their heads like I was some crazy woman trying to learn harmonica in one day. I haven't played it since.

Estrella del Valle translated by **Toshiya Kamei**

The Desert Is More Beautiful without Your Voice

When I get to LA, I'll tell her
that I don't love her. I'll tell it to her face.
I'm sick and tired of her stupid talk.
I should've stayed in Tijuana
with that miniskirt who batted
her fake eyelashes at me, but no;
I preferred to keep happiness in the glove
compartment and desires in the tires.
Then they told me, "Hey, get cozy with
the little Chicana," but why did I listen?
Where did I leave my cigarettes?
We've been on the road for two hours
and she only talks about movie stars, jewelry, and dresses
from department stores in San Antonio;
about her maxed-out credit cards, about autographs
and now the cunt wants us to go to Hollywood.

El desierto es mas bello sin tu voz

Cuando llegue a los Ángeles, le voy a decir
que no la amo. Se lo diré de frente.
Ya me tiene cansado hasta el camino
su estúpida plática. Debí quedarme en Tijuana
con esa faldita corta que me guiñaba
la pestaña postiza del hartazgo, pero no;
yo preferí guardar la felicidad en la guantera
del auto y las ganas en las cuatro llantas del carro.
Entonces me dijeron, "vamos, ánimo con la
chicanita" y yo les hice caso.
Dónde habré dejado los cigarros.
Llevamos dos horas de camino
y sólo habla de artistas, joyas y vestidos de las
tiendas departamentales en San Antonio, Texas;
de sus tarjetas de crédito vencidas, de los autógrafos,
y ahora la muy estúpida quiere que pasemos a Hollywood.

Dave Woehrle

July

*"I'll take all the time I please this afternoon
before leaving my place alongside the river."*

-Raymond Carver ("When Water Comes Together With Other Water")

Ray and Tess married in June of '88, went fishing
all of July in Alaska. The cool lakes and streams
teemed with muskie or trout or bass, fish bodies, all muscle and scales,
fought Ray's taut lines, his lumber-mill hands on the auburn rod.

Ray and Tess cast and reeled
and recast and noticed the sky,
in love with being in love and writing about it,
the sunshine on two sets of blank pages,
both quivering for pen.

They read Chekhov
to each other in an evening cabin,
journalled, drank, smoked,
spoke of fellowships envied or lost,
academia like a tan tweed coat
or strait jacket, often fitting too snugly.

The sun almost never set that month. The sun
lingered as a lonely wallflower, never
quite blending in pine or rock or horizon.

Never unnoticed by poets' eyes.

They were home 22 days.
Still in love. Still writing about Alaskan skies.

Ray tried to live with tubes in his nose. He heard
men weep in hospital halls with the door open. Green
and white everywhere: walls, scrubs, clipboards.
People at the end and not liking the end.

Ray died at 6:20 am,
his lungs like flattened tires,
heavy, black, and done with breathing this world's air. His
heart a bad fruit. The stubborn punch of cancer.

Tess cried. As did others.
The water lost.
The water lost.
And found in other places.

Barton Smock

Moses

everyone called him Moe, and not just his friends. Moe, he didn't believe in beginnings, but his wife would tell people when it started. it started, she would say, when he stopped eating his lunches. and he guessed that was about right, as right as a wife can be. he'd come home from work with his pail and set it heavy in his wife's right arm as the baby, the youngest, would be in her left. he'd say, no I didn't, maybe tomorrow. then he'd go out to smoke but he wouldn't smoke. he'd leave the cigarettes in their pack and walk out to the yard and think about putting his fat neck in the tire swing. he'd come back to the house and put his fat hands on his daughter's shoulders and say he was home and he would be home tomorrow to eat with her and her brothers. he wouldn't, though. not right away, on the weekends he'd sit on the step with his oldest son and watch little men die. such a small drop, from that step, not enough to kill a man. his son would just look at him and take the man from Moe's hands and place him on his back again. soon the day came that he left work on his lunch hour. his daughter said thanks and poked his belly. he could hardly move in his pants anymore but he managed to sit down. he asked his wife for the special and pinched her leg. coming right up was a plate of canned ravioli. fuck ravioli he said. but he didn't say it mean. he said it as if he'd just asked for permission to hate ravioli. he said it again. he said a lot of things just then, his mouth full, his wife opening cans in the kitchen. he addressed god directly. after these many years, he addressed god head on. he made for his truck, hungry for the tongues in his pail. god, Moses here. it's the ravioli, we have too much.

Justin Hyde

my father is sixty to my twenty-seven

i have come to live in his house again.
when i leave for the factory during the dark of
morning
he sleeps beneath a worn sheet on the couch.

as i tie my boots in the kitchen
dad's naked thigh pales thin,

bony as the skeletons of carp-

quiet on the banks of the des moines river

where we fished.

Suzanne Scarfone

Box of Disquiet

truth be told
part of me has lived
in this box of disquiet
for years and years
let's see
one still summer's day
two of my teeth came out
baby teeth
plop plop
ripe pears
falling from my mouth
I gasped and flushed
and poked my finger in the
wet gum
and knew I wanted
to plant them
in the backyard garden
behind the wild raspberries
under the clumps
of bee balm
and scary weeds
I had on a pale yellow organza
dress with buttons up the back
and sprigs of apple blossoms
pink and green
sprinkled on my chest
and a pine velvet ribbon
tied at my waist
and my feet were
round and bare
I pushed
and pushed on the
heavy porch door
until it opened
my arms and legs
falling into the air
rushing through prickly grass
and cat's pee and
other bits of
smelly life
I flopped on the ground
digging
with my knuckles
a dirt home

Clinton J. Frakes

Desire #4

What is Thanksgiving to a born-again-Lakota-Celt from Detroit
alone in Polynesia?
An excuse to hit the titty bar--
& gratitude is elusive as Maverick does the splits in a pink felt hat;
Chastity works her lollipop,
dropping her Catholic skirt;
then comes Eclipse, hugging a beach ball
painted like the globe.
Her booty shorts say *Total*.

What are the chances a Pine Ridge
girl would glide on stage 2400 miles from Turde Island?
The zealous MC introduces her with incongruent hype:
“Come and see *Wi!*”

Wi means woman.

A dream catcher burned to her sacrum with the four sacred colors:
red north of lowest lumbar
white disappearing south at the cleft of coccyx
yellow & black along the impossible axis
of pelvic east/west
its promise of the Seventh Generation.
She’s surprised for the first time all week when I
greet her in her grandparents’ tongue—
“*Toniktuka hwo?*”
She stumbles slightly at her spinning pole
garter drawn almost inelegandy for a bill.
“Lakota?” she asks, bending toward me.
Her tongue has a silver bolt through it.
She spills buckets of hair across my face
cooler than midnight water &
from under this tent I remember
sage prairie, buffalo and *wasna*
wild turnip & *wojapi*,
black chokecherries.

I tuck an Andrew Jackson in the
ankle strap of her shiny stiletto:
the biggest Indian killer of all time,
his face long and freakish in the glint
of rhinestones & strobelight.

But we should sing in sage beds under cottonwood
& morning star, skinny-dip in the shallow
limey creeks at Grass Mountain
 lollop in the *Paha Sapa*-
 its primrose elk trails
 on citrine-belted hillsides,
eating raspberries & rosehips,
 passing secrets mouth to mouth,

 belly to belly.

But her belly has a bolt through it too:
 Custer just a tumbleweed in a wintercount there;
Crazy Horse himself a faint, curious melody;
 calendars of Jehovah wan & forgotten
 amid the roar of the Wind Cave,
the song of all our beginning.

No, the lolloping won't happen;
 but I *am* her favorite at the bar,
getting twice the shine as the suits
 from whom she plucks bills perfunctorily
 & eases back my way in some esoteric reward
 for a few words brought across the ocean from her native plain
where I carried the Living Tree with ninety warriors
 to the Sun Dance grounds,
 laid red earth
 on the half moon altar
believing there was a center to everything.

Leta Keane

Gila Monster

Gila monster (hē'la) *Heloderma suspectum*.
n. A paunchy and lonely lizard found in the southwestern regions of the United States and northern Mexico. It is banded with scales ranging in color from black to faintly pink to the yellow of old newspapers. Its saliva is venomous and, in addition to the unsightly waddle its portly body necessitates, is believed by biologists to be one possible reason for the creature's solitary lifestyle. Female Gila monsters are notably more vicious than their male counterparts. In Mayan cultures, the Gila monster was the patron animal of middle-aged bachelors and divorce lawyers.

Joelle Ryu

the oldest superstition,

mom always said there was nothing unluckier
than breaking glass.
i supposed she'd never kissed in a cemetery
or seen a ghost that photographs florescent yellow
like on the night we first met in Vinton
and i slapped your face.
all our clumsy hands have done is un-do buttons
and break the ice, not glass.
i haven't broken anything since i was 5—
my mother beat the habit into me.
but last thursday i dropped my favorite vase,
while greeted by your answering machine.
i heard from a friend of a friend of a friend
you left for chi-town last thursday.
breaking glass never makes the same sound twice.
i heard its crack in Vinton, the shatter
when we broke ice,
the crush as you drove over more than heated sand.

Charles Weld

Love Poem From A Line From A William Matthews Love Poem

I love you baby (two-beat pause), *no shit*.
-William Matthews

It's all in the caesura—the two-beat pause
between *I love you baby* and *no shit*—
silent space that allowed the speaker of the commonplace

(in the dark car at the drive-in
as the young Bill Matthews listened in)
to feel his mistake and correct it

with intention to change what was inadequate
into something, if not enough,
then, at least, clumsy enough

in its attempt to be enough,
to be raised from the past and repeated,
years later, as line 53

of *It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*
and, years after that, by me
as I read the poem to you the summer that we met—

repeated gratefully because we're all clumsy
before love's requirement, all wanting facility
that, we somehow understand,

although more accomplished in more things than we are,
the poet understood he also lacked—
repeated because places without content

appreciate content
like the places Orson Phelps made his Victorian parties camp
on their way to Mount Marcy and their way out,

high on the spine of the approaching spruce ridge,
but below the crest enough
to block a view of the summit

which he hoped would limit the risk
of their taking his mountain for granted—
repeated by you with chalk in big block letters

across a road between two cornfields
I ran up afternoons, remembered by me often
although not repeated until now

(taking for granted, a mistake I'm also still correcting,
wanting to be your better lover now and forever).
I love you baby (two-beat pause), *no shit*.

Brian Daldorph

A good day's work

She's really mad at me.
She says, "Did you take the car in?"
I shake my head, "Tomorrow."
I haven't cleaned the kitchen.
The pizza box from last night
still on the table,
pizza inside like yesterday's news.
"Why didn't you cut the grass?"
"Couldn't get the mower started."
True:
I couldn't get it started
from the couch in front of the TV.
"I've been on my feet for 12 hours
selling perfume. What have *you* done?"
I'd drunk a few beers.
Smoked all my cigarettes.
Watched a few stupid TV shows.
Slept a bit.
Walked down the street
to Café Luna
for coffee and rolls.
"I've been working on my book."
She looks ready
to burn down
every library in the world.
But first she throws a beer bottle,
smashes the TV.
No bother.
Nothing good on anyway.

Brian Daldorph

In whatever game

you're playing
I have only one card,
silence,
which I play
over and over and over

Anthony Opal

Oh Captain

That's how it starts— Mud
fills the streets in april '89
& my father wades out barefoot to his knees
waving at the camera
 with rain drops on the lens—
He was always the captain
of his own ship & his ship
was always going down; & the rain rose
in my mother's gray vinyl jacket with the hood up
I waved; I started saying goodbye
& I didn't even know it

Dustin M. Hoffman

Pretty Ladies

My Mennonite babysitter held my pretty ladies in one hand,
her thumb creasing the box edge and pressing hard
into a brunette's navel. The other hand pointed a naked,
flesh-colored fingernail to the threshold
where I stood, red-faced and trembling, too weak
to protect my pretty ladies

living in a flimsy Hudson's gift box—brimming
with the women I'd collected, carefully carved
from my mother's magazines, using long orange-handled scissors:
women with dark shiny lips wearing JC Penney lingerie,
sun-bleached blondes in tropical print Spiegel bikinis,
the first grade class picture of my first girlfriend,
short-black-dress Glamour models, Jessica Rabbit.

Minutes before, my sisters and I had sung
"This Little Light of Mine," our cupped palms turned bushels,
hiding our fingers from Satan's whiff. While those fingers
still carried heat from little imaginary candles,
she decided to clean my room.

Now, a Mennonite stare searched for demons
burning inside a six-year-old boy. Single strands
of her yellow hair strayed from the black cap in the back
that hid length, pride, temptation. My older sister, eight, pushed

past me, into the path of her finger,
her own still glowing from candle heat, always glowing.
She told the babysitter

our mom didn't care, she knew, they all knew it was my box,

my box turned secret, holding breasts and thighs and low waist lines
that made my stomach bum.

The babysitter dropped my pretty ladies,
letting them flutter. They landed where they had been
in the middle of the floor, now scattered and backwards,
windblown hair on top of hourglasses,
printed with black and white letters
of item description and pricing
like a cloudy X-ray.

That day I learned to hide,
to slide the pretty ladies under my bed.

R. D. Drexler

Carmilla

So what if you lived in Styria
In a castle, with a moat,
With your German father, remembering
Your dead Styrian mother,
And your sleep was oppressed by nightmares.

You were visited in the small hours
By someone who looked like you -
A woman about your age, with teeth
Like the canines of a bat,
A voice like illness, & disturbed eyes.

You made sure your door was locked at night,
From the inside, the curtains
Drawn, the amulet bought from the gypsies
Affixed to your pillow.
Nevertheless all precautions failed.

You felt a presence press your rib cage
A chill beneath your nipples
And a stab like a hypodermic
In the soft flesh at the base
Of your throat. When you woke, you found marks.

You lost interest in the sun, the snow
That throbs on the black mountains,
The brook in the grove near the castle
Where you used to swim before
The water began to turn to ice.

Perhaps, if you raised yourself from bed
Found yourself in the grove, lay
On the waters until your night dress
Grew sodden, until you slipped
Beneath the green mane of water grass.

Perhaps, you could circumvent rebirth
Each night, in your pine coffin,
Half-filled with earth, circumvent your lust
For blood, the blood that sustains
The alien life you call your own.

R. D. Drexler

Hotel Bokor Palace

In the cool air, in bare concrete rooms
Bats socialize in Hotel Bokor
Palace. In the gutted lobby, moon
Light betrays the unconfident boar,
Wary, outside the casino door.

In its heyday, the French gathered here
To forget Phnom Penh, to forget
Saigon. Mere, they could drink cassis, wear
The clothes they might have worn back home, bet
Money they did not have on roulette.

In the evenings, discrete, old men in
White, starched uniforms extend the pipe,
Gummed with slowly bubbling opium.
They adjust the wooden pillow, wipe
Away night sweat, lull the French to sleep.

Here, everything was as it should be –
Deferential servants, ceiling fans,
Fois gras, camembert, iced, white burgundy,
Understanding girls - and boys - at hand,
No forms or convoluted demands.

In a sense it's easier now. Jeeps
Lurch up from the ocean-front below.
The bones of those thrown from the cliff sleep
Disembodied by the rains. Spirits howl
After dark. The French aren't here to know.

Tracy DeBrincat

Swallow

you want to lick it
till I come
do you

you want a lake-sized cloud of pink
flamingos
muscle necks
black beaks
wings beating
madly madly
inside your mouth

you want the vise-like grip of a poet's
steely knees around
your head
holding it there
till the last of the birds settle back
upon the water
in one tight slick sheet

but will you swallow it all inside
the birds
the lake
its silver and gold fish
do you think you can bear the flickering slipping
violet-veined reefs
rocks flecked gold and red
flashing fingerfronds of briny chlorophyll

do you
all of it
every last bit

Julie L. Moore

Cicada Shells

We used to pluck them from tree trunks like berries from vines. Collect them in jars. So fragile, we could crush them with a Charmin squeeze. Which we did at times, just to hear the crackle, to feel the force of our fingers. And other targets were as easy to find. Skins of snakes in our kid-sized hands wielded like swords, then thrashed against arms. Grasshopper corpses on the driveway kicked like stones. And the live ones: spiders and ants squashed under the tips of our toes. Beetles whose brittle bodies crunched like bones. Pill bugs from rocks overturned oozing like pus. We raised killing to an art, pillaging all summer long to the music of cicadas, their husky bellies pulsating on buttonball bark.

Nick Bertelson

Six Years to Play in the Dirt

Only archaeologists discover skeletons
all together, intact,
and preserved in dirt.
They use little black brushes
and wear hard-brimmed hats.

The lay discover,
or as some may call him, the tourist,
lacks the education
to find bones from one animal,
all in the same location.

He's a man in hard-brimmed hat
hoping to find something whole.

Josh Thompson

rattle and mum

in the darkest moonlight,
she hums like a radiator out of tune
and I watch from the window
as our neighbors lay mattresses out on their lawn
to sleep under stars, I'm sure
and we haven't been that romantic in months
and lately I feel like a shredded thesaurus,
trying to find the words to tell her that she has
collapsed my lungs and stolen the air from inside of me.

Dan Pinkerton

Picnics

1. *Memorial Day*

Lawn chairs are lined up, blindfolded,
a final cigarette & then BLAMMO!

The ostracized uncle smokes near the raspberries,
coughs up a lung, digs for a pink replacement in his briefcase.

The violence is deplorable—
bees in the Jell-O, the clatter of forks & birds
& the English language mummified.
Youngsters sneak off to maim one another
with lawn darts.

Time once again for the old man's humor:

*A duck walks into a pharmacy,
asks for chapstick, says
just put it on my bill.*

As you can see, the criminal acts are everywhere.

2. *Fourth of July*

The kid takes a ride in the old man's
cranberry-colored Buick.

*Fire those bottle rockets into the neighbors' yard,
the old man cackles. (Illegal fireworks spirited
over state lines in the Buick's trunk.)*

Nurse "Whisker-Chin"
sent him home again this year for head lice,
the dark-faced kid, weakling with long
greased-up hair like nobody else
in the fourth grade.

Here he comes crying out of the pines
with a lawn dart in his skull.

3. *Labor Day*

God, what a brilliant America!

Timid fingers of rain tap the glass, sunflowers
cast Abraham Lincoln-sized shadows,
my ostracized uncle finally advances
to that great smoking lounge in the sky.

I'm finished with this place (or it is finished with me).
I've been processed, pre-packaged, readied for consumption.

The Greyhound hurls vile insults
from its tailpipe, leaving me at the terminal
where I adhere to the contoured chair, each object
in the station bolted down for its own safety.

Why should I be an exception?

Tanya Chernov

This Red-Faced Alarm Clock Is All Wrong

The new thing watches me. I shiver
just eyeing it in the bedtime dark.
This silver square machinery: too bright, too
red. Cheap and plastic-thin in my hands
while I plugged it in and set it down.
Hard edges clash with the curvy, gold lampshades
and soft purple swirls in the duvet's pattern.

It makes me miss the friendly sturdiness
of the old one, now dead by way of volume loss.
It looks outdated, feeble as it rests
near the trash can, power cord
wrapped carelessly around its body.
Face pale with the absence
of those happy green numbers.
It let us oversleep two days in a row, let us
wake in the sensation of sleep-muffled panic.
It had to go.

I liked the smallness of this new one,
set the time and date with ease.
It looks back at me now, ungrateful
and neon, like it wants to murder me
as I sleep. With pillows over my eyes
I can still feel the red-brightness
and turn it to face the wall, then cover it
with a shirt minutes later.

Last night I dreamt the clock came alive,
grew a mouth and started screaming.

Emily Scudder

Spiral

It is what I wish the heart was.
A Guggenheim.

Frank Lloyd Wright and the Hawaiian fern
curl to a logarithmic swirl.

To keep its prey in continual sight
the falcon circles its flight

like I stare into shells. Even
snails know the ratio

that relates a Kansas twister
to the mountain goat's helix of a horn.

Gravity pulls us in/orbits/spins.
We all know there is calm in the eye.

Instead we beat. Pulsate.
We're electrical.

It is what I wish the heart was.
Not a muscle.

Holly Day

Killing Birds

it was absolutely amazing watching him
do it, just aim and “crack” and
feathers would fly. I don’t know
what kind of bat he used
but the ball was marked “Spaulding”
and it was as hard as a rock.

couldn’t play one game of ball with Jason
without killing at least one bird
robins, sparrows, big, fat pigeons
anything dumb enough to get in his way.
and it didn’t even seem like
it happened on purpose: I’d pitch straight and true
and then behind me, something’d die.

I heard, years later, that he’d made it through college
on baseball scholarships and might have even
gotten a degree
got stuck in an office job straight out of school
because no professional league could stand to see him play.

Holly Day

Pieces of Carroll

in the other room, a mushroom is attached to the wall
and it's not going to die. I have dumped bleach
and chlorine and ammonia on the same spot, over and
over, sometimes in deadly combinations of the two, and still

it blooms like a white umbrella, not the same, one, of course
because it is just a mushroom
and not some sort of
supernatural parasitic growth, mocking

all the household cleaners I have in my house
to combat it and its kind.
no, new ones have grow in the spot, one
at a time, quickly, so that there
is always a mushroom on that part of the wall.

I'm tempted to pick it, eat it, sit back
in a comfy chair and see where the disease I've ingested will take me
whether revelations will come minutes before vomiting
or dying
but no, I have children, a man asleep in a bed upstairs
mothers don't ingest hallucinogens
that don't come as side effects of
cleaning inhalations and chemical burns.

John Roche

Baked Alaska

My ex-girlfriend Lorraine made me Baked Alaska
for helping her move into her mountaintop home.
While the dessert soufflé browned
we sat on her deck watching the sunset behind the ridge
colors amplified by an afternoon thunder shower.
Finally it was ready, a golden mountain of cake
filled with green tea ice cream
and topped with a magnificent meringue.
Her kisses never tasted THIS good
but, ah, how I did crave them.

John Thornburg

Polyethylene

Build me a plastic home,
and fill it with styrofoam chairs
with cellophane walls and a celluloid bed
we'll make polyethylene love.

We'll eat only hydrogenated oils,
and delight in all the acrylic colors
of polystyrene stars that hang
like neon signs in synthetic skies

and amongst elastic trees with alloy leaves
we'll stare up into a halogen sunrise
from astro turf hills at fluorescent dawns
we will yearn for something organic.

Michael Walls

On A Hot Day

the Gatorade slides like an icicle
down his throat. And he
remembers a cold Coca-Cola,
years before, shared behind
his aunt's house, with a friend
of his cousin, a older girl
who already had breasts,
who told him she would like
to fuck Steve McQueen
in his red Ferrari and how
he had wondered if a Ferrari
had a back seat, the patch
of white that seemed to smile
at him when she lifted her dress
above her knees while sitting
cross-legged in the grass. The way
the cold coke burned going down.

Jason Bradford

Silhouette

Often, I envision myself upright,
with, at least, even shoulders,
a chest not shaped like a cello,
supported by Phelpsian legs,
on both feet,
which, at times, I do forget I have,
four gray wheels
supplanted on the ground,
I glide with the flick of a finger
on my cork-ball joystick,
rain collects
beneath my crooked wrist,
crooked fingers,
once double-jointed,
dangle like dragonfly legs.

Ann Zoller

A Small Notice In The Paper

When we went to visit
the strange family,
it was always dark.
The son let me roller skate —
but only on one skate.
The sidewalk cracked and choppy
and I would bump and stumble
not seeing where to go
until I hit a spot of light spilling
from the window. The adults would sit

on rough parlor chairs with doilies
and we would play outside in the farm night air.
His mother would make a late supper:
baloney and cheese, canned peaches
in thick sauce, and we would
sit down to eat at midnight. But first
the son would circle the table,
take bites of cheese
and spit in each coffee cup.

Strange kid, my mother said.
Crazy said my father.
He could do math problems
the teacher didn't understand,
a whiz with numbers. But I knew
he killed cats and only let me skate
with one skate. He grew up
isolated, lived in the hills
with his elderly mother and father.
The father died of old age.
One day the fifty year old son

took a gun, shot his mother, then himself.
They never left the farm. We went
there only when it was dark. That
was the only time my father smoked
cigarettes and not his pipe. The thin
white cigarette was too small
for his hand and it made me feel
he was not my father.

I hear the rifle shot and think
of numbers in his head, skating
on broken patches of concrete
in the dark. I see a white
Lucky Strike in gnarly hands
and spit swimming in coffee.

John Azrak

The Hot Corner

I grew up on an intersection in Brooklyn dubbed the hot corner, drivers in wife-beaters on summer nights screeching onto the avenue, burning rubber, manhood at stake, beer cans flung at our stoop like Spaldings. The home in my future would be on Beaver Cleaver's street. At nine,

I saw a man speeding around the corner fly off his motorcycle, helmetless head (another *spaldeen*) bouncing along the curb until his foot caught in the sewer. When he died in Veteran's Hospital, I ruled out Harley-Davidsons and English racers. Two years later, walking my new Schwinn down

the monster hill past the fortresses of Joey Gallo and Tony Anastasia (How *did* my working class parents wind up so close to Mafia mansions?) the garage across from our home exploded, the rooms above on fire. The baby was lobbed like a softball into the arms of my father. I prayed

out loud and swore off attached garages. After I got sucker-punched in the school yard for beating a kid in stickball on his turf, I vowed to send my kids to parochial school, but at fourteen, leaning on the holy water font after serving 6 a.m. Mass, Father C lifted my ass like a bowling ball

off the rack and I wondered if any home came without a parish. I took refuge on Dyker Beach golf course, across from our intersection, but after consecutive birdies (mine), JLM (monogrammed sweater) sidled up behind me as I washed my ball on the eighth hole and slipped

his gloved hand into my back pocket. I crossed out public links and imagined the greener fairways of Long Island where I've settled for three years in a sleepy town with wife and daughter and the itch to bid on the lone Victorian (detached garage, wraparound porch)

two blocks up from the hot corner.

Daniel Donaghy

What You Do to Me, Baby

after Jim Daniels and Christina Acosta

You bring out the Billy Joel in me.
The Meatloaf in me.
The canned peas and carrots in me.
You bring out the *Guitar for Dummies* in me.
The tractor mower, the leaf blower in me.
The mini-van in me.
The socks and sandals in me.
You bring out the Italian dressing over
an iceberg lettuce-and-tomato salad in me.
You bring out the flax seed oil in me.
The Weather Channel in me.
The David Letterman in me.
You bring out the liquid hand soap in me.
The 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner in me.
You bring out the witch hazel and skin-
firming daily toning moisturizer in me.
You bring out the nail biter in me
The chichi dog groomer in me.
The long-sleeve shirt at the beach in me.
The tiny hammer in the glove to break
the car window in case we fly off a bridge
and get trapped underwater—
arm in arm, no doubt, baby,
and loving every minute of it—in me.
You bring out the turkey burger in me.
The fruit salad in me.
The light beer in me.
The *Rocky III* in me.
You bring out the “Eye of the Tiger” in me.
You bring out the starter log in me.
The store-bought kindling in me.
The Yankee Candles in me.
You bring out the brie and grapes in me.
The commercial-free jazz station in me.
The kids have practice for another hour,
baby. The dishwasher’s clacking
and the dryer’s tumbling away.
Now how about we head up
for a roll on those flowered sheets?

Richard E. Mezo

Over Monarch Pass

Night, like an ocean, sidles up to jutting red rocks.
The Arkansas slices east, contained in boundaries.
Overhead, blind stars, season's first snowflakes,
Winnow the bare foothills fading behind. I nurse
The old Plymouth up the pass, relax going down.

Highway signs arch desolate towns; stark headlights
Bend around hairpin turns—those eighteen wheelers
Hell-bent to nowhere. Notched black trees arrowhead
The royal horizon. Bare bulbs, dim on porches, light
The tourist traps: everyday clutter, handlettered signs.

This is western country. Down the highway, I'll stop
At the all-night cafe for coffee, stretch, shake sleep
From my head. But for now, the moment's enough:
Weary, high from all-night driving, windows down—
Sailing a current of striped asphalt, just moving on.

Richard E. Mezo

meeting

the one cutting my hair
looks like a
high priced asian hooker.

the one sweeping hair
one chair over
looks like a
porn-site schoolgirl geisha.

meeting,
porn-site says
derisively.

only meeting that cow has
is with donut,
says my hooker.

couple minutes ago
the manager waddled over
told them she had a meeting
hold the fort down
she'd be back around noon.

why don't we ever
get to go meeting?
porn-site asks
angrily tossing swept up hair
into the garbage.

i want to ask them
if they've ever heard of
the sword of damocles

help them understand
being a manager
is more curdled milk
than martini

but the hello kitty purse
over there on porn-site's shelf
and the cricket length fingernails
covered in silver stars

Meredith Devney

Leukophobia

Because you won't buy toothpaste
I wake thick-mouthed, alcohol taste
turned to paste overnight. Infomercials
lulled me to sleep and now I am disturbed

by everything: bleached socks, double knots,
my relation to Malevich. The black cat
incessantly bathes. Your neighbor rides by
on a bike singing Eee-Aww again
and again like a donkey at dawn.
He's wearing a poncho. It is not raining.

Do you love me yet? I continue to use
dandruff shampoo, only write poems on
colored paper and I promise to wear red
on our wedding day. My astrologer predicts

we're meant to be. If I give her \$10 more
will she say we're soul mates? That she sees
longevity in our future: a ranch in Texas
where it won't snow, you teaching rich kids
how to weld and my 4-month maternity leaves
causing me to create *The Hormonal Odes*?

I want to play tic-tac-toe on the back of cereal
boxes every morning with you. But we won't
because milk is not allowed. Before leaving,
I will pluck out three of my blondest hairs
and place them on your pillow case.

Ann Struthers

Offering to the Leopard

Sri Lanka

Yellow roadside sign warns:
Elephant Crossing,
but we are scouting for leopard.
As sun drifts down the West,
we see him on high rocks, royal head
resting on his regal paws, surveying the jungle,
reading the evening menu.
His yellow eyes slide across me,
his expression non-committal.
I think he is an editor.

The guide asks me if the fat German woman
can borrow my binoculars.
She watches him a long time, the two
of them gazing at each other.
I can hear his shriek, hear hers—
it isn't over till the fat lady screams.
I ask for the glasses back. She doesn't thank me.
I offer her to the leopard, her and her obese husband.
When the jeep jounces back to the gates,
a tribe of silver Grey Langurs frisk
through the dusk, maybe ghosts of the ones
the leopard has already eaten, maybe ghosts
of small Sri Lankans, maybe ghosts
of all the ideas I have killed without knowing it.

Ann Struthers

Not Knowing Why

Adolescent white pelicans squawk, rustle, flap their wings,
lift off in a ragged spiral at imaginary danger.
What danger on this island in the middle
of Marble Lake? They're off to feel
the lift of wind under their iridescent wings,
because they were born to fly
because they have nothing else to do,
because wind and water are their elements,
their Bach, their Homer, Shakespeare,
and Spielberg. They wheel over the lake,
the little farms, the tourist village with their camera eyes.

In autumn something urges
them toward Texas marshes. They follow
their appetites and instincts, unlike the small beetles
creeping along geometric roads, going toward small boxes,
toward lives as narrow or as wide as the pond,
as glistening or as gray as the sky.
They do not know why. They fly, they fly.

Contributors' Notes

John Azrak was a finalist for Glimmer Train's very short fiction award in 2006, and a finalist in The Sonora Review's short-short fiction contest for 2007, judged by Steve Almond. He was also a finalist in Orchid's short-short contest, judged by Amy Hempel. Azrak has poems in, among others, *Court Green*, *Poetry East*, *The Santa Clara Review*, *California Quarterly*, *The Comstock Review*, *Bryant Review* and in the anthology *XY Files*.

Nicholas Bertelson is 20 years old and living in Missouri Valley.

Christina Burress lives in San Diego, California with her husband and two children. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Naropa University. She teaches poetry in the schools and has started The Del Mar Writing Project to showcase and honor the creative talents of her students. She has most recently published pieces in *The Alembic* and the ezine *Not Enough Night*.

Karin Carter is a Theatre and English double major. She lives in the theater with a bag full of novels, but comes out to read manuscripts for small literary magazines over good conversation.

Tanya Chernov earned her BA in English from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, and holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts: Whidbey Writers Workshop. She lives and writes in Seattle, working as a copyeditor for Expedia.com, where she enjoys being paid for her grammatical neuroses.

Brian Daldorh's new book of poems is *From the Inside Out: Sonnets* (Woodley Press, 2008). He teaches at the University of Kansas and Douglas County Jail. He edits *Coal City Review*.

Holly Day's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have most recently appeared in Canadian Woman Studies, Skyway News, and Ruah. She currently works as a reporter and a writing instructor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and lives with her two children and husband.

Aaron Dayton is a first-year at Coe College. He plans on being a triple major in Creative Writing, Computer Science, and Art. In addition to his work on the Coe Review, Aaron enjoys doing sound work for the Theatre Department.

Tracy DeBrincat is a freelance creative advertising consultant in the entertainment industry. Her first novel manuscript, *Every Porpoise Under Heaven*, received the 1996 Washington Award for Fiction. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in *The Baltimore Review*, *The Berkeley Fiction & Poetry Reviews*, *Crucible*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *GSU Review*, *Karamu*, *Laurel Review*, *Madison Review*, *New South*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Pinch*, *Primavera*, *Rio Grande Review*, *The Southern Anthology*, *Willow Review*, and *Zyzzyva*, among others.

Estrella del Valle's most recent poetry collection, *Vuelo México-Los Angeles Puerta 23*, was published in 2007. Translations of her poems have appeared in various journals, including *Burnside Review*, *Common Ground Review*, *International Poetry Review*, and *Pembroke Magazine*.

Meredith Devney is originally from Upstate New York and received her MFA from Emerson College. Her poems have been recently published in *The Cherry Blossom Review*, *Sawbuck*, and *The New Verse News*.

Daniel Donaghy is the author of two books of poetry: *Start with the Trouble* (University of Arkansas Press, September 2009) and *Streetfighting* (BkMk, 2005), which was a Paterson Prize Finalist.

R.D. Drexler is a professor of English at Coe College.

Clint Frakes was selected by former poet laureate Mark Strand as one of the Best New Poets of 2008 for an anthology of the same title through Meridian Press. In 2006 he received the James Vaughan and the Peggy Ferris awards for poetry. He is a graduate of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute and currently writes and conducts spiritual wilderness tours in Sedona Arizona.

Amy Gray is currently a Sophomore with the intent to graduate with majors in Asian Studies, Business Administration, and Creative Writing. Her career aspirations are still unknown.

Abby Hayes is a freshman English major at Coe College. She enjoys reading banned books, taking pictures, pretending she can speak Spanish and volunteering.

Emily Higgs is a sophomore English major who appreciates fine poetry and those who compose it.

Dustin M. Hoffman is working on his MFA in fiction at Bowling Green State University, where he also serves as assistant fiction editor for *Mid-American Review*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Blue Earth Review*, *Blue Collar Review*, and *Black Warrior Review*.

Justin Hyde lives in Iowa where he works as a correctional officer. More of his published work and his first book can be found here: <http://www.nyqpoets.net/poet/justinhyde>.

Toshiya Kamei is the translator of *The Curse of Eve and Other Stories* (2008) by Liliana V. Blum and *La Canasta: An Anthology of Latin American Women Poets* (2008), as well as selected works by Estrella del Valle.

Leta Keane is a senior at Coe College.

Richard E. Mezo has published poetry (and prose) in many journals and books; the latest poems were published or accepted by *Alimentum*, *Penwood Review*, and *MacGuffin*. I recently published an “op-ed” article in the *Washington Post* on “waterboarding” as a torture. He is currently teaching composition and literature part-time at Germanna Community College in Fredericksburg, VA.

Julie L. Moore is the author of *Slipping Out of Bloom*, forthcoming from *WordTech Editions*, and *Election Day* (Finishing Line Press). Recent work appears in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, *Cider Press Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Sou'Wester*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. Her website is www.juliemoore.com.

Anthony Opal and his wife, Laurel, live, and try to be artists, in Chicago, IL.

Dan Pinkerton's new work is forthcoming in *River Styx*, *Sonora Review*, *Diagram*, *Natural Bridge*, and *North American Review*. He lives in Des Moines, Iowa.

Joseph Ponce is a junior English/Creative Writing major at Coe College. His stories have appeared in the 41*88* Literary Magazine, a local rag out of Joliet, Illinois, Joe's hometown.

Crystal Robinson is a sophomore psychology and creative writing major at Coe College. She enjoys both writing and reading poetry and especially enjoys finding out about what others are writing.

John Roche is author of two books from Foothills Publishing, *On Conesus* and *Topicalities*. He is an Associate Professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, where he teaches literature and creative writing courses and advises the campus literary magazine. He lives in Avon, NY.

Joelle Ryu is a sophomore at Coe College.

Suzanne Scarfone's poems have most recently appeared in *Phoebe: A Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, *Cider Press Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Natural Bridge: A Journal of Contemporary Literature*, *Ducts*, *FRIGG*, *Switched-on-Guttenberg*, *Poetry Repairs*, and *Cherry Blossom Review*. She is Education Director and writer-in-residence with InsideOut Literary Arts Project in Detroit, an organization which engages children in the pleasure and power of writing by placing professional writers in schools to help students develop their self-expression and give them opportunities to publish and perform their work. She is also a teaching artist with VSA arts, an international organization which showcases the accomplishments of artists with disabilities.

Meagan Scott is from Tacoma, Washington and has spent her entire life telling stories.

Emily Scudder's second collection of poems, *Natural Instincts*, was just released by Finishing Line Press in October 2008. Her first collection of poems, *A Change of Pace*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2007. Her poetry has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Margie*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Mochila Review*, *Cranky*, *Swivel: The Nexus of Women & Wit*, Mamazine.com and been selected for display by the 9th floor elevators in Boston City Hall, included in *World of Water*, *World of Sand* (Cape Cod Literary Press), and her poem *Fiddler Crab* has been anthologized in *Interactive English: Grade 8* (CD-ROM, Hodder Education, London, England, 2008).

Jenna Shaw is a senior at Coe College with concentrations in English and Classical Studies. This is her fourth year as a Review staffer, and she will continue literary studies, in one way or another, after graduation.

Katie Sherman is a sophomore at Coe College. She enjoys working on the Coe Review staff and is looking forward to a future in the literary publishing/editing world. Although she loves her hometown of Sandwich, IL, she loves traveling and experiencing new adventures.

Barton Smock lives in Columbus, Ohio, with his wife and three children. He can be read most recently at inertiomagazine.com.

J.R. Solonche is coauthor (with wife Joan Siegel) of *PEACH GIRL: POEMS FOR A CHINESE DAUGHTER* (Grayson Books). His work has appeared in numerous magazines, journals, and anthologies. He teaches at SUNY Orange in Middletown, New York.

Ezra Stewart-Silver is a senior at Coe College. He is currently writing a poetry thesis. This is his fourth year on the Coe Review staff.

Ann Struthers teaches the most interesting college students in the world in Coe's English Department. She is currently writing a series of poems about wild life. "Leopard" grew out of one of her experiences as a Fulbright Fellow in Sri Lanka. "Why" came from watching pelicans at her summer cottage in northwest Iowa.

Joyce Sutphen's most recent book of poems, *Naming the Stars* (Holy Cow! Press 2004), won a Minnesota Book Award. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Shenandoah*, and other journals. She teaches literature and creative writing at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota.

Josh Thompson is a poet and short story writer living in Rockaway Beach, New York. His poems have appeared in *Thick With Conviction*, *The Ugly Tree*, and *Poetry SuperHighway*, among others. He's still waiting for Charles Bukowski to come back from the dead.

John Thornburg is a sophomore at Coe College studying Psychology and Creative Writing.

Sara Voss is a senior Mathematics and Computer Science major at Coe College and is undecided about her aspirations after graduation.

Michael Walls lives in Atlanta. He is a labor lawyer and environmental activist and is the Chairman of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Board. His poetry has appeared in a variety of journals and magazines including *New York Quarterly*, *Free Lunch*, *Atlanta Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Bayou*, and *Poet Lore*. His chapbook is entitled *The Blue's Singer* (The Frank Cat Press, 2003).

Gary Webb is a senior art major at Coe College. He is from Blue Grass, IA.

Charlie Weld works as an administrator in a non-profit agency, serving the mental health needs of children and adolescents, in the Finger Lakes area of upstate New York. Pudding House published a chapbook of his work, *Country I Would Settle In*, in 2004.

Dave Woehrle is an English major at Coe College. He hopes to continue working in the literary realm.

Ann Zoller has published in journals including *Nimrod*, *Poets On*, *Xanadu*, *Croton Review*, *Webster Review* and *Negative Capability*. Her book, *Answers from the Bowing Moon*, won the Pegasus Award from the Oklahoma Writers Federation.

Coe Review

A vertical strip of yellowish paper with red stains and a white object, possibly a pen nib, against a blue and white background. The paper strip is positioned vertically, with the red stains appearing as irregular blotches. The white object is located near the bottom of the strip, resembling the tip of a fountain pen nib. The background is a gradient of light blue and white.

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