



BOUNDARY STREET

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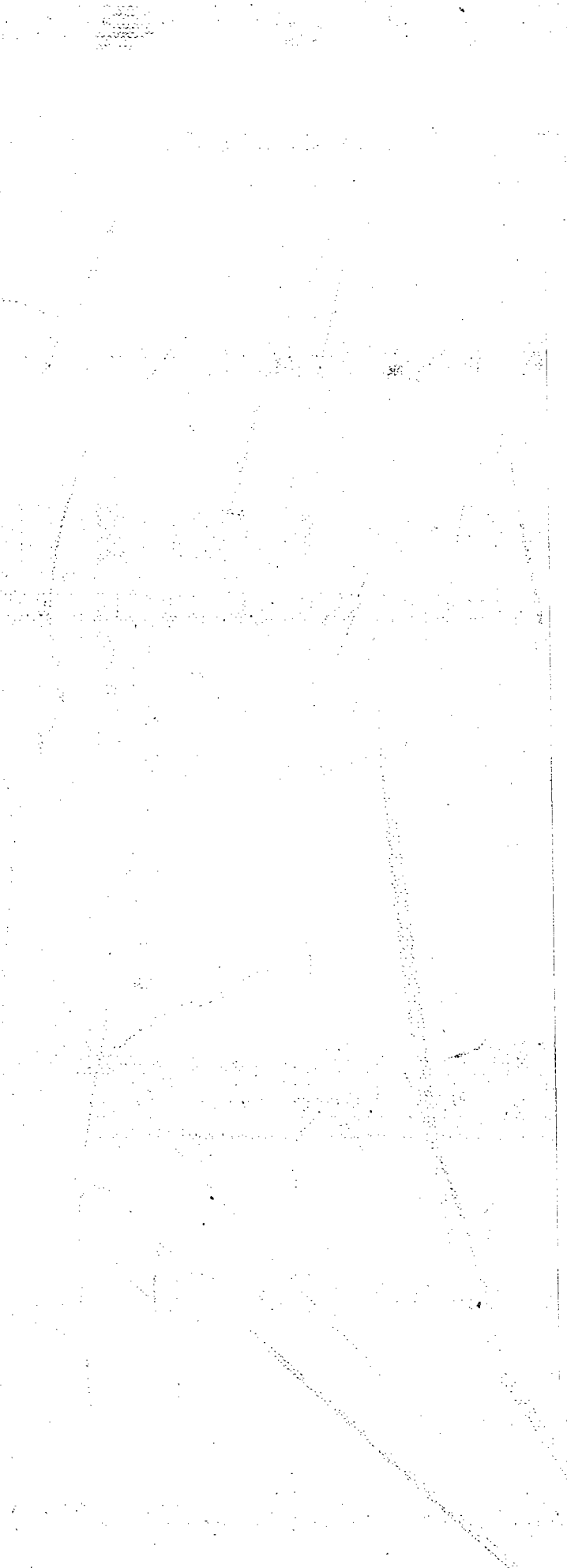
*A Collaboration*

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburgh High School

for the Creative and Performing Arts

CAPAMU



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Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts

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## PREFACE

This chapbook is the result of a collaboration between students in the Advanced Poetry Workshop at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and Literary Arts majors at The Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). Throughout the Spring 2000 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems, meeting both at CMU and CAPA for workshop sessions and discussion. This collection of poems celebrates that collaboration. We all learned from each other, and we're all better writers, and teachers, because of this project. We hope you enjoy reading these poems as much as we enjoyed working together.

*Mara Cregan, CAPA*  
*Jim Daniels, CMU*  
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BOUNDARY STREET

Anne Ray

WHAT THIS DOES TO ME

I started taking a class in weight training.  
The weights leave soot and sweat  
on my hands. Two and a half hours,  
three times a week. We work in an  
old gym, where the machines are tempered  
black steel and there's a bucket of chalk  
for your hands and a guy called  
Coach who carries a clipboard.  
I shouldn't be in this room, a concrete  
bunker with a floor of black rubber. You have  
to lie flat on your back to do that one. At first  
I felt skinny and longhaired and pink next to these  
boys—huge, lifting bricks of weight,  
sweaty, and all that grunting. Now this place  
sounds familiar. *Come on put it up*, the spotters say,  
and *breathe breathe*, and *uh uh uhhhh hehehe*.  
Sounds vaguely like a Lamaze class, I suppose,  
but I've only heard Lamaze on television.  
I like what this work does to me. I can feel muscles  
under my skin, triangles and bulges, lines in my legs  
that pull taut like cables. Not like these women who  
lift a four-pound dumbbell and dab a cheek. Most days  
I scrub my feet in the shower with soap and an  
itchy washcloth. Most days I strive for Knighthood.  
I like how the women's locker room

smells. I like a white towel over my orange-ish body. I like the roundness of my feet on the floor. My body is stretched out, except for my knees they're fat, as though they've been padded with dough, always swollen. I don't mind it when they can put up 220 on the leg press. The locker room smells a bit like a hospital, sterile. But a bit like someone poured rum on the floor, a smell that stings the nose. I remember that smell, I can taste that rum from somewhere, even over the soap that drips in my mouth.

*Francesca DeAngelis*

WE HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOREVER

We have been together forever, since junior high, it seems a lot longer doesn't it?  
Yes, it does, but it is still my time to go.  
Take me in your arms into the field of wild flowers near the countryside.  
Because that is where I want to spend my last days alone with you.  
I have loved you from day one, but death has caught up with me.  
Please remember the way I was, when we were young, don't think about me sitting here

lying in my dark and scary deathbed.  
The date where we went to the park and you pushed me on the wood swing hanging down from that old sickly tree and the swing broke but you lifted me from the ground and carried me all the way back home. I will always think about that.  
You know that from my grave on my way up to heaven I will look down on you, I will be your guardian angel.  
Children I love you,  
Donny be a good husband to your new beautiful wife. She really does loves you, I can see it.  
Ashley, my gorgeous grown-up daughter, be nice and kind to your young growing son.  
And last but not least,  
Bob, my wonderful, loving, caring husband, we have been together forever but it is my Time to go.  
I will think about you always.

*Katie Horowitz*

THE DIRT OF DELHI

There is a pool in the center of the Jama Masjid  
Mosque in Delhi, India  
The stone is red and wet from rain  
They say there are  
Twenty five thousand praying here on holidays  
All skinny as cats  
Gristly men  
And women with eyes that absorb everything

They wash their hands first  
Wash their faces  
Their babies' faces  
The bottoms of their bare feet  
Their teeth  
Pour rainwater over skin thick with air  
Bathe in thick holy water

3000 years ago  
Droves of brown men  
Bent over in the sticky sun for six years  
Pounded rock  
Laid marble  
Pounded rock  
Allah let it rain on the men when it got too hot  
Let it rain on the men when their throats got dry

Let it rain on the stones when the men had gone  
And filled the pool when it ran dry again and again

Gabriella is American  
she drinks bottled water  
and moos at cows when  
we see them in the street  
she carries around with her a bottle of  
hand sanitizer  
gelly chemical stuff  
that she slides in the outer pocket of her purse  
next to her toilet paper  
her credit card  
she has me turn on faucets for her  
open doors  
because they are dirty  
when I am not around, she uses  
hand sanitizer  
rolls the stuff around in the  
palms of her hands  
so that she will not be infected by the  
smell and  
taste

I let dirt collect under my fingernails  
Let the palms of my hands collect grime in the creases  
because

1. the dirt makes my hands look darker  
makes me feel less alien
2. Delhi smells like diesel fuel fumes and  
burning dung  
and rain, if it's the kind that floods rivers  
and fire  
and frying onions  
and three thousand years of must and human  
breath

When I finally wash my hands that night  
In the marble sink in my  
Hotel room  
With the marble floors and  
The mini bar  
I don't use soap  
I make sure that I am careful  
To let water marry dirt  
A thin mud that I rub over the tips of my fingers  
before allowing the white of the sink to swirl  
away 3000 years of healthy, dirty evolution

In Old Delhi  
They are washing and praying for salvation  
In the Jama Masjid Mosque they are walking barefoot  
in the rain  
Callused feet smacking sandstone  
Rainwater splashing up to rinse away  
Dander and sins and the urgency of progress

*Eric Silverman*

MY GRANDFATHER'S POCKETKNIFE

is not real Swiss Army. It's a Craftsman,  
American made, with just a can opener and four-inch  
blade.

He probably bought it at the Odd Job on  
Astor Avenue when he got home after Japan surrendered.

Its shell the same leather brown color as his '74 Lincoln  
that was totaled when a silver Toyota ran a red light  
under the L-train. He gave the knife to me about a year  
before he died, his fingers, thick from years as a plumber  
stroking the four-inch length. If you were mechanically  
inclined, he said, I have so many tools I could give you.

I keep it in my apartment by the park, a short  
walk from the college campus. I keep it in a drawer  
next to computer screws and a solar-powered calculator,  
the blade rusting, can opener stiff, difficult to unfold.

*Sarah Nalitz*

PASSION

Acrylic splashes on black canvas  
Portraying movement of figures, bodies.  
Strokes of manifold reality  
Dying and living  
Breathing and choking.  
Textured swirls and lines of movement, motion.  
Painted tears and blood smeared on white. Tough  
Canvas stretched beyond the frame of life.  
Going beyond normal restraints  
Motionless pulsating.

*Shane Creepingbear*

ODE TO ROUTE 66

Loosely large interstate symbol  
The unmistakable misleading parallel  
Of the soft forest floor  
You've been twisted, and  
The general public rides you like a flea rides a dog  
Gripping and biting your every curve  
Tied in knots throughout the world  
Your transportation isn't down separate steel  
Beams laid late 19th century  
Flat and high, directing from north to south

East to west

Your unmistakable symbol is a structure  
And architecture that lies next to you  
Architecture that supports your bridges and body  
You are the layers between bricks in walls  
And you are the route of production

*Jesse Kates*

AN EARLY HOUR

Joggers trace  
the hill. Pearls gleam  
  
from the reflectors  
on their backs to the sky,  
  
still & black & open  
to a Photoshop fill,  
  
the Color Picker poised  
on the deepest shade  
  
of purple or grey,  
the fading trails  
  
of distant jets  
or yellow,  
  
the dotted arc  
of destination.

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You are sleeping.  
Your belly is the missing moon.

On the floor below  
I churn & chew,

pace & orbit  
a wide, shining table.

The creaking stairs  
announce your find:

a tangled vacancy  
in the bed.

*Angela Dickson*

FIELDS OF RED

Walking through the field of strawberries,  
holding hands and tasting the sticky, sugary nectar.  
A rumbling airplane flew overhead,  
diverting my attention towards the future,  
not you and your meaningless ramblings.  
I think about the future a lot,  
because I don't know where I'm going to end up  
or if I'll really be as successful as I want to be.

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I don't want my life to be boring.  
Watching the stars overhead,  
I think of making a wish,  
like I've done so many times before.  
Sometimes I wish for you.  
Sometimes I don't.

*Linnea Robison*

ONCE UPON A TIME

So I married the prince...  
I know that I was supposed to be the lucky one.  
Sure, I married prince charming  
or not-so-charming as it has turned out.  
Yeah, so people wait on me  
and I get what I want  
everything I want  
but I miss the days  
when I could lie by the fireplace reading  
and sing freely while doing the dishes.  
Those were the days.  
I still appreciate fairy god-mummy  
but she is no piece of pie.  
Now she is trying to mooch off of my glory  
I told her to go back to the realm  
where she belongs.  
The dresses are nice, sure

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and so are the servants.  
But I miss the old days  
and I honestly miss my sisters.  
And the prince, oh the prince!  
I don't even want to go there...  
handsome, sure  
well-bred, definitely  
but intelligence isn't his strong point.  
Sure, I like him  
but my advice to you:  
never marry a guy after two dates.  
I learned the hard way.

So I got the girl...  
You're not going to hold that against me,  
are you?  
She looked all sweet and nice  
quite a knockout in that blue silk dress.  
But I tried to hide my disappointment  
when she came down the stairs in those rags  
and I found that it was her.  
She told me about the fairy god-lady  
and I believe it.  
She gave her more than a dress,  
believe you me.  
She was stunning  
floating on air  
a queen to the fullest degree

she hasn't looked like that since  
even in dresses far superior to  
the one she wore that night.  
I like her, sure  
but maybe it was rushed  
Maybe I even love her...  
but she is no Marilyn Monroe.

So I was a Little Bit Mean...  
that doesn't mean I deserve what I got!  
I had a chance with the prince, I know it!  
Now look at me  
the beautiful wife of Phillipe,  
the bloated duke from over the river.  
I could have been a queen!  
A Queen!  
Now look at me, two lousy servants  
a wardrobe the size of my pinky.  
I deserve better!  
So I wasn't the angel to her  
that I am to everyone else  
and the red carpet is just pulled  
right out from beneath me  
I would have looked  
So Good  
in royal blue  
So Good!  
I've only one conclusion:

that God hates me  
he does, he does  
either that or he just loves her.  
I did nothing wrong  
so maybe I teased her a bit—  
sisterly love!  
And that whole being our servant thing  
was so totally mother's doing.  
And now look at me  
knockout wife to the debted Phillippe.  
I hope he slips in pig manure  
and dies!  
I hope she does too!  
That stupid cinder girl  
a queen...  
Why couldn't the prince  
see the angel inside of me?

*Lis Harvey*

SAW A DEAD MAN, ONCE

His fingernails, the color of yellow celluloid,  
were beginning to curve like bracelets of Bakelite.

That stuff, when rubbed with an excited finger  
at the flea market, starts to smell like Wilbur,

the fetal pig who taught me where the thyroid is;  
taught me to worry about a condition

that could grab me one day in my early forties,  
make me wait in the doctor's office, while

the nurse calls upstairs for my spouse,  
while I memorize the pink plastic model of an ear

and shiver in the blue paper smock  
sliced down the back like a dead man's suit.

*Carolyn Elliot*

THINGS NEEDED FOR A BIRTHDAY PARTY  
IN A CITY PARK

Downy blonde calves caked  
with mud above  
lacquered silver sequin stiletto heels

then four pieces of colored plastic  
in red and green and purple and orange  
elaborately faceted like crystals  
and strewn like precious gems into said mud

then a blue silk blouse printed with  
ads for French absinthe (drunk long ago)  
spread on the grass for a picnic quilt

and finally a plucked pile of over-ripe  
honeysuckles  
all yellow and all evaporating  
as fast as the sun can stain them.

*Claire Schoyer*

TO GRANDPA WHEN GRANDMA CRIED

Hey, I think  
that after you left us  
with thoughts  
of *I am Glad I am Not Young Anymore*  
and memories of your hands clutching our wrists  
with glances that spoke the names you could not speak  
you remembered Lizzy the invincible woman.  
It took her twenty years  
and a medical questionnaire at the doctor's,  
to learn to cry,  
cry over her mother.

The woman, your wife  
who told you to sing along  
because you knew the words.

I saw her cry,  
as her grandchildren  
your grandchildren  
echoed your life  
into the wood of the Unitarian Church  
as Walter,  
your friend Walter shook  
next to Lizzy  
who mumbled, afraid,  
afraid of loss.

I knew Bets was right  
as she possesses the wisdom you passed on to your  
daughters.

You were swinging on the old Rope Bridge  
watching the sky with  
those eyes that could see Venus in the fog.  
She is tough, your Lizzy,  
maybe too tough.

*Natalia Beylis*

SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE  
WORLD'S LARGEST GIFT STORE,  
LAS VEGAS, USA

Everyone's sporting Elvis glasses, \$5.99 tinted lenses,  
fake sideburns attached, sending them hip shaking  
down the aisles. The James Dean night clerk  
ignores them all.

He's got his hands stuffed into a \$24.89 red jacket,  
trying to look so rebel as he chases a teeny blonde  
bombshell  
in a Marilyn Monroe wig. I wait for the rows of  
snow globes

to melt in this dry heat, standing cool in my hot  
green visor, tilted so low my eyes can make out the  
glitter cursive of *Las Vegas*.

I've made it here in double-time, over blue marked,  
even-numbered highways, coming from a California  
daydream,

my car grill tattooed with mosquitoes. I stepped  
into a blazing that I couldn't place as night or day,  
knowing it was too bright for either.  
I'm just here looking for a jackpot.

A 16-year-old cowboy strolls into the gift shop  
and I Price-Is-Right guess the dollar tag of his look,

\$3.99 wind-burned cheeks, \$8.26 callused fingers,  
a \$28 over-priced cowboy mosey walk. I follow him  
thinking an outfit this good must be heading for gold.  
But there's something about the tight fit of his Levi's,  
the worn white wallet outline on his butt, the over-sized  
hand-me-down tip of his Stetson. He's a genuine  
off-the-rodeo-road real thing. I tiptoe past the nudeboy  
playing cards and spy over the rims of aces shot glasses  
wondering if I could cash all of my chips for a piece  
of him.

*Zach Harris*

ODE TO CHINATOWN

Smells come from counters  
wonton and pork and eggroll,  
and the fish share their last breath  
with the bottom of the plastic container.

The sidewalks are crowded; no one walks  
in the streets here. Like salmon thrashing  
upstream, people try to reach where  
they should be. Small teapots sell next to  
fat Buddhas with children clinging to their  
earlobes, dripping from their heads  
like wax from burning candles.

Small fountains trickling water over  
smooth rocks echo in the silent  
air of the shop.

The woman at the register is wrapping up  
a small teal teapot for you in newspaper.  
She asks where are you from,  
and you say, "Pittsburgh."

People are talking, yelling to be heard  
over the symphony of horns coming  
from the ocean of cars and trucks  
surging through the narrow streets.

Fake watches dangle on the walls, and  
designer bags with stitched-on labels hang near them.  
In the corner, they are selling pairs of  
metal balls that relax and calm you when  
rubbed together on your palm. Long paper dragon  
bodies stretch out from paper cutouts of head  
and tails, attached to thin wooden sticks.

Chinese words flow like water  
from the lips of the counter workers.  
You watch in curiosity, eyes glazing  
over, this exchange, wondering what  
the fluid language sings.

This place surrounds your senses,  
overloading your nose and ears and mouth and eyes  
and hands with its sheer number of sensations,  
taking you away in a flurry  
of newspaper and Chinese  
characters.

*Nestor Ramos*

THE MIME

I called her the mime  
when I wanted to piss her off.  
She liked to be called the street-performer  
or Alice, which was her name.  
There is a lot of power attached  
to the act of naming, she said,  
and she was serious.

When I stopped giving her change on the street,  
I knew I didn't love her anymore.  
She had a voice that could crack walnuts  
or lobster claws, and she stood  
in the living room, working her way  
around an imaginary box and carrying on  
a telephone conversation in her staccato

whine, more than a little disconcerting.  
She flooded my apartment with pillows  
that said Love is Blind and Bless this Mess,  
and I realized she spoke mostly in clichés,  
talked about love as if it were something  
we had to water and fertilize.  
Maybe love and fertilizer do have something in common  
and maybe that something is Bullshit.

We fought often. Are you a mime  
because you never have anything interesting  
to say? I asked. That was unforgivable,  
but she quickly forgave me and made certain  
that I knew we always hurt the ones we love,  
and did I tell her that just because I hurt her  
that didn't mean I loved her? No,  
I did not. I giggled  
to myself about how her tears looked like mime  
tears, makeup perched on her cheek.  
We kissed.

I'm getting good, she said, I can really feel  
this box. She pressed her hands  
against the air. Sweetheart, I said,  
that box might be invisible,  
but it sure as hell isn't imaginary.

*Matt Stidle*  
PROGRESSION

A river is always changing,  
burrowing deeper into the ground a little at a time.  
The lazy inhabitants residing within change over time,  
the topography surrounding ages.  
The components, though, stay the same...  
for it would not be a stream if it weren't composed of  
water.  
Water flows from multiple sources,  
all tributaries that come into contact with the tide are  
engulfed in it.  
Progression is listed as a synonym for river.

*Shalita-Marie "Starr" Gray*  
I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS  
*Dedicated to Maya Angelou*

I know why the caged bird sings  
I know why the caged bird sings

It's tired of being locked up  
And caged in  
Every direction that it turns to  
Is another barrier  
There are no exits

It wants to be free,  
But it can't so,  
Now all it can do is sing

It wants you to listen to its song  
Because you might never hear it again  
Its weary tweets  
Tell you that it wants to be let out  
Do you know what it's like to be locked up?

The only sun that it knows of is  
The light on the ceiling  
Why can't you let this bird out to  
Get a fresh whisk of air

It wants you to listen,  
But you won't because you don't  
Understand why it's singing  
You desire to hear it sing,  
But as soon as it does  
You close your ears  
You expected its tweets to be  
Gay and cheerful

It wants to be heard  
But you still won't listen  
You're a barrier  
And a cage stopping it from escaping

*Noah K McGee*  
LATE FALL FUGUE

Bach understood the intricacies  
of love-making, a fugue  
the most effective way of rehearsing  
my body woven with yours, two  
distinct melodies,

my violins darting  
around your slow cello,  
urged by the conductor's baton  
not to labor on one  
harmony.

Bach, all mechanics, sacrificed  
the warmth of those notes,  
just as autumn  
does not pause  
for summer's glories,

but trusts in the warmth  
of two bodies,  
when outside  
the chill overtakes  
lilacs late in bloom.

