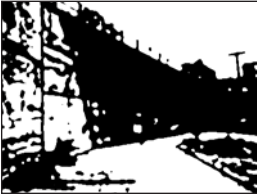


BOUNDARY STREET

Volume Six



Carnegie Mellon University
Creative Writing

&

The Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts
Literary Arts

Spring 2007

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This chapbook celebrates the sixth year of a collaborative project 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 2007 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems, meeting both at CMU and CAPA for workshop sessions and discussion. 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
Kristin Kovacic, CAPA

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Carnegie Mellon

Royal Sable

Elizabeth Barsotti

The woman, she leads me towards the white.
I am thirsty. Thin.

I was dry hair; now I am lavender
darkened with blue,

dipped, dampened. I will tell them

of storm-torn sky and barn door.

How the rain, the water

puddles on the paper. I drink

and keep the pigment hidden
in the middle. I create the wing
of the gypsy moth, the seagull

with a flick. She grips

my stem. Wrings me at the end
when the light fades. One summer and I am

frayed and tired. Stained as the cotton dress

with raspberry.

Spoon

Kathryn Bouvy

Yesterday, I watched a spoon drop
with a metallic chink off the edge of the table.
I wrote a poem about the spoon, and my cheeks
reflected in the cold canyon of aluminum.
I traveled into my pupils where
I considered new colors to illustrate
the stars that hide beneath my eyelids.
Soon there was another half-page of words
describing the spoon, like a dead body,
lying silent on the linoleum.

Yesterday, I dreamt of spoons.
My face reflected on the spoon
balanced on the sweep of skin
stretched between my thumb and finger.
My portrait plays a trick on me,
hiding and tumbling; an acrobat.
Peering at me, upside-down, from the silver
of the spoon. Mirrored eyes and ears.
I chew over the words
with my mouthful of pork chop.

Last night, I tried to sleep,
but couldn't close my eyes without thinking
about the spoon between my fingers.
I suppose in some ways the silverware
was more than something sitting in my soup.
It ladles mercury into the cold dead crevices of my brain
so that my skull shines gray under the moon.
I couldn't close my eyes last night
because I spent the dark hours contemplating this,
and how the shadow on my ceiling
looked like a spoon.

Concert

Madeline Chandler

Sound Check Guy

This guy had better not
throw his mic ever again
ever again.

I can't stand these
glamour punk bands. They don't
know how to do anything
including playing their instruments
and singing. They all suck
and they have all those
girls hanging all over them.
I'm cute. And I know how
to set up a killer sound system.
What does he know how to do
besides throwing the freaking
mic off of the stage!
Jeez!

Annoying Girls 1,2, and 3

Oh my god! The lead singer is so
so hot! I'm so glad I wore
my mini skirt and heels to this
concert. Maybe if I dance with my
friend he'll notice me!
Ouch! Oh my gosh! I can't believe
that that girl in the mosh pit, which
by the way, is grosser than gross,
just stepped on my feet.
I took four hours to get my
eyeliner perfect for this show!
Ew, look at her. Her hair is all messy.
Your hair needs to be the perfect mix
of crimped and straight! Why don't
these girls know anything
about anything?
Jeez!

Girl in Mosh Pit

Ha! I got her foot! I hate those
damn girls! You sweat at concerts!
No need for hours of makeup! Also
sweat, if you didn't realize, is wet!
And wetness makes your hair un-straighten
so there is no need to straighten your
god damn hair!
Oh yeah, I almost forgot
skanking is for in the pit, not how
you dress! I'm the badass punk chick!
Not you with your pretty little MySpace
pictures. Look at me with my boyfriend
who doesn't actually like me! Eeee!
Get in the pit! Move a little!
Jeez.

Guy in Band

Wow. Look at that, there are girls
in the pit. But wow look at
those girls. They are so hot.
I love when girls wear mini skirts
to concerts. But I also love a girl
who can mosh. God they are so hot.
Kinda like that one girl in that one place
with the hair that did that thing.
Oh man she was hot. I will never again see
a girl with black hair and chucks.
Oh man there's one! I love original girls.
Punk rock is all about originality. We don't
look alike at all. Oh man all of these girls
are so freaking hot! This is great. I'll
throw my mic to impress them.
Wow, all of these girls are hot. But
not as hot as me.
Jeez!

Two-Way Story

Charmaine Clarke

Heaving are the shoulders of a girl who sits
grieving, in her mind she is
lost now. So is her love that
cost the ultimate price.

She gave something so valuable, her
virginity, she could never get back.

Stories often have problems, and she
inventoried, incorrectly, her
lust, her emotions. She mistook
dust for love, leaving a pile without a
beat, where her heart was once
deceived, she felt for love.

Bed is where a boy sits to
dread with nothing in life to
face, a smile rests upon him like in a
race he'd just won but he'd
cheated, and knew he had, he was
conceited, he met his goal.

Girl, he knew he tricked you and made you
hurl. The way he felt caused her to feel
enough. He told her he loved her, his
bluff. She began to believe, only seeing it for what she
wanted, but not for what it really was. He only
haunted virgins to be the first one to have them, and
it, or he, was. He left right after he got it and
split, and she'd wished that she was the one to save her
gift before she gave out before her time.

S.I.D.S.

Tine Dawson

To my mother. And the sister I never knew.

My head, bowed, with singular strands
of unnaturally dark hair falling into my eyes.
His fingers grip my arm
as hers clutch the hem of my pants,
crying out from her eternal sleep.

I stop, and he pauses,
looking back at me with wide eyes.
“No.”
My voice is calm and short.
“I can’t leave her here alone.”

He tries to pull me into submission.
I refuse and slap him hard.
“I can’t!” I cry.
I can’t.
Conception to birth,
birth to death, she had been mine.

An attentive mother, I was.
I suppose you could call it obsessive.
Night and day, day and night I was there,
to hold her or kiss her forehead and stroke it
cautiously, as if she was made of glass.

There was nothing I could do.
I set her down gently in the crib.
Just like I was shown.
Water is the element of life,
and my need for it killed my baby.

If I was there.
If I had listened
and heard her tiny lungs stop.
But I took one drink, and another,
until my body was full of water,
and hers was empty of air.

He tries to pull me along.
I fight tooth and nail.
Until he's bleeding and I'm crying,
and we're standing at the edge of the
shallow grave, too small for comfort.

Letter from the Future

Avi Diamond

After awhile
you learn to live with it,
knowing
that somewhere else in the world
someone is doing
exactly the same thing as you

but *better*.

You swirl these tattered sheets
in a tub,
your mind rippling
with life-size ideas, so big
you have to throw them back up

in a toilet.

You start to believe
that by dipping your palms
in lukewarm water

you can beat loneliness.

II

Yesterday
we waded through murky swamps
in bare feet.
The frogs were getting
restless.

You were foaming at the mouth

with questions about why and where
but mostly why.

I could have answered them.
After all, I am the future
wearing the past's leather coat.
You are the present

smiling up at me.

I showed you how to
snap the necks of swans
in half

like white hoses

throats imploded
beady eyes shut.
When I asked if you wanted

to return

you pressed your knuckles
into your cheeks to hide
soggy eyes.

invincible.

I thought you said you wanted to be

My Muses

Erin Gagnon

He is the eviction letter
jammed inside my mailbox.
He condemns chain smoking,
dartboards and the bump-and-grind.
He requests that I paint my walls white,
go to sleep by nine.
I pour ketchup into the white paint,
splatter the walls pink.
I am the brush, bristles bent.
He snickers, scrapes the brush clean.

He is the round, beer-guzzler
at the ballgame
who shouts steroids at the players.
I shout *keep your elbows up*,
and his voice cracks with mine.
He licks mustard off of his upper lip.
I can taste the spicy seed.
He spits sausage and fried onions,
and my mucus wells black.

He is the schoolboy
who sells roses on my street corner.
He tells me stories
about my mother making love
in an old Cadillac.
I am my mother. He is the backseat.
He shudders as I sweat.
I drive with eyes closed. He holds
the map in his right hand.
He guides me through the streets.

20 Undeveloped Negatives

Michael J. Hartwell

small candles puddle
 the guttering wicks
black as lampcords
 faintly of chocolate
little panting lights
 flat cake rink
ganache cracks, a mosaic
 under the lava
tablecloth flutters
 noise gathers, pushes
pours another drink
 surreptitiously
boxed gifts tower
 the reluctant colors
an aunt snaps candid
 shift and whisper
everyone turns
 sings with orange voices
the time-blurred flames
 still, still blinding

Dryer Sheet Blues

Erika Holmquist

The interwoven breath of me, born
with a jagged cardboard rip. I lament
the desperate fall of quarters,
the slamming of doors. It's the holy
glowing countdown that I dread,
the way my body seems absorbed
by the spinning load of this,
my better thoughts lost to the dust
of the lint trap. Am I redeemed
because I've touched
all these white shirts? The hum
of the hot metal sweats me
like wet cotton. And then: the cold
rush, the waxy residue of the outside
air, the freshly-scented tumble,
and the way I am infinitely discarded
on the checkered linoleum, dark
chest hair curls clinging as I drift
calmly to the dirty pool in the center
of the room, by the Caution:
Wet Floor sign. Should I have heeded
that warning? I suppose. But I am not
alone here, at the bottom of the world.

Skeeball

Adam Jaffe

I found a Chinese king under
a skeeball game yesterday
a better prize
than any finger-trap
or kazoo
I drove him to my place
Nobody throws an honest skeeball
these days he told me
as he sliced pepperoni
from the freezer
for sandwiches
I admitted that I too
missed the golden days
of the sport
and the Han Dynasty
maybe if only to impress
him
but he sighed
and chewed his mustache
maybe guessing that I
too had dishonest
rolls in a suitcase
behind the water
heater

Chicken and Ranch

Rachel Jardini

We wanted to go back there.
She didn't know why, or where it was,
just that it was a stream of orange water
and a double-tire track in the mud.
I had never been there alone
and being with another child was alone.
She didn't know how or where it was
but we could find it on bikes.
We would find it by sundown
and take chicken and ranch with us
in case we missed dinner.
We made a phone call and headed uphill.
We could find it on our bikes.
It was only up one hill, down another,
past an office, and to the left,
downward with the gravity
becoming less subtle on a gravel road where
boys tossed nerf balls.
It was only up one hill then down two others.
The water wasn't rusted but we knew
we had found it on our bikes. Tossing
them aside, we stepped over heaps of trash
and watched twigs swim as we sat
on a stone, eating supper by the creek.

Flying Notes

Antwan Johnson

I didn't tell you to go in that direction
but you chose to.
I didn't tell you to hit that one
but you did.
I didn't tell you to hit anyone
but you did.
Why did you hit her?
Now look at me I'm sitting in the office
because of what you did.
My dad is hollering at me
but that four-eyed woman deserved it.
It's your fault
and you're trying to blame it on me.
I didn't crumble you
and throw you.
I certainly didn't have you to begin with.
Bobby gave it to Jane who got it from Bobby
and he had got it from her.
The one you hit and
here I am sitting in the office
probably in trouble.
No!
Not probably but definitely in trouble,
and all you're going to do
is laugh
and make it hard for me
hard for me to go to the next grade.
I didn't say hit Ms. O'Brien
in the head.
But you did
and them
they're blaming me
and I want to know why,
you did what you did.

Love

Chloe Jonas

She Waits

I'm waiting to find you, Love. I want to see
how it feels.
Going to sleep knowing my heart
belongs to someone.
Waking up
with someone beside me. Love,
I want to be the reason he smiles. I want to
come home to roses
scattered on floor
leading to a bedroom lit by candles.
I want to get a card for no reason other
than because I make him happy.
I want look beautiful in sweatpants and a large Hanes t-shirt.
I want to write
my own vows
on the back of a picture
showing that my love
for him no one else has. I want to tell
him that money
means nothing, the gifts are unnecessary, being
with him is all I
want. I'm tired of waiting. Find me, Love, sweep me
off my feet. I'm ready.

He Waits

Her beauty shouldn't just be her beautiful
brown skin, her dark brown hair, or her white teeth.
Her beauty should be what I find underneath her make up,
what I see in her when she's having a bad day, the stories that she tells me.
Falling in love with just the physical features isn't what I'm about.
I want to fall in love with her spiritually

and emotionally. Her beauty is what
I want to see when I wake up next to her,
the smile on her face when I cook her breakfast,
when I show up to her job with a bouquet of her favorite flowers thanking her
for just being her. Thanking her for not being afraid to show me the real her
day and night.
When money's tight, when my day is off, I want her to support me. I want her
to love me even if she isn't driving the nicest car or living in the biggest house.
I want her to understand that I love her even if it isn't wrapped with a kiss,
sealed by a hug.

Natural Isolation

Ari Klein

Atop the mountains of San Francisco,
I stand here in the depths of a redwood forest.
I feel the fragile ground beneath my feet.

I hear the trees speak, but still ask why.
That is: Why do they speak to open eyes?
And why do running antlers stick

around when bare trees throw branches
in clean paths? Maybe for comfort's
cold sake. Maybe not. I see water

running clear through a valley,
yet wonder why deer flee
from scented footsteps. I smell

the dead petals of roses. Forsaken,
they search for the sun and a new place
to call home. I taste the dew in the morning

breeze, but wonder how time passes
and creeks freeze over. I wonder:
Who, but a mountain, can provide

such answers? I wonder: Who else would want to?
I would, but I must not be a mountain.

An Old Woman Regards Winter

Thomas Laskow

Black sheep go down,
The last sheep of winter. The last
Sheep I will raise, go down and drink
Blankly at the cut red trough running

Clear water. I have filled buckets
And glasses with this water. I have run
This water through hoses, boiled it.
Filled glasses for my children, and used full

Buckets, and a hemp sack to drown
Blind cats, gone down in the grip of
Water, speech of splashing. This winter,
Long after raising children,

I raise the fire,
Raise the kettle. The sheep
Stick in the fields, black
As footsteps raising complaints

From floorboards. The sheep
Do not shiver in winter, they
Are wormed in spring, cloak-
Heavy bodies, hooves that have

Cut my hand, again, again. The water
Braids across the red cut. The red
Goes down at last, down the black
run of pipes as children fear

The hemp sack, the formless winter sun.
The sheep are like notes, stuck
In a field. Again, again, memory
Goes down, as the kettle steam

Rises, blinding the window with water.
Hot to cold, the glass draws together
What was separate, raising whiteness,
And traceless fields. Long after children,

The loose hair, grain and complaints.
After the coal ponies, dog beds, winter,
And speaking, there is the merciless
Open field, there is at last blindness

Filling the lungs with cuts
Of the sun and fear, the rising
Whiteness. Who would recognize
The courage of an injured hand

That hears no complaint
As it fixes the hemp tight
And forces the lame to go under?

In braids, glass clears. I am revealed
To the sheep rising blank in the cold.

Bicycle

Louis Liss

I'm sitting on a line, parallel with
the plane that is the pavement below me.
My dusty shoes kick off from
grey pedals that used to be black.
They turn the chain
which turns the gears,
twists the wheels,
and moves me forward.

A small red car sits at my hip.
I'm as tall as him,
but I'm not his equal;
he steps down on his pedal,
a piece of shiny silver metal
that pushes his car towards the wheel
at the edge of the park—
a metal-statue center and shrub spokes.

The world feels exhilarating
at the price of my own energy;
sweat and breath are exhaust.
This clever contraption
between my legs, rolling me
as the stones from the pavement try
to reach up and scratch my face.
I'm only a skinny line on a plane
and it feels better than ever.

The Confession of John Watson

Jacob Minsinger

We were in the moor.
The case was solved.
Holmes found the murderers of
Sir Charles of the Baskervilles
and Colonel Barclay
of the Royal Munsters.
Who would have
thought it was Henry Wood?
He was presumed dead.
Though I had my suspicions
of Jack Stapleton, the last heir of
the Baskerville fortune.
Holmes, of course, knew from the beginning.
And what was the purpose
of making me go to Dublin alone?
Just to make sure the coast was clear?
I didn't sign up to be his bodyguard.
And what did he do?
I gathered the clues.
I handled the danger.
I met the killer face to face.
And what compensation did I receive?
"Come with me, Watson.
May I stay in your home, Watson?"
Not even a thank you.
I was just the resident doctor,
and he was the shining star.
He got the credit
as if I had done nothing.
What had he ever done for me?
I helped him.
I made sure he was safe,
yet he always made me
look like a fool in front of everyone.
I was taken as stupid, but he would be

nothing without me.
If only he'd thought about that
before he smoked that cigar I gave him
on his birthday.

Our Lady of Sorrows

Jessica Packer

I throw white roses
from the vase on the kitchen sink
on cathedral steps for
Lady Madonna as
she is assumed
body and soul
into heavenly glory
having completed her earthly life.
I watch them disappear into
the white of the first snow
and wilt brown and old into
the white of the fourth snow
that falls to the quavering purls
of folk rock swinging
through a rusty radio
as I scour tin in hot water,
rosary bound like barbed wire
around my wrists.
But despite the dirt in the curtains
and under my children's nails
and tired eyes,
spring creeps in
like a nun
up through crocus buds
and endless rains on
soft gusts that grow warmer
and warmer and turn my
attention to the sky
to see the faint starriness
of Cygnus glimmer into focus,
stretching his elegant neck
through broken light to

a million suns,
across the gnarled autumn
that's settling in my hands
and bleeding wrists.

By the Waterfall

Sam Pyles

She sits
ignoring the melodrama of the world
while the mist sprays her face,
a thin mask of protection.

The rock is vibrating
against her stomach while she sprawls out against it.
She watches the water ungracefully dump into the pond below,
lazily swinging her feet in the air.
In her hands, she twists a LEGO into new shapes.
Flinging it suddenly into the pond's depths, she sees what it is.
In reality, she twists a hunk of red clay and stones.
Her childhood occupational dreams are shatters.

She lifts herself up and lands on her back.
Desperately, she stretches her fingers,
grasping the twirling air instead of the basket she wants.

The picnic basket hides just out of reach,
taunting her as the wind reaches down
to flap the napkins surrounding her treasure.
She glimpses the metal bowl and the pack of strawberries,
still snuggled inside, but now subject to the air's torment.

A burst of energy shoots through her.
She flips over,
clawing at the stone underneath her,
fighting, despite the wind tearing at her hair.
She reaches the basket and pulls it toward her chest to keep it warm.
She crosses her legs and peers inside;
her beauties are still safe.

She turns her back to the wind.
She tears open the package of strawberries
and offers it to the mist of the falls.

It accepts her offer graciously and coats her berries.
She smiles and pulls the plastic off of the top of the metal bowl.
Inside is a nest of brownie batter for the strawberries.
Carefully, she lays the berries in the center.
A spoon is extracted from deeper in the basket;
the instrument of the intertwinement of the batter and the berry.
That same utensil is used to spoon the brown nectar into her mouth.

The textures and flavors weave around her taste buds
and dance with them into ecstasy.
She rolls the rough spots of the brownie against the roof of her mouth
as a wave of the tang of strawberry bursts down her throat
as she bites deep into one with her back teeth.
She swallows the whole thing and lets her body fill with its presence
until it explodes outward and coats the forest
with the paradoxical definition of poetry.

The atmosphere whispers in her ear,
“There’s poetry between us,
the water and the trees,
the open air and you.”
The falls thundered of a sense of purity between the animals
and the rain that began to fall.

Droplets fall from the sky,
tiny drumbeats against the surface of the pond,
spreading circles of consequences like the butterfly’s wing.
She laughs, filling the area with amplified sound.
Dancing briefly beforehand, she runs into the cover of the leaves
which cast a gentle green glow as the birds hide in cover.
The scent of rain copiously fills every nook.

This is how the world should be,
joy where others see doubt,
finding hope among the hidden
triumphing for the reward of finishing.
A pure way of life found only on a temperamental day by the waterfall.

A Poem by Sarah

Caitlin Rawlins

Poems should be for porcupines.
Inky quills ward off the feelings
that smuggle themselves
into the unresisting,
posing as packages
of creatively arranged words.

I am porous.
The skin where I cracked
my head open is thinner and lets
poetry seep in, lets me live
in memories not of my making:
the tent that once canopied
the dining room wasn't mine,
I never found strawberry tarts
on my desk. I remember eating
the quesidillas at Fernando's.
I loitered there once,
turned passerbys into the subjects
of a novel, and as I watched
their dismembered torsos bouncing
across the window, I took notes,
speculating about their ratings
on hotornot, marking the ones
with sensual backs.
Or was that Starbucks?
Was the air perfumed with vanilla
and coffee?

My head opens
when thunder cracks,
and I imagine a little girl,
stethoscope dangling from her neck,
advising me to take a spoonful
of vanilla. I never wanted
to be a doctor.

Tales of Brave Ulysses

Luke Rifugiato

inspired by "Tales of Brave Ulysses" by Cream

*They touched the distant beaches with tales of brave Ulysses.
How his naked ears were tortured by the sirens sweetly singing,
the sparkling waves calling him to kiss their white laced lips.*

Tales of brave Ulysses flow across my sweaty brow.
The Cyclops, blind and bleeding, fell on his ass
amid piles of rusted, crumbling gold.
The last dying suitor looked up to see his dreams flow
down the streams of blood on his shirt. Ulysses
grabbed his wife and kissed her violently.

*How his naked ears were tortured
by those sirens sweetly singing.*
And the ropes nearly gave way as sailors strained
and pushed against them
and pushed against life itself.

Wah-wah whips scratch vacantly
at dirty doors, and broken walls.
Glass tubes glow with a thick evanescent
orange. I hear her name in the liquid reverb
of the hall.

*Her name is Aphrodite
and she rides a crimson shell.*
And you can't escape her glare.
It calms you, stops your heart
for that one second.
In that second eternity is stretched out
far and thick like Ocean waves
crashing against crumbling cliffs.

Feedback screams and moans like the dying Cyclops
and you want to smash your life against your amps.

After Meeting Cecilia

Duncan Richer

After you stacked up a tower of lawn chairs
you sat there all day in the sun, getting progressively happier
like some kind of solar-powered mood swing.

After you wore that white dress
starched so it was stiff
like a Sunday paper
I wanted to read you all my life.

After we slow-danced in your Aunt's living room,
a desert of cigarette butts and half-filled cups
begging at our feet.

After you grabbed my hand and put it on your side,
fingers fitting between your ribs like mechanical wheels spinning.

After all of that
I felt and counted each heavy breath
in and out
like the tides of my youth.

Strength Tastes

Rachel Rodgers

Like a mint
lifesaver; I've got my eyes
closed. At this moment
empowerment strokes
my goose-bumped arms.
I no longer live in the past;
at least, I hope I won't.
'Cause man, bringing myself
down tears up my kneecaps,
and I just can't handle that.

Right now, my stride
sounds like a tambourine;
everyone knows tambourines
shake it best. My presence
is so red that even Mars
pales in comparison.

I know I've got it going
on, so when I stride
by I look him straight
in those eyes, eyes that smell
exactly like city wind and broken
crayons. And I don't bother
saying hello, or even nodding.

It's not worth my time
'cause independence
is taking over,
hanging around me like a plaid
bed sheet.

Gloria

Anne Marie Rooney

Because I was not in love. Because I prayed
with a hard ink. Because when I thought
I was pregnant I drank a tea of black
fever. Because every night I fingered
the gun under my pillow. Because
every morning my mouth tasted
like motor oil. Because I threw ice
down my throat. Because I liked
to watch the moon collapse. Because
when it snowed I fell to angels and when
it rained I needed no one. Because I bet
all my teeth on two aces. Because I slept
in red lace and spit up blood roses.
Because the Bible burned when it saw me.
Because I thanked no one for my name.

A Final Announcement

Jon Samuels

I am the last remaining
chicken finger,
the lucky one

that you pinched
tenderly at the corner
of the freezer bag.

You'll never get to taste
what it feels like when
I burn your mouth

off because you couldn't
wait until I got cool
enough to dominate.

That is, I never made it
to the microwave, so
of course I bear

no hard feelings,
as my freezer frost
melts off like spring

and I breathe out
a fragrant last "Oh well"
from the garbage can

which you only notice
when my stink becomes
an odious exclamation

you can't ignore anymore.

Deep Sea

Sara Sareen

Under the forests of gleaming coral
and past armies of zebra-striped fish
Below the frozen ceiling and the canopy
of delicate-skinned jellyfish
Below the rays of last light
Below the herd of fat green sea turtles.
and under the haunting grounds of the Vampire squid
the sea is only lit in flashes of bioluminescence
volcanic springs bubble like acid across midocean ridges.
Below the twilight
Underneath the water trenches
the sea goes blind and plantless
the dark octopus slumbers tangled
in his heap of abandonment
Hydrogen bubbles
The lava of life explodes
into the moon of Europa and the flesh of animal meat.

Two Muffins

Lucy Schoyer

Two muffins are in the oven.

One muffin says to the other muffin, "Man it's hot in here."

The second muffin says, "Wow a talking muffin!"

The oven gets hotter and hotter, the two muffins feel their sides searing, their tops blistering.

They talk.

The first describes his childhood, his mother, his absent father, how he could never live up to his brother.

The second listens.

He listens and lies down, pressing his ear to the flames below.

He hears the walls sizzle and little volcanoes erupt around him.

He hears footsteps outside.

He sits up amazed. How could he go his whole life not knowing he could talk?

He hears the radio. He sings along.

Fire Melting Ice

Nicole Sharkey

Things are quieter now, more difficult,
in this lazy summer of sun and sand.

You sip Kool-Aid in glasses with ice
and gossip by the lapping water of the public pool,

watching overweight men in over-sized trunks
lick ice cream cones like love affairs
heating up.

I sit on the bench, water dripping
down like ice melting in my mouth,
and soaking my shirt.
I spite you.

You have long forgotten
how it feels to be invincible.

I see the ice melting in your eyes
and the heat of the season, melting
the ferocity from your figure.
I miss you.

Let me cut out the old memory
and freeze it in your mind.
Once your blades meet the ice
it's as if an old wound has reopened;
it's in your blood.

And then you're off.
The ice guides you through its course,
and if you listen so intently
to its slippery whisper it will coax you

"Pivot, back check, eyes up. Focus."

I am back in summer's
salty breeze, swinging on the rusted set
atop the eroding hill
that used to be so much more

in a neighborhood that has fallen
into the Ohio River and
with no one to hear
it scream, has drowned.

We can't remember
what it was like to be there
in its glory, and I can only think
about the season before last,
where I always managed to find my way

back to the ice, back to the frozen
depths of my obsession.

I can't help but sense continuity
between us and this moment,
and for just one instant
I feel intricate, even perfect.

So tell me what you see, and I'll tell you who you are.

The Illuminative Box

Vaughan Stephenson

Do you remember me
at all? I once lived on a gilded
pedestal, high in your living room.
I was the bringer of light and warmth,
the comfort object for every
tear-stricken night. I thought you loved
me. I loved you. What happened?
I gave you reruns of *Gilligan's Island*,
The Honeymooners, *Bowling for Dollars*.
gave you *everything*. What did you give me?

You once loved me. But then, love is shallow,
replaceable, and cheap. I was your window to reality,
coldly thrown away, gasping for air.
You gave me my first
glimpse of life, lifting me from my cardboard
womb, placing me with calculated grace
facing your love seat. You plugged me into
the wall and fed me 120 watts of love.

I now live in a vast field full
of cans, boxes, broken bats. Thousands of
lost socks, grime-encrusted tissues.
If you can believe it, I rest
just over a pile of blown-out tires
from that beautiful plinth that held me aloft
like Atlas, for I was your world.

Until you stepped through the door
one day with a package that was long and flat.
I watched you drive nails into the wall above me;
dust and flakes of paint drifting onto my head. I was placed
onto the couch facing the wall,
while I watched you hang and adjust your new love:

a flat-screen wonder whose face stretched like a placid lake,
waiting to shine other worlds and places into the backs
of your eyes.

I was the Illuminative Box that
illuminated your life. I was your sixteen-inch
window to the universe beyond your walls. Now
I sit here in the dump, cold and hungry. I wait
for the day, the glorious day, when I can look up, and see
a truck dumping a new heap of filth, and there,
tumbling down from the heavens comes
the High-Definition Rectangle that replaced me.

My Father and Living Season

Liam Swanson

See that bird flitter across the window it doesn't know
that behind lies crucifix fields
and to the left a fall into a sphere of water
something no cold-blooded finger of God
needs.

See that steel grow like fingers across the field it doesn't know
anything.
Except that forward lies a bog
the final light.
The steel bars fly faster than any bird.

See that seed wallow through the street it doesn't know
it can't grow in asphalt
or a hospital flooded
with absinthe and turpentine.
Live seeds are the last things we need.

Ring a gong and skip through that globe
steel slivers in our fingers
hold nothing back.
Question the birds and the seeds
steel is the only thing real.

Steel frosted with cement
rests against my brow
remember
birds eat seeds
and steel eats birds.

O Buenos Aires Where the Beef Roam Freely

Michael Szczerban

and board city buses full of men and cows
nurse their young in all the city's best
plazas and pretend that some errant steers
do not hang like dejected teenagers from ceilings
in the city's most highly favored shops
their chests cleaved in two sad halves
dangling awkward and maroon.

O Buenos Aires I could set myself free
in a pasture on your hills where old men
would watch me ruminant and scoop
my dung and protect my children and want me
to be glad in their green grass and to frolic
should I wish or to fatten should I munch and laze.

O Buenos Aires in my life there are no good knives
and no kind old men and no bullish certainty
that every good life ends with a purpose
or that every life with a purpose is good.

O Buenos Aires I would happily live in you
for to live among the good airs is to be satisfied
or dead and to die is to have lived fat and happy.

Upon This Tidal Wave of Young Blood

Anna Vogelzang

after Clap Your Hands Say Yeah

now that everybody's here can we please have your attention

we will scratch the metal of your Volkswagen with pinky nails
make our voices match its pitch we will run across parking lots
bare feet burning snow and drink pink from rusted tailpipes,

there is nothing left to fear now that Bigfoot's been captured

we will yell brickbrack boxes we will melt our voices
fire and copper we will meld our skirts to concrete
we yell yellow yes across blackpurple sky blackpurple eyes,

we are calling from a tower expressing what must be having one's opinion

we are the funnelwebs we are the internet we are the wet welt
on the bottoms of the tender feet you rest on broken teevees
neon squeezed from dark spotted sparks below you we pulse bodies
crack teeth,

America, please help them now they are childstars

we are far from your homes at night knife to bark dark to night
woods of broken butts beneath nyloned feet high as stars
music box croaks cloaked clouds and mouths and hands and feet,

*with their sex
and their drugs
and their rock
and rock
and rock
and rock
and roll*

Nudists sweat it out in Dutch Gym

Findlay Zotter

Sweat flies over the ellipticals.
Bare skin touches the bike machine.
The odd sighting of body hair
becomes so much more common
in a Dutch gym.

Old men filter in
take off their clothes
and get to work.
Working up a sweat,
pumping some iron.

The cameras flash.
The people gawk.
Mothers shield their children's eyes.
But still
the nudists sweat it out.

The women all
chickened out.
Even for nudists
there are some
boundaries.

Sneakers, the only article of clothing,
slam onto the treadmill,
whap, whap, whap.

Without a shirt you can see
the bulging of pectorals.
Without pants you can see
the strain of thigh muscles.
Nudists sweat it out in Dutch gym.

