Boundary Street
Volume V

Carnegie Mellon University
Creative Writing
&
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Literary Arts
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Boundary Street
Volume V
Katie Doyle, CAPA

*My Cat Has Died*

Don't let go.
My small
demented
cat has died.
The world is flat
and I have fallen off.
Don't let go.
At a party
where I only know
the person who brought me
I think about my cat.
And I want to cry.
Because I want
the cat.
Not
the party.
Don't let go.
I want to go
back to Australia.
My girlfriend is there.
She has a cat.
A cat just like mine.
I could go
and I could steal it
and maybe
I wouldn't miss my cat as much.
Don't let go.
My girlfriend
gave me a necklace
for my birthday.
A locket.
With a picture.
A picture of my cat
and I keep it
in a box
next to my bed
when I don't wear it.
Don't let go.
I won't let go.

Jackie Brook, CMU

*Static Time*

Tick.
My tired eyes
roll and close,
your electric red
blinks and whispers
"Eight-forty-three."

I crack each knuckle
in synch with your
second hand, third hand.

I heave and breathe,
counting
one one thousand,
two one thousand.
but still,
"Eight-forty-three."

Took.
Dani Zionts, CAPA

A Waste of Time

You sit in the chair, clutching the chair, palms greasing the legs of the chair as, face contorted, you try to remember something you never learned, because who paid attention in the digital age? Life can be hard sometimes.

You stare down the clock. Big hand on little hand on second hand that keeps ticking like the engine that could, in the end.

Forever. It doesn’t stop as you do, so you catch your breath, trying to stick ticks on fingers until the sticks form a mound of time as they collide. You’ve lost it.

The minute and hour hands sit opposite. What does that mean? Suddenly, they’re a peace sign the second at 12. You stare because it’s pretty, forgetting you needed to be at your daughter’s dance class twenty minutes ago or in three hours, maybe fifteen on a clock that thinks in terms of half-days, thinks with its hands. This moment, you contemplate over counting. Hands slip off chairs, seconds off faces, Hickory Dickory Dock.

Rachael Brown, CMU

Salted the Earth

White isomers, imported on the flaming heads of comets, make their way to the summit of your morning eggs, and to the stick of dynamite originally thought so devastating that no one would risk using it for warfare.

It is the guts of all those novelty shakers you brought as gag gifts to the office Christmas party. They say we want it inherently.

Traitors, in the vein of swine, were once met with salt. The Duke of Aviero and the Soviet Army both suffered

an affliction as embarrassing as it was Assyrian.

In this infamous land nothing may be built for all time.

Dad whispered to me that these are the shoulders civilization has always rested upon, the archetypal crystal that can immortalize the dead. On the highway, we passed a pyramid pregnant with hypertension, tranquil as a snow drift.
Kaneisha Lloyd, CAPA

*The Newspaper: History's Scrapbook*

Genies in a bottle
leaping off the page.
The bold letters jump out at you
like students out of their seats,
saying *read me, read me.*
An old-fashioned book cover
made from the comic section
passes history's time
as the class writes an essay
about what they did
over summer vacation.

Your stiff figure
takes over the faces of passengers.
Appealing to the men
in business suits sitting on the subway
with the newspapers folded delicately on their
creased pants.
Their excuse
to sit in a coffee shop
checking the stocks
looking up at the time every five minutes.
Grabbing a black hole in a mug
of cream and sugar keeps your attention
only until Wall Street writes something interesting.

Grandma shaking
the paper for better reading,
like an eight ball,
asking a question,
inquiring an answer.
Looking for the obituary
of John-Campbell
as her granddaughter dances
to the sound of Madonna
in the entertainment section.

Alexander Chen, CMU

*Particular About Courting*

A geisha's face is deceit in a pink box.
So pretty and welcoming, it doesn't matter
if the red lips leak subtle venom.

Talking becomes weak; knowing
is the chain that holds back the next inquisition.
Those questioned will wear organza veils.

Sentences act as leftover change in denim
back pockets. Skipping the verbal exchange makes
the game moot, but honesty in a locket will still be there.

Male X and Male Y walk down a stone path,
words unspoken between them. The softness
settles in the air, waiting for a moment to glow.

His dark eyes don't pierce but rather warm me,
then African jaguars line up next to one
after another in my stomach. I reach
for his hands, they are inviting. He kisses me
as the lights darken; midnight is upon us.
*Is the tie really black and filled with debris?*
I conquer allure and the game of playing coy.
However unlike Kayoko, I am not that skilled
in the clever art of conversations.
Isaac Munro, CAPA

Mt. Jackson, Virginia

Each farm flashed by the window
fast enough that they all became same.
Every barn was a clone,
with identical tall silos and big wood doors.
Overrun castles of the not-quite frontier.
Every cow was a twin to the next.
Every horse was the same dirt-brown.
These farms had no white mares,
These farms had no black stallions.
Every cornfield danced
to the one acoustic tune I couldn’t hear.
Every sign was just green with a flash
of white letters that were all the same, just rearranged.
It wouldn’t have mattered if I was asleep.

After the Mason-Dixon line
we plummeted South but I didn’t feel different.
We slowed down when we entered the town
so now I could see people.
Gray-haired farmers leaning on rakes
staring at us, the minivan circus parade.
Sandy-haired youths gnawing on that long gold grass
like I thought they only did in movies.

We drove past the blindingly white church
but somehow I had time, this time,
to take in everything.
A small graveyard stood proudly behind it,
showing off the proud dead in a Bluegrass trophy case.
The steeple was unremarkably high.
The Confederate flag dangled above the door
and I didn’t know to act like I’d seen a ghost.
I looked at the Star-Spangled Banner’s
twisted cousin, and I didn’t know why I should be appalled.
This church was built by slaves in 1907,
fourty-two years after slavery was abolished.
That flag was put up by black slaves,
fourty-two years into free life.
You don’t need a rocket
to go to another planet.

Mark Cullen, CMU

Social Commentary

The righteous Sea-Moose came ashore
Tomorrow or a day before
That is to say he came today
Round Twelve to Noon I think I’ll say

Round Twelve to Noon he made a leap
A most extraordinary feat
It lifted him out of the sea
Onto the shores of Tripoli

In Tripoli the moose did trot
Much further than you would’ve thought
But not far from the woody dock
That is to say, around the block

Around the block his path was made
And that is how the road got paved.
Hannah Tuchin, CAPA

*Thoughts From Under the Staircase*

And you're coming through in stereo
in a garden state,
where the woods of our fathers burned
down years ago. And the boy next door
is hunched over his sink, while the maple
watcher, but nothing but tears are leaving his
body. While the paper turns to ash before we
can even begin to read.

And you're a busted guitar on bourbon after the
rains came flooding in. And all your former lovers
have their makeup stains on your lips and bed.
Each new moon lies over a fading star. And each kiss brings
you closer to truth, that the marks on your wrist weren't
your biggest mistake.

You smile and hold him like you'll never let
him fade. But his broken eyes are glued to that
piece of canvas that you forgot to paint.
Behind your hair and eyeliner is the soul I never
touched. And each word on this page is smearing
under my hand, becoming a smudge on my palm
where your name used to be.

The records in my corner are gathering dust,
fading into the wall, and no one but the
starving artist can find them. Is it all just a dream
or am I losing my mind? Because the only thing real are
the laces on my shoes and the wasted ink dripping
from my mouth.

An off-white dish has fallen,
shattered on my floor, and I swear I can see your
face on the smallest piece if I just close my eyes.

And I know I can touch you if I can last just 10 more
minutes in this town. And the boys
with the tight pants are pressing against each other,
and you begin to sweat because you want so bad to be
them, for your speed racer to come and save you.

And you're passing out in a symphony of sounds,
in a dark and lonely place, filled with memories, mirrors, and dreams.

And it fades to gray. So you open your arms and fall back,
as you hit the ground, numb. And I smile because
you finally got what you needed.

Katie Thomson, CAPA

*Cinderella*

In every girl's dream
she wants to be
Cinderella,
glass slippers,
and a fairy godmother.
A carriage to
drive her to the ball.

But when you get
older, all the dreams
you had when you
were little turn
into something
sketchy and
provocative.

*Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*

becomes a Beatles
drug trip.

Tellytubbies
are gay
and Cookie Monster
is bulimic.

Cinderella
talks to mists
about going to
a dance, and
her evil
step-sisters
look like drag queens.

The worst part
of Cinderella
is that she lost her shoe.
I've never been
disgraceful, that
outrageous,
shocking,
shameful,
dishonorable,
scandalous...
drunk, to
do something
that bad-mannered.

I believe that
Cinderella is a gold-digger.
She only wants
the prince for the
money.
the nice house,
the big car,
the jewelry.
and to get away from
those drag queen sisters.

The stability of it all.

Alayna Frankenberry, CMU

What the psychic might have told my grandmother when she was still a child

Loss and resolution will hang you like a bulb
from their wilting Christmas tree.

You will bury yourself in rocking horses,
sit in your house alone at last, listening to the wind
discuss your beauty in the past tense.

The imprints of smoke will hang
forever on the horizon, reminding you of your first
husband, of the sound of his plane crackling
like leaves, sending echoes through the woods.

Your hands will never unclench.

You'll nod goodbye to half your bones
and pray the others' aching into silence.
Countless frowning people
will help you with your slippers.

Your paintings will hang above
the bed posts of your grandchildren,
who will spend countless hours
searching for you beneath the paint,
the water lilies, the wispy clouds
and the sunsets. Beautiful,
beautiful sunsets.
Megan Huerbin, CAPA

Palm Reading and Tarot Cards For Deborah

Deborah,
when you look into
the night sky
intelligence will graze;
your inquisitive eyes,
your listening ears,
your iridescently red woven hair.

Your life,
as long as the moon's.
will be spent alongside friends
of the shadowed past
and the fogged,
masked future.

Your life will find
love
in unexpected places.
Death at 10 A.M.
will break your untamed
spirit.
Loss of childhood innocence
on a painful visit
to a funeral
clad in black
will scar and scorn your
passionate blue eyes.

And when God bows down
before you in
his undeniable splendor,
Deborah,
only then will the smoke
from your wisful
cigarette
burn to its end.

Renata Nelson, CAPA

Going Home

At 4:30 PM on the edge
of Washington, DC.
none of us are surprised
that the two-way
four-lane
traffic
is at a standstill.
Windows are rolled up,
opening only for an instant
to flick a cigarette
onto the hot asphalt.
The air shimmers with heat.

A Mormon church
breaks the monotony
of the landscape,
jerking up through the trees.
I used to think it was a castle,
flags waving atop pointed towers.
I searched for a princess,
expecting to see her long blond hair
cascading from a window,
glistening in the sun.
Someone wrote
"Surrender Dorothy"
on a nearby bridge,
so now I look
for a glimpse
of sparkling red,
a mousey-haired
Kansas girl
being held prisoner
by Mormons.

The beltway is confined
by concrete walls.
They stand,
 bland and imposing;
giant wheat crackers;
the walls of a maze.
English ivy clings to the rough
surfaces, clawing its way to the sky.

Horns honk with agitated
ergy as we
slowly move forward.
The walls become
a beige blur,
accented by green blotches
of ivy.
We leave Dorothy
far behind,
to find her own way home.

Michael J. Hartwell, CMU

Nocturne

There was that night at summer camp:
we planned to stay out “under the stars”
and the stars planned otherwise.
When it rained, I tried to remind
myself (whose bright idea it had been
to want the survival badge) that we
were still beneath literal sky, at least.

I woke around three, though sleep
had given me little to wake from.
The sound of insects clung in my ear
like moss on stone, like a black patch
of sonic Velcro. It wasn’t scary stories.
I knew no headless Indian would come
seeking my scalp. It was the thought
of massive trees, drunk and swaying
with the hot heavy wind, how one
could kill by mere loss of balance,
burying me in its pitchy branches.
I dreaded gravity more than any ghost,
my own pine coffin.
Amanda Nichols, CAPA

Bolero

The music booms from
the surround-sound speakers.
They reach out their hands,
and gracefully
allow their bodies to fall into
one another.
Her eyes are full of compassion
as she pleads for him to touch her.
He pulls her harshly,
forcing her to become submissive.
They move and sway to the beat,
their bodies acting as one.
Her long slender legs rap around his body,
and he dips her slowly,
with her lips slightly apart.
She absorbs the lust through
his finger tips,
and allows herself
to give into her desire.
He lifts her in the air violently,
but she makes it look graceful,
floating back down
as if she had come back from a quick
visit to heaven while on vacation.
Their foreheads touch,
and they look longingly
into each other’s eyes.
Then the music unwinds.
Their movements soften.
He gives her one last dip,
but this one more tender than the first.
She grabs his chest,
and they look deep into each other’s souls
one final time.
Then they stand up,
smile,
listen to the applause and walk
off the dance floor.
You cannot see the lust that once
lingered in their eyes moments ago.

Alexis M. Papalia, CAPA

A Year In Two Lines
Based on the song Sunday Morning by Maroon 5

January pushes us together in frigid fury,
snow kicks in dusty whirls from the heels
of frozen black boots, eyes meeting
through windswept strands of golden-orange hair.
Stares glint with casual passion, glittering in the beams of
car headlights, and his hand
has found my cheek.

January turns to May,
snow turns to rain, thunderclouds, relentless at dusk
as he stops me on the empty, darkened brick
under a bridge, protection from the storm
as he wraps an arm around my waist
and we count, six, seven, eight, nine
up to fourteen and the wind is scared away by darkness
and we are wrapped in it together.

May dissolves June, under a sky streaked with
a beach of pearly pink-orange
and the sun waves its last goodbye behind a cloud of heat.
We walk together, only
the crunch and pince of bleached gravel,
his hand touching mine.

In darkness she is all I see...

I imagined that June would give way to August
and lazy sun burnt afternoons
September and dusk and the feeling of fall
and frosty winter again, the nighttime of the year
when the shadows would cross his pink-windswept face again
and I could only dream of May.

Flashes now, but then
they were eternity.
Driving slow on Sunday morning and I never want to leave...
They still are, the drumbeat
echoing crunching footsteps in gravel
under a permanent pearly pink-orange sunset.
Will Kim, CMU

Uniforms

Frigid winds sneaked up into my shirt as I stood occupying my mind with Catholic nostalgia, praying for the bus to come.

I recalled a time I got caught performing the sign of the cross in the kitchen — I was an oddly religious kid who would make sure prayer was a requirement in every room.

For some reason, I thought it would be funny to explain my compulsion with some joke I learned from school.

I hail her in the kitchen because that's where a woman belongs. My mother slapped me, and took me to the priest to confess what I had just said.

Even in the booth, I could hear his muffled chuckle. Perhaps because my passage was ten Hail Marys.

At the conclusion of my reminiscence, a beautiful nun sauntered over to the stop and casually chatted up conversation.

Astonished by her veiled beauty, her brown eyes engaging in every way and her pale pink lips capturing my attention, I remembered the lessons of my mother's callous hands and I entertained her.

We stepped on the bus, and I tried to explain all the good community service I'd done in my lifetime. For the ten minutes, we were together, I attempted to impress.

Suddenly, passengers gripped onto the poles before the bus came to a braking halt and the nun stepped off the bus and I watched her walk into the Cricket Lounge.

Lauren Johnson, CAPA

Good and Bad Hair Days

Sitting between my aunt's legs, feeling her pointy nails stick my scalp as she intertwined my hair was my first realization of pain.

It's been almost six years since I sat on those yellow pages in the kitchen, with my mom combing that hot piece of metal through my hair.

Then it was time to go to a hair salon, because I was entering womanhood. I remember after that first time leaving, my hair blowing in the wind.

Until one day, five months ago I went into the salon and watched as my straight, longish locks met their fate on the floor.

Today I am left with barely an inch of hair after all of these years. And I realize that in the absence of hair, only emancipation.
Christina Lim, CMU

Lessons
for Andy

A one-year anniversary awakens the flood
that started in my room on that frigid Tuesday
and wore its welcome with a suffocating permanence
for what seemed an endless week:
How could someone so young, healthy,
how could he, our Andy, be gone? Did you hear?

It happened in his sleep. I shook my head in the water
in disbelief. The perversity of imagination charged me to see it all:
the wrenching dismemberment of life from his curled-up body,

tries to cry out in the night when the whole world
was sound asleep, the moonlight watching, shedding blue on his white.
And his mother, with Sunday-morning muffins warm and waiting,
to knock on his door, could I only imagine, the greatest mistake of fate did she see.

As I sat there, puling with the crashing tides,
I fought to stay still for a moment of clarity. Flashes of fins
shot back fragments of a thirteen-year memory:
the buzz of cicadas in July, the condensation of iced coffee
making rings with every sip, the clanks of the heater in winter.
Always the living room piano plunks.

With Mrs. Kim, pencils tapped on the wood to help me keep the beat
every week in the company of Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Kabalevsky.
For every student that parked on that wooden bench for an hour
the creaking shad house came alive, its trees brooding in close to listen.
When he was back from Princeton for the summers, it was with Andy
Geometry and essay writing and vocabulary, SAT I's, II's, III's,
Rebecca, Lord of the Flies, Wuthering Heights,
in the company of themes and theory, formulaic mysteries,
discussed and applied, solved, simplified. The power of knowledge
drew circles of pride in me in spite of my insecurities. We all know,
he'd sip, you're a smart cookie.

So here he was, bound in the cold ground, forever twenty-seven.
When the tears finally dried, I picked up a loose piece of gravel
and chiseled an epitaph on the sky,
so that I would always be mindful
of optimism and faithful of my abilities.

With this act, his brilliance never faded.
Ashleigh Early, CAPA

Dear Auntie

Any fool could guess what was happening in your dark, lonely house. Even when you closed the doors and windows so that we couldn't hear what was happening. We all knew what you were doing to your innocent babies. They couldn't hurt a fly, especially not the way that you hurt them. Your house was made up of torture chambers. In the kitchen, pots of boiling water that could cook a child's flesh like a hotdog. The stairs, pretty much self-explanatory. When they cried, did you feel pain? Did you hurt too? No, not yet.

Dear Auntie, did you love my cousins at all? Didn't you remember the pain that you went through as a child? Don't you remember the hurtful things that your mother said and did to you? Don't you think your sons feel the same? Do you really want them to go through what you went through? Did you even think about this or is it all about having someone to be in charge of?

Dear Auntie, are you blind? Your mother, didn't you know that she was wrong? You should know. She has already received her punishment: she just doesn't know it yet. Don't you see? Justice is always eventually served. Your mother has done wrong, but so have you. You have become the person you probably hated throughout your entire childhood. Someone else is feeling the awful pain that you suffered.

Dear Auntie, this does not make sense. You will only end up in trouble like your mother. She's caught up in bad things and is running out of money because of it. She constantly disgraces herself for money. She is not loved. She does not love. She will never be happy. She will never be right, not in mind or soul.

Dear Auntie, you are in jail. Your sons are with their grandmother. You may never see them again. Dear Auntie, your mother does not love you. You have never known your father. Dear Auntie, your sons are now happy. Do they ever even stop to think about you?

Dear Auntie, your life is not over. We can be a family again. Dear Auntie, your life is not over. You can get out of jail and come see them. Dear Auntie, don't spit into the wind. It will blow back to you. Dear Auntie, don't throw rocks on the moon. They'll go around and hit you in the head. Dear Auntie, your sons are safe. Almost everything is right in your, our family.
Stephanie Reynolds, CMU

*Our Vacation into the (Honey)Moon*

Alone for the first time as Husband and Wife,
we dropped our bags and my shoes,
the mental and literal ones,
 enabling me to grip with my feet,
and we could balance with our bodies unburdened
literally but not mentally

Husband reached out to me, to nullify his fear of my falling,
away from his love.
The smooth clouds let blue shine through.
The sky was jealous of the pristine mountains,
I of his intense feelings.
Mossy grass paled in comparison to the brilliant beauty of the lilies
*and the feelings of Husband.*

The white of the snow on the mountains above reflects the light of the world
into his blue eyes. A shiver rocks me as the mountain air reaches us despite the
gap inspace and time.
Soon the Wife in me will catch up with the Husband he is
*and we will live happily ever after on the moon.*

Randi Campbell, CAPA

*Essence*

They wear soulful expressions.
Twisting and twirling
their sherbet-colored dresses
spread like butterfly wings.
As they spin
this joyride
brings out the ballerina
inside them.
Their presence is angelic.
A pastel rainbow
is splashed in the background.
Cleansing spirits
they rejoice
with ruffled umbrellas
that block the pain.
Leah Selekm, CAPA

*Outer Glow*

Sparks fly around his body,
and fluorescent lights illuminate his outer glow.

He isn't solid; he's a bit shaky.
No one is able to pinpoint his direction.
It's as if he's lost himself to the vibration of the sounds discharging out of his
guitar.

His guitar, his red guitar.
It's all a blur now. Nothing is clear.
Nothing will ever be clear between us.

His personality covered up with the tension of young girls' hearts.
Flash back to a time when I was that young girl,
his hands intertwined with mine.
His calloused fingers and my small hands were perfect.
Now his fingers grasp picks which play unfamiliar melodies.

The image of him has become such an obscure thought of mine,
he isn't certain and he isn't solid. He isn't a part of my mind.

Louise Marie Silano

*girls will be girls*

*inspired by girl in white by Marge Piercy*

i've always secretly
wanted a sister.

but in reality, i'd probably just end up
feeding her to an alligator, in the instance
that she had nicer breasts or softer thighs.

but this isn't reality and she wouldn't mind
because, you see, i would be secretly saving her.

love isn't really the trap.
love is actually the rabbit.

so at the very least,
she would be able to
hold onto something soft
before she felt the teeth.
Alexis Milbee, CAPA

Cautioners
*after* *Surreptitious Kissing* by Denis Johnson

You are the marionette affixed
to my manipulative fingers.
I chew them off like a rabid zombie cadaver
when I’m nervous and can’t say anything except
how wrong I always am.
(You are fixed to tell how wrong I could never be.)

I would like to think that this is not an assault,
but something more of a blunder,
a white lie on the lips of a best friend.

We are not sly, and we do not fool anyone with our
surreptitious kissing, our
holding of each other in secluded hallways
that fall fast with our affairs.

Sarah Wilson, CMU

At Lowe's Hardware Store

I rounded the corner
and there, among the light-switch plates and replacement
sockets, a man and a woman,
a casual embrace.
A song I don’t recognize pangs
the hard surfaces, the concrete,
the metal racks. It guides
their gentle sway, styling
their hips in slow figure eights,
the spectacle of the love that did not fail.

Did they hold longer
to each other early morning
before rising out of bed? Did he
set a cup of coffee for her to
catch out the door?
Did she wipe the counters down
of her makeup flakes each
night? Would it all be worth it?

Even I know it can’t happen
that way. He flipped
too many papers on a nine to five
and blamed her. When he readied
himself to leave, they faced
each other in the doorway, tracing
the lines they had seen form
on their hard faces.

She squeezed his biceps.
She put her head on his chest.
Took his arms to place on her middle,
and looked up, just as she is now.
Sarah Geisler, CAPA

*Vegetable*
*Any herbaceous plant that is eaten whole or in part, raw or cooked; a person leading an unthinking existence because of having lost consciousness or use of the mind.*

- Webster's New World College Dictionary

On these cold sheets
of Siberian snow,
I lay like a snow angel.
I have not seen the stars
since the month before
my seventy-seventh birthday.
I do not know
where I am, who I am.
Two plus two equals twelve,
and no human has ever walked on the moon.
But what does that matter?

Everyday, a new bite,
wire, arm sprouts from me.
I'm like a starfish
or poison ivy.
I do not feel human anymore.
I cannot open my eyes.
I will never again have
enough stamina, strength,
whatever it is that drives
everyone else to blink
fifteen times per minute.

Let me go.
The last thing I saw
were blue angels pumping
my chest and stabbing me
with needles,
and then there was light.
I was gone.
Why did they bring me back?

I'm done,
cooked, old. A vegetable
rots if not eaten.
The garbage men are here,
so take out the trash.
Stare at the Atlantic
and remember me.

I will be there,
somewhere in the
white foam waves.
Lindsey Buckley, CAPA

Stripped

What if upon waking tomorrow,  
I open my eyes  
not to see my candy-coated baby-blue walls  
or mahogany bed set,  
but to see  
the brown murky water  
of the Monongahela Wharf,  
lapping onto the concrete docks.  
Picking the crust from my left tear duct, I’ll walk  
the edge of the sidewalk  
and cup river water in my palms.  
The grains will swim  
and for that second  
they’ll align to form the world’s planets  
minus the sun.  
The sun has been extracted  
from the universe,  
due to wealth and happiness,  
lacking despair and anguish.  
We’ll switch places and tear all human beings  
from everything they’ve worked for.  
The poor will take my Swens and my Mercedes  
and give me their hospital scrubs  
and the stench of unwashed hair.  
I’ll approach a woman standing  
twenty feet away, mesmerized by the  
filthy liquid,  
and I’ll ask her what I do when the sun sets  
beyond the trees.  
The lady brings us blankets.  
She won’t look at me.  
What lady?  
We don’t know her. She just brings us blankets every night.  
I’ll turn back to where I woke.  
I’ll see the oxygen turn thick,  
I’ll see the little planets that aligned to control the atmosphere.  
I’ll be blanketed under my last shred  
of satisfied needs. I’ll beg  
and the desperate need of approval will be the same  
as my coins, jingling in my Styrofoam cup.

Leah Wolkovich, CMU

China Patterns

He held me the way he was meant to –  
round, solid arms streaked with understanding.  
He felt the way my dad does on Sunday mornings,  
strawberry waffle hugs with a side of forehead kisses  
and orange juice.

We sit together at night dissecting life and ourselves,  
feet in books of poetry, settling immediately  
into a routine we never took time to develop.  
I am drawn to him, eyes half-closed, peace nestled  
between words and bodies, a calm found in inhalations.

In the daytime, the sun illuminates everything,  
making shadows stand out as obstacles  
rather than worthy companions. Here, reality  
overwhelms, threatening to break understanding  
with the demand of expectation.

A certain comfort comes with distance  
contradicting the passion of proximity.  
China dolls in glass cabinets are more appealing  
than the ones you play with every day,  
but there is always the fear of breaking them.
Laura Crelli, CAPA

Family Pasta

We sit around the table,
our mouths watering.
What will be today's dinner?
We wonder with impatience
as Dad slowly,
(it seems to us),
lifts the metal lid of the pasta pot.
We each have our own favorite pasta meals—
mine, pasta made with bacon, potatoes, and cheese.
Pasta brings my family together for dinner.
Aromas
remind my dad and brother of Italy,
and me of the many happy nights
we have spent together,
enjoying those delicious pasta meals.
The aromas remind my sisters
of how much Dad loves to cook,
and reminds my mother how hungry she really is.
Family,
pasta,
they go together in my house.
Whenever we have birthday celebrations,
and our relatives come to visit,
we have pasta, of course.
When my friends ask what I had for dinner last night,
I almost always answer: pasta.
When we have something else,
the conversation at the dinner table
is bland and restless.
Chicken or fish causes mixed feelings.
Rice causes bored conversations,
like what Mom or Dad did at work today
or how someone did on a test.
But when the smell of spaghetti sauce
and original Italian pasta
fills our noses,
we realize the importance of family, pasta,
and how much they mean to us.