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 2004 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 poetry celebrates that collaboration. We all learned from each other, and we are 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
Boundary Street
Volume III

Carnegie Mellon University
Creative Writing
&
CAPA High School
Literary Arts
Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank: The Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, Carnegie Mellon University, CMU English Department Staff, Jim Daniels, Kristin Kovacic, JoAnne Valco, Greg Powell, and Mara Cregan.
Contents

Connie Amoroso, CMU
   To a Writer Spreading Ashes on a Page
Gillian Goldberg, CAPA
   On Redundancies in Hands
Jennifer Bakal, CMU
   the past's future is not now
Bridgette Holeman, CAPA
   A Day of Terror
Elizabeth Snipes, CAPA
   Forms of Man
Lillian Bertram, CMU
   Jim Daniels on the Moon
Jeri' Ogden, CAPA
   If They Would Have Fallen In Love On The Moon
Eliza Bishop, CMU
   Burial
Amanda Huminski, CAPA
   You Can't Bake Cookies with Crisco
Peter Borrebach, CMU
   City Fragments
Ev Lauffenburger, CAPA
   Communist Porcupines
Boaz Munro, CAPA
   1099
K. Dawson, CMU
   A Quiet Arrival
Christina Sahovey, CAPA
   For the Germans
Heather DiPrima, CMU
   And you, my mother
Rachel Belloma, CAPA
   Eucalyptus
Rachel Dougnac, CMU
   Minor Ballroom Infidelities
Rachel Thomson, CAPA
   A Poem
Claire Drobot, CMU
    Still Life: Appetites
Rachael Morris, CAPA
    Molly's Purse
Carolyn Elliott, CMU
    The Holy Terrors
Alexis Rago, CAPA
    Plant
Gianna Ward Vetrano, CAPA
    Being Born
Bryan C. Gaynor, CMU
    Permanent Inks
Darrah Bird, CAPA
    Marble
Stephanie Fisher, CAPA
    Patchwork
Lauren Ingram, CMU
    Hitchhiking Across America
Devon Conroy, CAPA
    My Position on the Evolutionary Scale
Soo Jung, CMU
    A Father's Departure
Janessa Parks, CAPA
    Seasons
Maria Matuscak, CMU
    Premonition
Ashley Wise, CAPA
    A Childhood Memory
Nikhil Shetty, CMU
    The Son: Alone With a Photograph of His Mother
Lakiesha Thomas, CAPA
    What God Gave Me Is Just Fine
Sarah Smith, CMU
    Meditation on a Jewelry Shop Window
Nathan Resnick Day, CAPA
    Poem
Gillian Goldberg, CAPA

On Redundancies in Hands

As my grandmother spreads jam on a piece of toast for her husband—my grandfather—whose eyes work only at the sides, I see we share hands. The cold outside has cracked my top layers, skin hangs slack. When I flex, now, holding a cup of tea, our wrinkles are identical.

I know that if anything is passed generation to next, it won’t be pearls guarded in silk purses, genes, songs. It is hands that are given.

Mine are small, they reach to the second knuckle of men’s gloves.

My sister’s are like rat claws pointed at the fingertips. Her arms bend, encircling a whole world as she eats cheese with two hands, as she oils a baseball mitt.

My grandmother passes the jammed piece of bread to my sister, who passes it to me. I set it in place on my grandfather’s plate.

Who knows what my daughter’s hands will look like, how they’ll wrinkle what she’ll do with them.

Maybe she’ll have a sixth finger, maybe she won’t have any.
Connie Amoroso, CMU

To a Writer Spreading Ashes on the Page

My dearest,
The displacement of the character is not the question. It is a matter of anguish and nostalgia, and the way mournful vowels in story shape your tongue.

I made a valentine of 458 crayon-colored hearts cut out of notebook paper. I worry that you're becoming immune to kinetic energy. I sent them in an effort to remind you of feeling the static ghost of human touch.

Remember that internal monologue cannot raise the dead. Do not betray your narrator, but tell the audience the truth. The story isn't finished until you stop chain smoking and let your heart seep through the white space.

You need to feel the secular reality of dirt under your feet, and revel in mortality. Let's go walk in the rain to a gas station and drink day-old black coffee. I can't prove there is a narrative in loving and death, just shudder and let the bloodshot memory open.
Jennifer Bakal, CMU

the past’s future is not now

no house

festooned with pictures crayoned by a grubby hand
numerous as sails on a pirate schooner
kindergarten graffiti giving no quarter to the conquered
violating every fragment of flat surface

no child

schooled to jump unfazed over evergreen roots
and other mountain-biking obstacles
squealing dive like a dolphin, Mommy a sweep
of back, another’s gaunt jaw forever intermixed

no you

discarded during my year-long mercuric mood
romping with mongrels and gorging on trifle
my brain unpretzeled too late to salvage
the buried treasure of our wrecked antiquities
Bridgette Holeman, CAPA

A Day Of Terror

My brain hit the floor like an egg in a violent shatter. Blood gushed on to the floor like red paint.

Just for doing graffiti on a Friday night with my friends, who have nothing better to do. The police could have punished me a different way instead of punishing me this way. I felt as if I was missing a fragment of my head.

Pretending they got me mixed up with some other kid who looks just like me, but in reality I guess it’s me who they want to beat.

Going to school and eating pretzels at lunchtime. Having a jump rope competition with my friends. Betting quarters with my lunch money on who would win.

I lay on the ground thinking about what I have done. I could just sweep up all the pieces and glue them back together again. Thinking about activities that I could have been doing, besides this.
Elizabeth Snipes, CAPA

Forms of Man

I. The Beast
Mongrels that lull
    in the idolatry
of the female
body.

II. The Hunter
Under the evergreen,
    angels lie
with fallen ravens,
rifles are night staffs,
branches fall for fire.

Damned angels
pick feathers
from the dead, weaving wings
to stab
in each other's backs.
    Man is deceiving.

III. The Worker
Sweeping un-immaculate
actions under a veil
of solidarity; a man's
heart is stonier under
the broom of conscience.
Dirty old men
mop long hallways
of un-clean fantasies,
making everything slippery.
Jim Daniels on the Moon

This disparate satellite
is foraging among moon rock,
deviant craters, haunting
faces in meteor dust

the tools for shelter
are not found. He takes
an inflated step that
propels him over
a sand dune (is that sand?)

floating flights
remind him of marshmallows
before remembering
that he never liked marshmallows.

the earth is slowly pulled
into view like a deflated
basketball, a gaseous
anomaly. His eyes
mirror weather patterns
and ocean currents
just short of beauty.

He recalls knowing, somehow,
that the shadows are seen
from space, not the objects.
He scans the planet
for Detroit, the blues, rock city
its shadow of calloused hands
scattered ruins, crumbling smokestacks.

He can not find the factories,
or the little league fields
beneath the refinery's glow.
His house is gone, along with
his old school.
Moon time feels like forever.
Detroit no longer exists.

Turning away he remembers
that he must find a cave
or shelter in a crater
before nightfall and the freeze,
leaving the smoldering sun
to set on a dissipating
dust trail of memory.
Jeri’ Ogden, CAPA

If They Would Have Fallen In Love On The Moon

they would float all alone,
a million miles away from Pittsburgh.
Living in a space shuttle
they’d eat dried ice cream
for lunch every day.
They both would have packed
an endless supply of their favorite foods.
She would eat French fries and salt.
He would eat Lay’s Salt and Vinegar Chips.
He would do somersaults and catch
chips in mid-atmosphere.
She would never have to want
for his attention, unless he was engaged in studying asteroid clusters.

They would fight because of boredom.
She would yell at him before
she’d storm off and cry
in her hands as she sat on the bed.
He would bring her moon
dust in a jar because
there aren’t any flower shops on the moon. She’d leap into his arms
and kiss his lips in forgiveness.

If they would have fallen
in love on the moon this
is how they would have lived,
but they didn’t. They fell in love in Pittsburgh
on a fall day when they were too old to know it wasn’t a meaningless crush, but too young to do anything but share Frosties from Wendy’s.
Eliza Bishop, CMU

Burial

My ribs ease softly.
I hollow out, the soil rises.
Webs in my hair.
A praying mantis at the nape
of my neck. Spine splitting
with ferns. Time is tedious
as it abandons. Unwinding,
sand pours from my thighs,
filling pools of my sockets.

Having been a bridge, a structure, a doorway
I will shed what entrances seek

Release.
Amanda Huminski, CAPA

You Can't Bake Cookies With Crisco

I baked with my father
among the metal cabinets.
He stood over my shoulder
and never had a recipe.

I learned this from him;
ever mix chocolate
and baking powder.
Something to do with chemistry.

An ounce of oregano
is more than I'd ever
imagined. He coughed.

The work he did in Texas
he regretted. Not including
the cooking, I'm sure.

I baked for my mother.
She liked the cheesecake and
ate it with aging teeth.

I baked with this girl.
She said that compatibility
in the kitchen reflected life.

My father taught me
not to use Crisco.
My mother ate the leftovers.

This girl, she had a sweet tooth.
I told her everything I knew
about cooking.
Peter Borrebach, CMU

*City Fragments*

1.

Ate a bagel
at 80th and Broadway.

A bearded priest
smoked a cigarette.

2.

My face reflected
onto Klee's blue pumpkin.

Over my shoulder,
the sky through a window.

3.

The pilot seeks
a less turbulent altitude.

We dream of mountains,
dream of snow.
Ev Lauffenburger, CAPA

Communist Porcupines

Every summer of my childhood Communist Porcupines would invade my bedroom and take me to their secret mountain.

They lived on a rock, which they insisted was shaped like a bear.

I never thought so.

On the very top of the rock the oldest and wisest of the Communist Porcupines lived. He was a crotchety old bastard who liked to dress in drag.

I can still remember how soft their quills felt when I tried to bury my young face in their fur.

Communists, like Porcupines, only have quills when threatened.
1
Voices flow like water from a flask, swelling, dripping, running out over the parched sand.

The mosque is an oasis in a desert of blood and blades.

The imam cries to God for peace in the Land of Abraham Jesus and Mohammad.

2
Europe is green and wet much more Promising than the cracked crescent.

From his City the Pope cries to the masses for war.

Crusaders see their reflections distorted in the helmets around them as they go to save their fellows from the infidel.

The infidel prays with Christians and Jews in one wall.
3
Swords hum, freshly drawn,
a line of teeth.

Arrows and gasps,
slashes and screams
rend the air.

Holy men cry out over the helmets,
reminding the men why they are fighting:
Peace.

A new hymn rises.
K. Dawson, CMU

A Quiet Arrival

On the road from the airport
my painted crimsons looked cheap.
Shanghai was brighter than I'd remembered.
In photographs it had been all blues
and communist greys,
but I could only picture a few dusty roads
and a bucket of crabs,
loose in our fourth story antiques.

My breaths astonished me,
larger and larger the fogs
through which I could see
an unfamiliar city.
On long turns and dark buildings
my sandalwood face
painted whites and reds.
Christina Sahovey, CAPA

For the Germans

1. Klaus
   The first German I had met was Klaus
   he was so tall,
   that it felt unsuitable
   standing next to him.
   I was 6 then,
   and could hardly understand him
   through the haze of his accent.

2. Markus
   Markus arrived years after Klaus,
   when I was 10.
   And Markus 20.
   He was always nicely dressed,
   and would speak to us
   in his native tongue.

3. Viola
   She was only the 2nd female
   of the Germans to come,
   and the first after Markus.
   At the age of
   12, I remember,
   she gave us a photo-book
   of her hometown
   Hannover.

4. Gunnar
   Gunnar was the last to come.
   We would talk about
   Radiohead together,
   as he also liked them,
   and he would share with us
   some stories of Germany
   and the university he attended.
   He left to go back there
   when I was 15.
Heather DiPrima, CMU

And you, my mother

I remember clowns, with distaste, printed in bright primary colors on linen sheets that chafed my skin and threw off static lighting bolts when I twisted in my dreams: the cotton taste lingering under my tongue until I gave in and sucked socks.

The addiction to garments came after the addiction to phalanges, when you would cover my arms with red knee-highs and pin them to my shirt to keep me from sucking my thumb, and when I did it anyways, you pinned sock to stomach; a bright home-made straight jacket.

In the evenings, you walked us, two midget lunatics in animal harnesses and leashes, once around the block while the neighbors thought you were crazy, because they didn’t understand what it was like to raise twins alone with only balloons to tell you where they are. You painted balloons on the bedroom wall: blue like the ocean by the summer house. Like my mother in July, and the water that kept trying to steal her children away.
I was drowning in my dreams
and would've screamed, but I could not
breathe. I cried and my tears flooded
the room, crept down the hall
and brushed the feet of your bed.
They tickled toes, which were always
cold in the summer. When you came
you looked liked the candy witch
of my dreams, scraggle-haired
and wild eyed in a pink-striped
robe. You held me and brushed tears
through my hair and sang sad lullabies
until you fell asleep. I could hear words
in the whisper of your breathing.

Sometimes I make it so very difficult to love me.
Rachel Belloma, CAPA

Eucalyptus

I still remember her scent perfectly, her skin nearly sweated menthol. We slept in the same bed, the three of us— me, my grandmother and her disease. Bedfellows, I knew them well. When she passed, my mother couldn't think of throwing out the sheets. They still had her mother spread across them: microscopic.

When my grandfather died in his chair, she moved into our house. The chair came with her, it is still in our living room. She was so much stronger than I could have imagined her being, I saw her cry once. Only once.

At the funeral home, I wandered into the cellar, full of coffins. Though I am not sure if my memory is honest, I remember the dark, the freezing cold. There was my rock, no Jesus could give me that. Death is cold, dark—it is something you stumble into. I could not shake it.

My grandmother slapped me once, I was young. It instilled in me a respect of her, no, not respect— but not fear either. I knew more was expected of me from her, she was not my soft-cored mother.
When she went, it was quiet.
I did not tell anyone when I discovered her.
I touched her face, held on to her.
Menthol, yes, that I remember as it was.
The rest is my own.
Rachel Dougnac, CMU

*Minor Ballroom Infidelities*

Students with starchy faces,  
puckered features, their nylon  
gray, pace the courtyard while John  
and I dance under ivy, a velvet curtain.  

John fumbles the in-step,  
and his hair becomes appropriately  
disarrayed. (How he straightens his ascot!  
How he toys with silk!) Vistas of white!  

Our laughing knocks over tiny mausoleums,  
but our shoes make such light, airy sounds  
(Such sparkling conversation!)  
that the neighbors forgive us.  

Then my, the controversy! Sasha leers  
at me with her fallen features, her crimson  
head, her encrusted heels, escorted  
by a dark, lanky movie star, a frail ingénue.  

"Quit the strings! John, you're in my revue."  
John and I flounce (what a miserable song!)  
The tulips cast down their shining lids (such sad posture!)  

That evening I re-heated pasta and drank vodka  
with the ingénue, rambled, resigned, about Elaine May,  
soap opera and horrible timing. My feet  
were bruised and teal. The ingénue burst into tears  
and his sincerity nearly killed me.
Rachael Thomson, CAPA

A Poem

--for Eddy, the bus driver

When I hear Titanic, I think of you,
brave captain! Your orange baseball cap!
Your old tooth smile!
Tell us your secrets Eddy, we are
long-lost grandchildren, tell us
how the boat sank, you swam for safety.
Are the icebergs really that beautiful? Or
were they dwarfed by the women's extravagant hats?
Silenced by the orchestra, waltzing
your boat into extinction.
Or just take us somewhere! I hear
the stratosphere is nice this time of year.
Or the ionosphere!
Take use there!
O captain, my captain, there's no point
saying you can't, we understand but, oh,
the aurora borealis so close!
We would be surrounded by stars, and return
zapping our friends with lightning from our fingers.
Just let us open the windows,
drink the pink, let us take in our
recommended daily dose of impossible things,
both nutritious and delicious!
Six impossible things, Eddy, I'm convinced
we could find them on this bus.
Claire Drobot, CMU

Still Life: Appetites

1. A young woman stands on the corner. Her coat billows behind her, pirate flag, masthead, the N-E-W woman. A thin layer of cloth hugs her idling breasts. She would like to display the indiscretions she has made.

2. A blonde-haired innocent drops his popcorn into the beach sand. He finds himself suddenly surrounded by a crew of seagulls. Heads cocked, they call to their brethren:

"Comrades, at last we have found food."

3. Paper flakes shape an old man's drying lips. The folds, cracks and lines trace the route his food will take, tempered by alcohol before it rests in his distended belly.

Surely, eating is fulfillment.
Rachael Morris, CAPA

*Molly's Purse*

Her life
concealed by a velvety leather exterior.
Her beauty secrets
hanging from her shoulder like a child
on the monkey bars.
Her true colors
a mystery consumed by a silver zipper.

There's nothing to hint at the chaos
inside but the jingle
of car keys, the occasional exposure
of photos & candy wrappers
when the mouth is opened.

Her life
safe behind those leather walls.
Safe behind the label.
Carolyn Elliott, CMU

_The Holy Terrors_
_after "To Earthward" by Robert Frost_

In a great dusty hall
I'll make a tent of sheets
stretched over chairs like falls
of yellow heat.

Then you and I will sit
inside it on the floor,
with our blue candles lit,
we'll play far more

Records than parents would ever let us. — I know
things I don't think I should,
that music grows

Of its own vast power,
that there's no precedent
to this or any hour,
that our small tent

Could fall like the ceiling
that you, not another
are my lost sweet feeling
love, and brother.
Alexis Rago, CAPA

Plant

from Rimbaud

Large, monstrous overgrowth of green fingers. Hundreds of leaves arch heavenward and then point down to the earth from which they came. Young chutes hug their elders close as they make their slow eternal climb to grab the sun, who is forever out of reach. The mighty stems bend weakly in the wind as small insects build villages upon their surface. Some of these villages are carved into the plant's skin, creating brown tattoos of disease along the leaves and spine. As rain trickles down to the roots, villages are flooded. The inhabitants washed away. As the beat of the rain quickens, the plant sags a little in relief and then breathes anew. Its body refreshed, its harmful inhabitants now at the roots. It takes on the new radiance of fresh cut grass, waving in a sea breeze, in summer.
Gianna Ward-Vetrano, CAPA

Being Born

To watch the old lives blossom
under their saffron skins
is to burn, to bleed, to blush.
It purges the pink.

The sun cracks the eyes;
the street explodes with Spanish;
bomba, baby, bomba.
Eyes close.

Follow the sun earthward
in rhythmic pulse, gushing
breath, and bone, the body's
fragrant guns.

Like ice melting in gardens,
we lie, chewing candied
violets, playing Mother
Earth in dirt.

Behind the mask, sleep
collapsed, dropped its carcass
in consciousness, the last stop
under the skin.

This is who we are.
Blind woman, deaf
man; the soup of souls
all but real.
Permanent Inks

I wanted to paint
her room black with red trim,
colors that suited darker moods.
Instead she built
a tiny room for both of us,
but we haven't yet moved in.

She wrote out "My Love for You,"
Helen Steiner Rice's simple verse,
all childlike rhymed couplets,
underneath where the photo fits;
it's hard to cover those words
with any old snapshot of us.

With love and time
she made its rough exterior
beautiful. Rounded sharp edges,
added paint for character,
chose careful words.

A knotted black heart: the half-finished
tattoo on her back. The second half
must be earned; I'm working harder
every day.

She drew that design atop the frame,
at the center,
whole.
Those hearts
cross, inseparable
even as our paint fades
to pinks and grays.
Darrah Bird, CAPA

Marble

Suddenly, it's not the marble itself. It's the way it slides across the palm leaving the tiniest of dents in the lifeline.

In the darkest corner of my memory, I watch her pick at it with her pinkie, searching for the cracks and bruises,

like it's the eye of her favorite cat. The sunlight color of her six stripes meandering aimlessly across the Savannah,

she was obviously cold to this game. As if the world stops turning she bites her thumb, flicking it inside her mouth just so she knows she's doing it right.

She bets her babies to the pool sharks with thumbs bigger than their biceps, and turns.

She flips thumb against pointer finger, sending her bravest forward. It fails around the grass seeking what friendship her fingers can't give it.

It manages to avoid all contact and lose her

the eye of a fish she caught next door.

The darkest corner of my mind opens, shedding light on the attic and my lifelines caressing tiny orbs of memory.
Stephanie Fisher, CAPA

Patchwork

The arm was torn just above
the shoulder, some of
the cotton was showing. I'm
not sure if it was age or neglect
that caused
the damage to her arm.

It smelled like fabric softener,
despite the dirt smeared on
the round face. Mud stained
the blonde locks of hair,
and if you looked hard enough
the grayish blue
eyes might spill over with tears
at any second. I picked the doll
up, hugging her close to my
chest. In some way, I
was trying to make the doll
feel better.

I wondered who it
could've belong to;

who could carelessly leave
something so beautiful on
the ground? Perhaps the girl
with the patchwork dress
was dropped because her owner
was in a hurry. What if there was
a brief struggle, in which she
was discarded? Maybe she
was discarded because she was
no longer needed.
I wondered what other little girl stared into her starry eyes.

My mother didn't approve of me bringing the doll home, unless she could wash it. After the doll had her bath, my mother wanted to repair her battle wound.

I pictured myself in the patchwork dress. It would reach my ankles, barely covering the brown boots. Now, I wonder if my mom noticed the wound on my shoulder. Would her mother refuse to let her keep me unless she could sew up the wounds?
Hitchhiking across America

These black highways, a pale sun rises
to zenith over a thousand miles
of corn and silence. A long way off
I see a man standing at the side
of the road, his reaching straw arm
supported by an old broom handle,
stitched grin wearing at the seams.
Corn waves brown and green.
The sky rises like a hawk's
blue wing. He fades behind me
in a cloud of dust, waving, still.
Devon Conroy, CAPA

My Position on the Evolutionary Scale

Start? I'm a bag of skin that needs hydrating. There is no motivation, nor care of craft Inside this leather—no cocoa butter can fix this ruined hide.

Skeletons dead in the crust of Montana blink when they see me—What are you doing there? I am alive and trudging steadily, though my compass is broken and I have cataracts.

Notions have been tossed at me to take a seven-year nap. Fling your body into the ocean, let it drift to the bottom and let the merman with Johnny Depp's face comb your hair as you fall asleep.

I'm hoping there will be a storm, a tsunami or some other disaster—Anything to makes me combust. The well is dried, and drilled as deeply as possible. I see a small girl, she is flinging rocks downward, frowning at the echoes.

Ignition is something required for living, for continuity. I remember hope, the sensation of wanting and waiting for that moment when it all hits, and you know that there will be no end, only another road.

That is the most satisfying of all, waiting for our pinpricks, our personal train wrecks. They are the only way we improve. Evolution is a slow, weary thing and without the death or loss of a few along the way, we are all halted.
Soo Jung, CMU

A Father's Departure

I see his lips relaxed
in a smile, behind the thick glass,
as the door closes. I frame him
there? afraid his hair will never stay
this thick. To know him
is to know barriers & climb walls.
But outside, it is late? the sun refuses
to reflect its glow on the blades of grass
or allow me to pull
myself out of his unwanted shadow.

Years from now, I will stretch
my arms above me and point to the ocean.
I will imagine him lying
down on the curve of a hill, legs stretched
out, pointing towards my body.
I know we must cross
distances so when our bodies meet,
a kiss will pull the sun back home.
Janessa Parks, CAPA

*Season*

There is no winter,
the sky is turning pastel pink from gray.

There are no snowflakes splashing my cheeks,
mixing with my soft complexion.

There is no wind chasing me,
encircling me for my attention.

Tastes of warm chocolate chip cookies,
and tea, coated with sugar has,

faded;
swallowed by words unspoken.

I count empty nights,
Endless.

Outside the window, the sun, now rising,
but I still feel darkness.

Days are beginning to fade into nights,
yet time feels suspended.

No longer does the air sting my cheeks

and press against my lips, turning them chapped
from their strawberry shine.

The air is beginning to thicken, and I watch
as the butterflies chase the bees.
Maria Matuscak, CMU

*Premonition*
I want to write about pearl earrings
and daffodils, orchids
in December and crystal vases
in March, but I just can't
because I keep thinking about
the chandelier in the foyer that ought
to drop on the husband while his wife
and daughters sit down for supper.

How do you tell a woman her husband
is dead? Four-o'clock glare obscuring
not-Monet on the opposite wall;
focus, stink of Lidocane from adjacent
rooms. No one sees the same
rainbow; violet to me, red to you, he
can't see anything at all. They're
only characters in my head. Why can't I
cut stems and smile?

Unnecessary things compel me. Like a
dried pea of toothpaste clinging to ceramic
for salvation in the sink of a critical case. Or
asymmetry among the black dots on the back
of a ladybug, slipped in when a visitor
cracked a window. Drawn to the artificial
color of carnations in plastic vases,
a dog-eared King James.

The husband would have given his wife
pearls for their anniversary this June.
(When else would they have married?)
She might find them hidden in his underwear
drawer, or tucked in the breast pocket
of the gray suit he never wears. Or maybe
he didn't buy them yet. I can't decide. I want
daffodils on the counter.
Ashley Wise, CAPA

A Childhood Memory

The grass is always greener
on the other side, filled with 5-year-old Sally
and her brother Bob.
Jumping, running, and skipping
along the red brick road
to the famous wizard, Oz. The giants leaping
behind the tin lion whose
chest is empty and has a soul that's heavy.
Aimlessly wandering between
the walking corn stalk
and the kitty who never leaves her basket.

My mother always read me
the Jolly Green Giants.
I thought,
a green anything
wouldn't be very jolly.

I lay in bed at night, and dreamt
about the modest navy
walking cape and her cousin
who was a cow before being eaten by
the childish grandfather pocket watch.
I never liked the usual fables.
To me they seemed too predictable.
I knew a prince would always
rescue the damsel in distress. Or the evil witch
would be melted. They needed action.
Why couldn't the wolf, just once, eat
little red riding hood? Maybe choke down
a few lemons to flavor.
Nikhil Shetty, CMU

The Son: Alone With a Photograph of His Mother

In the mornings, his mother sat
at the kitchen table
with a single cup of tea,
steam curving up over her eyes
glazed in thought. There's a photograph
of her as a teenager, her eyes
focused to the right of the lens
biting her bottom lip, a finger stiff
inside a curl — her parents, now grandparents,
at the head of the restaurant table
and the rest of the family posing.

She was distracted by a boy;
her expression a noiseless separation,
just like the steam rising smooth
from her single cup of tea.

Her son, gone and grown
discovers this photograph
and remembers those morning meditations.
Such quietness, while the windows
shone bright behind her: his mother
lost in thought, what did she miss?
And with this image in his mind,
the son could not imagine her looking
at anyone like she did in that photograph,
but, the mother's expression,
he thought, was always, everywhere,
both lovely and ceaseless.
Lakesha Thomas, CAPA

_What God Gave Me Is Just Fine_

I can hot curl my hair, give it a perm, and even flat-iron it.
But trust me, I'm satisfied with what I was given from the beginning.
As much as I can pluck my eyebrows they're gonna grow back thicker.
So why not just leave them be? They way that they already are.
I'm not going to starve myself just to have the model figure,
and I'm not going to eat a load of fattening food just to get thicker,
just to please my fellas.
The way my figure is now is definitely gratifying.
Besides, I have a figure that fantasticallly fits with my height,
I can't be your, salsa dancing, booty shakin' Bronx talkin'
J.Lo.
Can't be your crazy drinkin' table dancin' country talkin' Britney Spears, or any other female that can never leave a guy imagining anymore.
I can't be your Superwoman.
So no thanks, no silicones for me.
and no thank you, no facelifts for me.
Keep your lypo, no suctions for me
because it's my hair, my eyes, my nose, and my lips
and everything else making up my body that fits...
Put it this way,
what God gave me is just fine.
Sarah Smith, CMU

MEDITATION ON A JEWELRY SHOP WINDOW

It is noon, Valentine's Day, and a boy arrives with flowers already dry and dark. Tired roses! You are not very novel. The girls and I put out cake and tea, play two hands of euchre under two extraordinary suns. All this talking!—

then sit with our guest in the dull room with the windows closed and look at the picture of the Arch in Paris, great black taxis gliding between its legs, until nobody can talk at all.

I think of a blue boutonniere I saw in a shop window the day before, when I stopped on my way to the druggist to blow smoke on the swans, and wished for a lover's breast on which to use my good knives, but was then ashamed. The Virgin in her blue ovals on the wall, her great big dinner plates, looked astray at the charm bracelets. All the metallic clanking of the faithful! Sad children walked by like dethroned monarchs, golden-haired and insolent, not wearing coats, and free from all rule.
Nathan Resnick Day, CAPA

POEM
After Frank O'Hara

It's Tuesday morn and I have school
but instead I have a coffee and wish
I were in Brazil or New Orleans, somewhere
warm where people walk on stilts
and drum-dance in the streets
with crazy headdresses. Instead

I go to the park (to dance of course).
O February! Now you've done it. I hope
you're proud of yourself. You flare your nostrils
and the walls come tumble-ing.

I take the 61C
at Forbes and Murray—have to pee
and on Fifth I buy a bum some soup
but just so I can feel good about myself

and it is noon already and I walk down
the avenue like Baloo, el mundo es un panuelo
and I think
I'll get a pizza at Sbarro's
with meatballs and then I'll probably rent a dumb movie
with Woody Allen
and I'm dirty as hell

and suddenly—the ice, I slip
and I hit the sidewalk and
a whole bunch of obscenities
        And suddenly

I turn the corner and see
sirens and two cars
smashed together like brothers
and an ambulance to carry away the dead.