



Boundary Street

Volume 10, Spring 2012

A CAPA | Carnegie Mellon Collaboration

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Melissa Pearlman (Principal, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12) and Vickie McKay (Carnegie Mellon University English Department)

This project was made possible by the generous support of the Jenifer and Marshall Gile Creative Writing Fund.

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Introduction

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 Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12. Throughout the Spring 2012 semester, CMU students and CAPA students exchanged assignments and worked together on poems, meeting both at CMU and CAPA for workshop sessions and discussions. This collection of poems celebrates this collaboration. We all learned from each other, and we are 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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The Fire Boils over the Cast-Steel Kettle

Austin Moyer

Hello and how are you? Can I take a seat here?
Thanks and may I say what a lovely dress, it really
brings out the turquoise flecks of your iris. Of course I
noticed, it's my job to notice, it's how I discovered
a little lake not far from here where no one ever goes,
where butterflies big as baseball mitts float above
a splendid dead oak jutting over the still water.
It's beautiful enough to make one weep, I assure you. If you like
I could show it to you. It's close, very close, and along
the way are wonders. Pentelic statues line the path
we must take and at midday, when the sun strikes, they thrum
like honey. Wait! Please don't go, I've got so much
to show you and your fingers are such things that were I
a better painter I would enshrine them on the skull's ceiling
so that when my bones are excavated many millennia from now
their delicate cantilevers will still tattoo my skeleton's canvas.
Wait! Please! Just one more argghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh hhhhtttt
IS THAT MACE?!

Deaf People

Cole Weber

My knuckles, dragging,
never heal and as blood dries
I will lose my fears.

Everything will go placid
And I'll be suddenly deaf.

Self –perpetuate
and become one with the wind.
I am beyond lost.

At last, the glory of sleep
is overtaking the sounds.

Everyone is fine
and everyone is whining.
No good ideas.

The world now has leprosy,
and now we're all falling off.

The sound of harsh blame
echoes in the parking lots
and quickly goes dead.

Now I have to say hello
in a million different ways.

I raise my voice, loud
and again no one is safe.
Stuck, jabbed, we open

every window and we try
to let sun flood in again.

Where Street Becomes Ocean

Alexis Royall

He slips through the doors of the bus,
shaking his umbrella, splattering me with water.
An old handkerchief falls from his pocket,
whispers secrets that I can't comprehend.
I let it sit there on my newspaper from yesterday, no
two weeks ago, no it's today's.

I hold the rag up to the man,
he frowns and I let it fall,
wipe my hand on my pants—
The bus rumbles on.

He looks at me
I turn away, see street signs unwind like
Yarn in a grandmother's withering hands.
South Millvale flashes by, my stop.

Ding, Stop Requested
The straps of my book bag melt.
I cough, he sneezes, and the bus driver shrugs,
the rest of the riders follow suit.

He scoops the liquid remains up with his umbrella,
picks me up too, sends me sailing
out the window.
I yell, he winks,
the driver steps on the gas, the passengers
stare straight ahead.

Pelicans land in the umbrella,
Evaluating me through kaleidoscope eyes,
one squawks, I yawn,
the street sloshes as it becomes ocean.

We hit land, I rock the umbrella,
trying to get us unstuck,
the water drains out—
becomes street again—
and we're on the sticky tar roof of my house.
I jump down onto the porch, open
the door, the birds follow, a slug with a
suitcase walks past.

My bed slides to me, tells me to climb in.
I slip under the covers,
Let the waves of amnesia wash over me,
Twist and turn to the sour beat of my alarm clock
telling me it's time for school, and
slide back into the world, wondering if my backpack
is still liquefied.

A Self Portrait

Jonathan Lee

Jonathan Lee sleeps in an endlessly decadent paradise.
Jonathan Lee is New Orleans.
He loves ugliness, swims in it, laughs and weeps with the unholy people
of this
earth.

Jonathan Lee stumbles through ancient carpeted tenements,
trying to escape and simultaneously make meaning of the tattered scrip-
tures of our
lives.

Jonathan Lee remembers when he used to lose himself in the community
gardens
of youth and sprawl out like a Brazilian slum, and knows that these days
he simply
drifts through a dreadful business casual half-consciousness.

Jonathan Lee is omnipotent; with a wave of his hand he derives angels
from sand
and ashes from monuments.

Jonathan Lee must give up his brooding esotericism
into a squalid misrepresentation of hip-hop culture, filled with the spon-
taneity that
fueled the wild inception of the universe.

Jonathan Lee views the crows on the line with trepidation and contempt.

Jonathan Lee is in charge around here. Luke Ravenstahl is a simply his
finger puppet.

Jonathan Lee has hope like a rotted fruit with its seeds in the ground,
dreaming of
fruitness.

Jonathan Lee walks into the corner store and lifts two bags of chips for
the bitter
look he received at the register.

Jonathan Lee is everything and nothing of his father, in joyous and tragic
grace the
two remain, hearts heavy with wanting.

He stumbles witlessly through riverbanks, tosses his trappings in the
flowing
consciousness and grieves effortlessly, crashes into the soil with sorrow
and ecstasy.
He longs for the war-ravished inglorious oblivion of revolution. He feels
like a
refugee of stupidity, vulnerable to its luring grasp.

Jonathan Lee rejects the post-modern wasteland and this is his downfall.

Jonathan Lee signed a treaty with the knowing and henceforth spends his
nights

chasing shades in the dark, longing for his breath to mingle with hers and
pink
clouds to surround them like cemeteries, but she vanishes, and so Jona-
than sulks
away, and loses himself under the blankets of night.

Vanilla Sky

Daniel Lipson

Tell me Abres los Ojos,
the world is worth seeing
it's like your life was
laid out on refrigerator magnets
draw me ugly, sign your name

I remember you when I close my eyes
my face smashes through the windshield
your face is hers, tell me love
speak with her voice, kiss with her lips
lie to me and tell me who you are
you've gone and she's all that remains

Selling Safety

Lindsay MacParlane

Later than the evening,
night hums a tune.
I see eyes in the crevices,
like secrets caught in mahogany.
The grass speaks with a whisper,
laughs with a crack of mud.
Legs become wind,
fingers twist knots.
Lakes with moments
growing equally undisturbed,
I am learning to appreciate safety.
But it was sold
for a game of dominos.
Now a ship rests miles
below us,
sleeping.
I guess I'll just have to take
the train
Instead.

Liquid Sun

Abbie Maynard

I wait, bathing in
the bittersweet of the slow,
steady ticking time bomb.

My knuckles flash white as I
ball my hands into tight fists.

Living off of old
excuses you've used thousands
and thousands of times.

Yet I stand, heart on my sleeve,
thoughts tattooed on my forehead,

available for
your personal amusement,
use it as you will.

Stare up at the blazing sun,
asking, "What more do you want?"

Expecting no reply,
but still wanting an answer.
So I settle for

the warmth of the liquid sun
on my naked arms and legs,

feel it radiate
through strands of my knotted hair.
All I think about

is how we lined up along
those ragged picket fences

on those hazy days
of sweet summertime. Or how
we scrawled notes onto

crumpled pieces of paper,
thrown aimlessly across rooms.

NO MAS

Ines Pujos

Inspired by Frida Kahlo's "Self-portrait" with her hair cut off.

She cuts thread by thread of hair as the floor
becomes as black as the roots of coffee,
ribbons the color of ink. She chants:

no mas no mas no mas.

It is June and the heat has become unbearable,
She does not bother opening windows.
Frida does not remove Diego's suit,
the pants draped around her thinning
legs, his red collared shirt not even fully tucked in—

A braid the size of a loaf of bread hangs from
the yellow chair. She can smell the acrylic paint,
the different hues of oranges and reds he uses
to paint the flesh of his Mayan brides, as they sit
naked, in their wedding bed.

A bottle of Tequila sprawled out beside her.
Frida does not stop the swift motions
of the kitchen scissors, the sound of metal
dulling as afternoon's Mariachis swells her chest:

Diego my mother Diego my father
Diego my sister Diego my brother
Diego my son Diego my Soul
Diego my love Diego my color
Diego my poison Diego my faith
Diego my paint Diego my heart
Diego my bread Diego my water.

To A Damaged Friend

Shakeria Carter

Baby, I've seen it all
I've watched as you put yourself in shame,
you'd say that everything was all right
but really baby, it was just another excuse.
Your eye is bruised
and your hand quivers
knowing that maybe someone will notice.
I'd told you before that he was no good,
taking advantage over you,
pulling you on a tight leash with no option to resist.
In defense, you'd say that he'd change
one day.
But in all reality we both knew that it's not that easy.
I've witnessed your pain, watched as your skin went from a pigment
of caramel to an abused purple.

Baby, please, take yourself out of that relationship.
He has done it all
and you fall for it every time.
His words have become meaningless,
overly stressed sorries and pointless excuses
you should know,
it's only the usual,
to you.
His fist raises against your innocent face,
sure enough to leave his mark.

You have become a woman that I never wanted to see.
When we were younger, we promised
that we would never let a guy change us, but you gave in.
I never see your smile anymore
and your eyes don't glisten.
Your heart has become an open book
an easy read,
public
to anyone.

He goes on about his day,
as you drag through despair.
His late nights have become your early mornings.
Release him from your heart baby, he is no good.

I miss your grace,
your ambition,
your everlasting smile
I miss you.
 The old you.

As a friend,
I stand by and watch
hoping that one day
you'll realize his damage,
see the lies in all his "truths"
and become the woman that you
aspired to be
but until then I must say;
Baby, I love you
and you mean the world to me,

don't let him change my beautiful friend.

We Tried to Tell You

Belinda Brown

I screamed through clenched teeth
that I loved you
and you heard nothing.
Mom threw away your needles,
every last one in that little red drawer
and you found your secret stash.
Daddy spoke with silence, said nothing
for three years
your proof he'd always loved me more.
We tried to tell you while you were here
that we weren't ready to let go.
And yet when I found you on that floor
frail and jaundiced as you were
I sighed just the tiniest whisper
of relief.

Adv_ntur_s in Military

Mayah El-Dehaibi

A tank paints a world with mango blood.

Kills Music, throaty chanting and drumming.

Kills Food, squashing vibrant fruits against rigid asphalt.

Kills Jargon, combing communication out of a child's mouth.

A tank is not a wristwatch, cannot tick

hours away without a sighing wish, raindrops on a windowsill.

It is not a grazing ox that thrusts a horn into a gift of dry hay.

A tank wants the fragility, implying Maus

as a cunning rat, not the mindless brutality

contraption brought up by a blond cobalt jaw.

It hasn't a firm unmoving hand of a sculptor

nor a collagist's sight for junk mail,

it turns to painting. A classic.

It paints a portrait of lust for land,

paints grass crimson, paints huts and dirt crimson

forcing sap from mango skin, biting plums ajar,

rolling down paths to school and to church.

Quaint cracks in canvas suit quirky artists

who fashion scars of intimacy with a work.

Reader

Anita Trimbur

Her bookmark is a left hand thumb between the pages,
she, seated silently under the arc of her den ceiling,
legs crossed at the knees and ankles,
morning mind waning into a crisply green afternoon.

She chides the staples out of the corners of the pages,
thumbnail pressed into her index finger;
listens to the click of the watch on her wrist.

The loneliest thought fizzles in the swish of the turning page;
she shelves her morning mind, washes it first,
takes her glasses on and off.

She pens blue in the margins. Re-staples.
Ushers herself away.

Closed Curtains

Lily Schwartz

Lying in bed,
shadows through the window
take me back.
There was a tree outside my house,
long, thick, and hanging over.
Shading this concrete,
we stand on all day.
Feet like rough, dry clay
carrying me hard
across streets laid with
uneven brick.
Just the trunk
I can remember.
That is all I saw
eyelevel, and I
never looked up.
Hacked down for
some reason, the
only thing that hits my
eyes now
is this orange street light.

Behind Us

Jeremy Beer

The day behind us
The night ahead,
We walk the sands
Until we're dead.

Dark sky above us
Beside is the tide.
Our hands held together,
Along we will glide.

Darkness takes over,
It's nearly time to go.
Let's go on back
To the place we call home.

Nightlife

Jayne May-Stein

“Welcome to the nightlife”
_____ says through parted lips
And cigarette breath.
I grew up in a sheltered home
So I could feel myself
Growing up.
Everything looked green and yellow
Under the dim lighted bus
And the coach engine seems
Louder than before.
There is a man staring blankly
Ahead, his body swaying
In and out of consciousness.
I try to meet _____ gaze
Again but
_____ head is turned to look out of
The window.
_____ has always been ready
For the night.
As the coach rolls on,
I wonder if I am just as ready.

Skullkicker

Danny Kane

You, like six-armed Shiva in the pit
tearing everything in your path
to atoms and energy
heels slamming neutrons into blackening eyes
every breakdown I kiss your knuckles
a sweet hello
a bloody welcome back
to this half-time broken home

Why not create something for a change
bandana that chin to speak no evil
just grunt and spit out
that primordial cigarette ooze
let stiff-jointed kinetics
breathe life into wet cotton
feedback defibrillation
makes it jerk

But is this some crawling infant lifeform
or a frog leg in salt water?

Messianic

Brian Sherwin

Brian Sherwin is God's mascot.
Angels flock behind him in the sky.
He pan-fries his heart to get juices flowing.
He flips it like a burger, puts it on a bun,
and serves it to an obese fellow.
Girls swarm to him for kisses.
No spearmint ever necessary.
His breath smells of lilacs and rain.
When he pops in his eyeballs,
he sees in surrealism and sound waves.
So powerful, he must have freed the Jews.
What a good listener. Even a burning bush
wants a word with Brian Sherwin.
Look at those biceps, glistening
in the sun. They built pyramids.
When he cries, rainbows sprout from his eyes.
When he arrives back in New York,
he towers taller than the Empire State Building.
He looks across the state,
and slurps up oil spills in forests,
uses evergreens for his salads.
When people flat-line,
doctors hook an IV of Brian to patients' veins.
So messianic, he could resurrect
a chicken from a fried egg.
He doesn't need to walk on water.
Down by the coral reef, he swims
and breathes through gills.
Sometimes, they exhibit him in an aquarium
with the sharks and piranhas.
He's got more stomachs than a cow.
He thinks his turkey sandwich

is a nemesis, a sworn enemy.
He has gentler feelings for Pastrami –
they used to be squash partners.
Brian Sherwin spaces out
and sees a universe in a cup of coffee.
Stars percolate and glow out of creamer swirls.
Bits of sugar are like asteroids.
Chaosness purrs inside him.
His heart is so foolish.
It's a Tasmanian devil tearing up his brain.

E-Less

Madeleine Barnes

“The God whom we should love is absent.” – Simone Weil

You walk
an unfamiliar way back,
guarding your bag.

Cars pass. Tiny lamps
switch off. An orchid sits
watching you, still
and calm.

You think of him
and blink, almost crying.
Up and down your skull,
armor forms: first pain, toxic.
Poisonous stabs.

Throw it up.
You sit down on a cold curb.
Stand up. Forward, again.

In your mind
you hold a blossoming branch:
pink magnolias.
In your mind, a door shuts,
black iron with six gold locks
turning midair.

You call for god.

Look for a signpost.
Look for a man, a woman
a soul. A hint: look

outward. Flag
him down.
Find your way.

Strange Apocalypse

Tyler Hudson

Tyler Hudson laughs so hard
that his lungs deflate.
The circus of cogs in his chest
closes its doors against the windstorm.
Spokes snag marbles of oxygen
and toss them outside, where
they bang like coins in a duct.

The Philadelphias and New Yorks in his jaw
are evacuated. Their streets drain to white.

Tyler Hudson laughs until
the floor cracks under the sheer weight
of his cascading mirth.
Great palms of his laughter
slap at the pedestrians below his window.

Buckets after cauldrons after pots after pans
after cups after trays after balloons after
cheeks after capsules after saucers
after flasks after bladders after gourds after beakers
after drums after canisters after shoes after
wallets after rockets after bombshells after clouds after
cells after pen-wells after
buckets

of laughter spill onto the heads of the confused crowd.

Supercenters and bus stations
are overcome by the flood,
both liquid and light,
milk and glow.
Capital cities are lost in it,
capital letters are blunted by it,
and no raft of laurels is sailable upon it.

Green paper ferments into pulp.
People gasp for air but drag a bellyful
of laughter—they
cannot help themselves.
Skyscrapers fall in a great domino plunge
that wraps the globe in silver stripes.

Tyler Hudson has become a wall in everyone's esophagus.
He is stifling.
He inflates everyone's skull.
He is freeing.
He brings night to dazzled eyes.
He is killing.
As far as he can see, nobody can swim.

Tyler Hudson is living alone in the last parking garage on earth.
He chases his breath,
catches it at space A-13,
injects it back into his bloodstream.
His jaws are repopulated,
his lips flush and moisten.
For the first time,
he notices he's standing in a puddle.

Last Straw

Zakiyyah Madyun

The click, snap, scratch and the turn of a hat,

His hat,

Grazing the sides of his skull like silk,

Worn and loyal since who knows how many
years ago,

It shows his patience.

But he, like his hat and his velvety smooth
sound that slides over vocal cords

Swims through the oxygen towards you,

So you can swallow his words like a soft drink.

He tells you to take a chance.

You've heard of his kind in storybooks.

He passes each house on your block like a
traveling salesman,

Offering up incandescent, indescribable
opportunities,

Strain your will to the breaking point in order to
resist.

You've heard of his kind in fairytales,

Late summer firefly nights,

Grandmother sitting in the creaky oak rocking
chair

Warning you of the ways of the world.

Oh, you've heard of his kind before.

But not like this, not in the flesh.
Scratch that, there's no flesh at all,
Just the subhuman grind of chalky bone on
chalky bone,
Raspy riddles escaping from the depths of his
mysterious interior.
He falters, that's when you know it's the last
straw.
His patience doesn't stretch anymore.
The youthful charm he glided into town on has
blown away
Like summer wind in February,
It is no longer.
No more,
And not at all.
He has withered away with your childhood,
He has seeped into the floorboards,
His bones hum with the quick buzz of insect
wings,
And other various things that have taken solace
inside him.
Whether they also hum with a soul that never
quite slipped out is a different kind of mystery.