



# **FIRE 9**

STUDENT POETRY JOURNAL

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## PREFACE

The collection gathered in this book comes from a diverse group of artists and poets. Most of the poets from MICA, and others from around the country. The poems contain the feelings and inner workings of their creator's soul. There lies a special place in the hearts and souls for the written word which engulfs the lives of others. In some way we can all relate to each other when we sense the passion that goes into these and all poems. A passion we all feel at different points in our lives. Just as we can taste, smell, see, hear, and touch, we feel. We feel happiness, pain, anger, and frustration. Sometimes when we have strong feelings we need to let them out, and what a better way than with the written word. The saying goes, "actions speak louder than words", but in the case of poetry I'd have to disagree, especially with the words expressed in this collection.

New this year to Fire 9 is the Fire 9 Poetry contest in which there was one winner who received a prize, and four finalists. We thank you all for your submissions and congratulations to the winner and finalists.

*Heather Nidowicz, Editorial Staff*

**WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK,** *BCP Printing, Paul Coats, and Robert Weiss*

*A tribute to Galway Kinnell*

**ASPIRING SCRIBE**

Rachel Chapman

The sour milk clouds  
of the Baltimore night sky  
pours acid thoughts over  
this tangled mane.  
It drips, slowly, down the cold,  
sterile surface of my IKEA brand bed frame,  
soaking me from arm to hand, to page.  
Looking at these thin hands  
and noticing the white  
ball point pen with which  
I write, I see  
that the pen is working  
although it may be light  
and dull, and cheap, and is  
adorned with gold printed  
poetry of the corporate world.  
and I resort to writing my own  
poetry about poetry.  
I don't know what to do  
but write poison words,  
the sentences going on too long.  
They end with an operatic belt,  
my mystic bewilderment  
overcoming me and it  
almost seems as if  
the green raindrops  
had leaked in through  
these heavy sheets.  
The alley cats howl  
beneath my window in  
the curdled night of  
Baltimore, where I write  
as if the pen had been fueled  
by the rain, that never  
stops falling.

## I EXPERIENCE

- UNTITLED *Yutaka Houlette*  
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\* contest finalists

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GRAINS *Donald Tetto*

### IV FREEDOM/ CONFINEMENT

\* contest finalists



V GROWTH/ DECAY

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CHAOTIC REALM *Robert McConnell*  
SELF *Hermonie Williams*  
UNTITLED *Jesse Burrows*  
UNTITLED *Yutaka Houlette*  
ACCEPTANCE *Mario Dupree*  
BOW *Miranda Girard*

\* contest finalists



## BALTIMORE

Lauren Mosinka

I hear sirens  
the instance rain falls.  
Metal hips against broken brick  
and trees  
falling falling down.  
The black men and white women  
disappear when night falls  
and the  
pink-palmed children  
sca-tter  
like glass.  
They say wait till spring  
when all good things grow.  
They say come see the  
greatest city we know.  
They say BELIEVE  
but I don't.  
I know it's a disguise,  
a way to compromise  
a way to simplify  
the underbelly,  
To silence  
compliance.  
I hear sirens  
the instance rain falls.

## UNTITLED

Jeemin Kim

Time smears through the slit among reality.  
And time pauses at the space.  
Every reality is moving except time.  
While I am stopped.

시간은 현실 사이의 공간으로 스며든다.  
그리고 시간은 그 공간 사이에서 멈춘다.  
시간을 제외한 모든 실체는 움직인다.  
내가 멈춰 있는동안

## UNTITLED

Masum Azam

Poem in response to statement made by Jean Paul Richter

“ Art is not the bread but the wine of life.”

—Jean Paul Richter

Intoxicated by Art  
Drunk with color  
Gives the purpose of search for another

State of being that is not of natural life,  
Not of this plane  
Looking for the medium to progress  
Artificially minded

Regurgitate new creations  
It will make them drunk as I am

This activity solves and creates many problems

Leave the museum and eat your bread

## UNTITLED

Jesse Burrows

As wicking  
As the hours'  
Are  
Tickings and chimings  
Of a silent clock,  
Or just present

Short of hear  
Inaudible, but  
By the ringing in my ear  
So soft ghosts  
So soft appear  
Upon his pregnant  
Belly,  
A blimp  
Like Brancusi bronze:  
Which shifts in tone  
From yellow  
To pink  
For either tin  
Or zinc  
In a total shedding gall  
Will never tarnish

## BELLY DANCE CLASS

Reanna Scott

the girls  
of Tuesday nights gathering  
clanking loudly from the hip  
our caravan reflected  
a line like worship  
filling the room thick with heat  
reflecting back to us our sisters  
ourselves in dimmed mirrors shadowing  
bare callused feet squeak  
across wood floor glossed on  
sweaty thighs brush under  
thick velvet folds of spinning skirts  
a perfect circle  
fluttering flesh to swear like marbles rolling  
zills calling out like crows  
the frenzy of feeding

## THE MANSIONS OF MIDDLE AMERICA

Rachel Chapman

The mansions of Middle America  
lie bare breasted on their backs,  
near the lake of smog and seminela,  
far away from coke and crack.

The mansions of Middle America  
are littered with parents and children.  
And the sons secretly smoke with their fathers,  
and the moms are addicted to aspirin.

In the middle of the mansions of America,  
Picassos line the walls,  
yet they're rarely even noticed  
by the family if one falls.

"The house was built by Frank L. Wright,  
or at least so they say...." says the girl  
who knew the guy that was a cousin of the dude  
who got drunk at the house one day.

In the mansions of suburbia central,  
the people are more than normal,  
in the fall she plays field hockey,  
in December it's winter formal.

Where the boys are off to baseball,  
where the retrievers sleep on silk,  
in the Mansions of Middle America  
the only thing whiter's the milk.

## SCRIPT

Lauren Jacobs

Bombarded with crude sketches, notions  
methodically, compulsively collected  
like a child's ritual  
trying to re-own the preciousness  
we innately understood as children  
before we were taught that everything  
is disposable.  
Rediscovering intimacy  
without spreading our legs,  
trying to communicate perception  
these tastes, sensations through simulation  
that our audience disregard when experiencing  
first hand.

## MINDSET

Jonathan Kirkbride

Smoke ridden morning,  
you mirror the moment  
that shadows my engine.  
You exposed my lungs  
to arsenic values.  
I question your ability  
and deny your wisdom.

## AVOCADO ORCHARDS

Lauren Mosinka

There are photographs and empty castles  
in place of the rough memory of you  
and I am stiffened by the  
avocado trees that grow in your place.  
I feel the warm click of BB guns  
and guitar strings  
fresh on my hands.  
Chocolate milk  
and raspberry seeds  
stuck in my mouth  
and the sound of a rusty voice  
tracking mud along the seams  
of white lace skirts.  
Our edges have come undone  
as the Pacific tempts me with  
three hot wishes.

## UNTITLED

Heather Spoor

and i mimic the world  
seeing the blue sky  
that waits above the clouds  
when in this moment  
no one on the ground  
could see through this thickness  
yes  
please kick the back of the seat again  
you missed a spot  
currently 50'  
ding  
fasten seatbelts  
return your trays to their upright and locked position  
no one told me  
the words came to mind  
like prayers at sunday mass  
sunday mass prayers  
don't ask the words now  
surround me with a congregation  
with the proper timing  
and I couldn't fumble  
one more kick will do me just fine  
and thank you  
flight attendants please secure the arrival  
yawn yawn  
Pop

## ON THE WAY

Danny Jones

You trotted across my path  
in that steady beating rain;  
in that interrupting rain;  
in that distortion's aftermath.

Your tired, soaking ideal  
unaware; focused adrift  
like me, lost amid the rift  
both somewhere besides real.

How close we came to each other  
as you reeled; tiny fragment,  
back from disillusionment,  
to that secular souther.

Find your way home in regret, as will I.  
Our hearts beat in time to the somber spry



## UNTITLED

Johnathan Kirkbride

Beginning.  
Light flirtation,  
a slight trickle behind the lobe.  
Heat rising,  
shortness of breath  
intense concentration  
betrayal of inhibitions.  
Continuous pulsation  
beginning of the rhythmic sensation.  
Two minutes and forty-nine seconds later.  
Verse two:  
Different position  
feet moving upwards  
head leaning back  
relaxed  
change again.  
Upright, feet holding the weight,  
arms flailing,  
head gear slides backwards,  
toy falls out of hand.  
Silence  
Resume.  
Pressure building up  
5, beating louder, more powerful  
4, enjoying every last second  
3, sweat pouring  
2, screaming now  
1... Eargasm!

## EARRING

Witney Gushue

at six years old you made me a woman  
wounded me twice and marked me forever  
for choosing of sliver or gold or bakelite

at ten you showed me how status could be  
brought through miniature windchimes  
and parrots in cages

at thirteen you gave me a place for presents  
occasions of love  
and parties of sorts

at marriage you will find me amongst diamonds  
perhaps  
white gold

and this morning you help me out of slumber  
give me light of amber  
and carry me through my day

## MOVING LAND

Christopher Paprocki

I'm really going strong.  
I'm pushin' the edge so sharp  
Its been breakin' me down.

Long journey, rough rail side.  
Pickin' up seed  
Bullet through the bottom tarp.

On a smooth swift slide glide.

I found a chance to ride upon the level layer.  
An almost inhabitable hour on the moving land

Made me step through a wreck and left,  
Like a dot upon the mirror  
A bullseye for my backward spear.

## **SYMPHONY**

Thomas Smith

Behind the blackest piano  
they sway  
creating the red notes  
and moving then out  
into the painted cavern  
poked with holes  
like the inside of a star.

## **BOLTON RAIN**

Thomas Smith

Tip Tap drops on my leather  
sweater grey and heather named  
as I skid down the leaves  
round one hand holding  
paper bound and rope weave  
The other, holds tight  
to the wet iron rail  
likely to help me along

## LUMP SUM RAISINS

Halldis Romsloe

Choosing carefully,  
I want this one to be different  
lumpy, rocky, a fat chance  
in a galaxy of perfectly shaped  
creamy filled chocolate globes.  
I chose you because  
    I like nuts,  
But you gave me  
    raisins.  
Your lusciously dark chocolate skin  
    promised something more  
    deep than  
the contrasted sourness of past-it's-prime fruit.  
Plu-perfect marriage  
in a box of Raisinettes of Rhebb's  
Sun Maid cheats on Granola with you,  
as mindlessly and without question  
you penetrate every wrinkly crevice.  
My tongue finds you awkward  
as if having walked into a room  
filled with extra marital sex.

## II LIFE



## UNTITLED

Yutaka Houlette

She didn't know how to play chess so I asked if she wanted to  
play checkers  
but she didn't know how to play checkers,  
I knew that she knew how to play chess and checkers.  
She wanted to play the game of life.

## MORNING TABS

Lauren Schneider

sensitive yellowing cuffs  
fit factioning for her fingers-  
their nimble thimble ends  
rough with restraint

or

mechanical properties  
of her right brained studies,  
noted: no sleep  
small suspicion of wavery

## BIRD FUNERAL

Reanna Scott

1. Small

small like a dead bird on a white sidewalk  
fragile-just like the drooping neck  
not clever but broken as in tragedy.

2. We sit thigh to thigh looking straight ahead in a dark room at the flashing screen.

Our thighs and fingertips are on fire, quietly smoking.  
We do not look at one another; we keep put heads centered straight.  
I then decide  
to move my hair and let my hand fall down closer  
to hers

The ten fingers clumsily clamp together at last.

They sit intertwined motionless  
like 2 dead birds  
broken still, sweaty like dog mouth.

Leaking heat  
Moisture  
Cum hands  
Clamped together sweating...

3. (like the first time I took my face to a woman  
Hot  
moisture  
cum hands)

4. can I slip a small paper note into your slammed locker at recess?

It would read:

Can we just fuck?  
(I don't have time for the love this week)  
Circle yes or no.

I would not sign my name.

5. All the crows yell at me constantly  
circling around in the sky, cawing down at me  
mourning their dead babies.

6. Recalling my font in the secret note

7. Only the mother birds have circled.

## SWING DANCING

Jenny Young

Remembering a time from before  
That I'm not suppose to  
Remember any more

Somehow the basics  
Have eluded me

But he  
He remembers me  
And we would swing  
All night long

Swirls and spins  
Back flips and turns

## HOPE & BENEVOLENT

Donald Tetto

### I

What is autumn  
but a series of smells  
that should remind you of something?

### II

I hate the cold  
and am wearing layers against it,  
but the cold of these days is kinetic, a cold  
that can feel things about to happen,  
a cold that is as filled with past action  
as it is with breath that had been briefly visible  
before falling away.

### III

These days are perfect,  
wrought-iron, Sixth Avenue,  
they speak of day trips to the city,  
or that place where the rusted chain link  
is peeled back to let you through,  
like a seat near the window  
and the heater,  
but the window open anyway,

( *Hope & Benevolent* continued )

because feeling is borne of contrast  
just as we are borne of such things  
as a piano concert the night before or after  
you've come and gone,  
just as if the sun had hit the building  
the way the architect had intended  
it would have been too much  
and as the shadows texture this space  
with where they will be  
and where they've been.

#### IV

Walking alone at night  
reminds you that winter is coming  
and the smell of wood burning  
reminds you that it has nothing to remind you  
at all  
save that its smell is sweet,  
but sweeter burning,  
as we find ourselves lost  
but more together  
and are better lost  
than with no home at all.

## IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME...

Nikki Havel

i'm eating spicy chips that are just  
burning  
my mouth off,  
but i can't stop eating them  
because i'm too fucking hungry  
and i'm sucking down coke like it's  
the only thing that'll save me and  
the bonsai tree is staring at me and trying to bloom  
though i haven't watered it in days and  
dear god,  
are you sleeping again,  
cuz this time i've got something important to say,  
not like last time,  
though you know  
that i know  
its all really the same,  
but i swear i'll never bother you again if you just tell me  
why she isn't talking to me and  
where can i get a good job these days and

( *It Seemed like a Good Idea at the Time* continued )

was it really necessary for that woman  
to hit me with my own car and  
where my cat went and  
honestly , what's your opinion of me,  
i mean, seriously this time,  
come on god, you've got all the answers,  
swing one my way  
cuz i've been a good little pagan chick,  
and even if i don't believe in you,  
you have to love me anyway,  
unlike everyone else i know,  
and even the bonsai tree  
is rethinking its place in the world,  
and my cat doesn't love me anymore,  
and i've lost my love for people, god,  
and i've lost my sense of taste  
from the stupid chips and  
how could people ever eat these and live,  
i mean, i'm running out of coke to drink,  
and when it's gone, god,  
*who's going to be there to save me?*

## BRACELET

Elizabeth Pieroni

around my wrist  
you slip away  
a knot tied tight  
for everyday  
twists about  
like life in string  
pulled harder  
now unraveling

## THAI DRAGONS

Lauren Jacobs

When trees mimic Thai dragons,  
red, orange, yellow,  
these bodies sweep up in wind  
breathing the air intense charged  
then abandoned by it,  
become scales under our feet,  
making mundane sidewalks  
into dragon's contours  
for the great passing of spirits.

## EMPTY

Ashley Capra

I stand in the doorway of a dark abandoned house  
Happiness once filled these walls  
I'm looking down a long, dark hallway  
Lined with open doors  
The cold kisses my lips  
I take a deep breathe  
And watch the smoke flow off my lips  
I feel like ice  
A slight breeze moves my hair  
A strand brushes my cheek  
And I blink in slow motion  
Moonlight streams through the windows on the left side of the house  
Towards the west  
Waves crash on the cliff  
Hundreds of feet below  
My mind wanders  
And takes me down the hall and through an open door  
A young man sits in the middle of the room  
Playing the most beautiful song on his guitar  
Over and over he plays  
And I stand alone  
Crying  
He looks up at me  
His dark brown eyes burn deep inside me  
His hair is ruffled, hidden underneath a knit cap  
His eyes scream out in pain  
An invisible tear rolls down his cheek  
Ending in his week old beard  
He continues playing  
His eyes locked onto mine  
This scene turns black and white  
Not a chord is missed  
This song is the soundtrack of my life

## POEM A

Lauren Mosinka

there was a dead cat  
on our kitchen floor.  
transparent white ballooned out of her nostrils  
like it would take away the night  
but the hot sun jumped on her like fleas

there was a dead cat  
on our kitchen floor.  
a broken window,  
a stolen black television.  
while a father was somewhere howling  
transparent white ballooning out of his nostrils.  
he wanted us to eat pancakes  
and brown maple syrup.

there was a dead cat  
on our kitchen floor.  
liquor bottles exploding like bombs  
over my head,  
while the decorated Christmas tree  
illuminated dinosaur books  
and multiplication tables all year long.

## DUST IN SUNLIGHT

April Camlin

Days and nights,  
bright lights  
here now in my world  
dreams into the real.

Went to the bar last night  
and wrote silly words down on paper,  
beautiful, beautiful  
you are beautiful in the night

and the stars in the sky light my path  
as I stumble to my car  
hearing guitars,

collecting pieces of glass I found  
lying on the ground  
looking into eyes  
that match mine.

There is so much I haven't seen,  
there is so much I haven't learned,  
there are so many people I've never met,  
but I can feel this lonely winter wringing out of  
my bones.

I can feel longing to find my home  
I can feel my heart saying this is all right  
and the livin's easy.

Daylight hits our weary eyes and sends us shuffling through  
our day  
but at night  
we fly down to city lights and city people and city ideas.  
On the way in the opera house is filling up with people  
dressed to the nines,  
red cheeks who will sit and listen and feel and love what they  
hear,  
intermission hot chocolate and souvenirs.

On our way home we pass the same place,  
empty of the socialites,  
the workers cleaning up and thinking about their life.

Three times today I got so happy I was sure my smile would  
break free of my face,  
living the times I'll spend the rest of my life remembering.

Sometimes I wonder why I feel the need to empty out my  
brain into a machine,  
my fingers finding the keys somehow like my thoughts,  
but every day extraordinary things are happening  
and i never want to forget  
every smile every laugh every touch every nod every drive  
every sunset every song every wish every thing.

Backseat of a fast car I am there scribbling my thoughts on a  
paper I find there soaked with coffee.  
I'm afraid that I'm dreaming my waking life away

( *Dust in Sunlight* continued )

There was a hard shell of negativity covering my body,  
but it cracked open tonight and was gladly shed  
listening to the lonely beautiful music of my ancestors.

[alone in the parking garage a man processes with bagpipe playing  
sweet music, unaware that i am crouched next to the stairwell listening]

faces come and go with smiles and shining eyes, and sometimes you  
find that some reflect their shine into your own and others only pass  
by quickly

tonight I wished that I could be as numerous as the stars and know  
everyone's story,  
but then I thought that maybe after I die,

I will know everyone's loves and losses,  
and see all the pictures I've traced into the air over the years.

I am so excited for springs cool breezes and carefree top down drives  
and flowers,  
those 5 minutes between sunrise and daylight,  
where you can create magic or fly or just sing off the tops of buildings.

## GOING BANANAS

Rachel Champman

Deep within my scattered being,  
the pain monkeys swing  
from bone to bone.  
Chattering gossip,  
mocking me,  
a heavy skull,  
a brain full of bananas.  
My words are chewed  
before ever leaving the lips,  
shredding my weak confidence.  
They laugh at my incompetence.  
Slapping their tails  
at my dysfunctional insides,  
as they climb through my mistakes.  
I cringe when they cackle.  
I want them displaced.  
The pain monkeys make  
me hate this flesh jungle.

## THE PAINTING

Jennifer Beser

Staring up at the moon  
Contemplating my life  
And quickly forgetting it all  
I can't justify my actions  
I follow my instincts  
I see the colors that paint my life  
Red for love, for hurt, for anger, for fear  
Blue for sadness, for coldness  
Yellow for happiness, for life, for living the moment  
I like clichés with color  
Painting you a picture that lasts forever  
Painting my future I can't see  
Covered in paint  
All over my skin  
It won't wash off  
I see myself on opposite ends  
I see the painting that captured my true essence  
And I finally saw who I am  
The answers I never knew until now  
I painted my destiny  
I painted me

## THE FLEAS

Rachel Chapman

I left my shoes in Chicago.  
The clunky black beasts,  
that are torn at the souls.  
So sandals now cling,  
like the stale  
odor of mold.  
Leaving me vulnerable  
to the real beasts below.

The fleas found my ankles,  
my juicy pear shaped ankles,  
so ripe and soft,  
they must have not  
been able to resist the perfect fruit  
that dangled  
for weeks  
before their starving eyes.

Their constant pleas  
overflow over me  
and into the bedrock of fears.  
Why do they love my blood so much?  
I swat and slap my gnawed limbs.  
The fleas suck out the marrow.  
They lick the color  
from my hair.

( *The Fleas* continued )

I squash them together  
with paint basted tips.  
Screaming to the masses  
Give me back my stolen blood!  
Becoming dysfunctional,  
I scratch at the battlegrounds,  
dig unintended graves  
that will never be filled with my foes.

The fleas have torn me apart.  
They hop from grave to grave  
searching for the tastiest piece of flesh  
to French kiss until their hunger is quenched.  
The lustful dance between predator and prey.  
I spend my time digging  
for some sort of relief.



## ARMAGEDDUN

Jo Cosgrove

forever isn't such a long time  
not when the world is ending soon  
and it is ending, you see.  
simply below the typical standard height  
smug little men with their lips all  
screwed up with doubt  
they'll be the first to see

you're gonna keep doin' it

'til nobody's in the way



UNTITLED  
Jeemin Kim

silence  
air  
conversation  
coexistence  
flow  
breathing  
life  
smell  
dust

There is nothing that is confined  
Neither anything can be together.

I'm traveling to look for the meeting  
of nonexistent nihility among them.

침묵  
대기  
대화  
공존  
흐름  
호흡  
삼  
냄새  
먼지

그 어느것도 같혀 있을수 없고  
또한 그 어느것도 함께 할수 없다.

나는 그들 속에서 존재하지 않는 허무를 찾는 여행을 한다.

## PREGNANT MOON

Lauren Jacobs

The moon was pregnant with harvest smells  
spotlighted-basked the trees seemed strikingly  
focused  
moth-wing leaves spilled from spider-leg  
branches.  
The sodalite sky drank in my eyes,  
stealing them,  
soaking my eyelashes,  
my breath sought-caught the air  
weighing it down, soft  
wishing to keep it.  
I splashed through brown and brittle pools  
of autumn trees' discarded snake skins  
blasphemous sound of cracking  
shattering  
subtly conversing pulse-songs.



# III RELATIONSHIPS/ INDIVIDUALS

## ASTROLOGICAL MAYHEM

Rachel Chapman

He's up early for work,  
while she wakes up choking,  
when Virgo and Pisces collide.  
The black hole pulls them  
inside the screams.  
The battle cry,  
the amazon call  
heard 'round the house  
lined with profane wallpaper.  
The twins lay quietly  
beneath the bed of fears.  
If only they were different signs,  
constellations un-aligned.  
And after Virgo and Pisces collide,  
he savagely mows the weepy lawn  
as she watches soaps  
with better red eyes.  
The twins lay quietly  
below the dusty dream canopy,  
Hoping not to loose each other  
to the interstellar  
explosion below.

## CIGARETTE (VERMILION RED)

Andrew Kyungil Kim

I light the tip  
Watch, as the circle turns vermilion red  
    My Father is a machinist  
    For over thirty years, he was  
    From the age of seventeen  
    Always curious of how things were  
constructed  
Puffing  
Lighting the red even brighter  
    When he sees a complex machine  
    Car, bike, train  
    When he sees an object we never notice  
    Chairs, tables, doors  
    He was always curious of how they were  
created  
The ash builds  
The red peeking through the windows  
    He's forty-eight, now  
    A father of two children  
    He has a wife  
    A machinist,  
    An upholster

( *Cigarette (Vermilion Red)* continued )

The grey tip  
Flaking, into a cone  
    He pays taxes  
    He pays tuition  
    He pays mortgage  
    He takes the garbage out on  
Wednesdays  
    He brings the can in on Thursdays  
    He reads the newspaper  
    He's balding  
    He has a bad back  
    He gets paychecks  
    He gets tax deductions.  
    He has debts..  
    He has insurance  
    He makes the bed.  
Tapping the ash  
The flakes fall like white feathers  
    One time, we went grocery shopping  
    When we were finished, he rode the  
cart back to our car  
    One time, we went fishing  
    He through me into the lake  
    One time, we went camping  
    We played five hours of soccer with  
our friends  
The ash still builds  
But the vermilion red still burns.

## MY FAVORITE NANNY

Heather Nidowicz

I sit in this little apartment  
as a child

I'm scared  
that cat will scratch me

I sit on plastic couches,  
Feel cool breezes

I watch dirty dancing  
fast forwarding the love scenes

I do anything  
I feel everything

The mask is coming  
coming to get me

I'll be safe here  
in her arms

Always in her arms

## UNTITLED

Lisa Parisi

Bleached,  
iridescent skin and  
sand blanket.  
Black sunrise-  
you take one, only one.

Secret truth of  
darkness,  
Hide your meaning in the  
still  
white  
of the wall.

Who did you tell?  
Who found  
your peach  
stillness?  
Afterglow and  
petal lace  
collide,  
making me whole  
again.

## A MIND SO RED

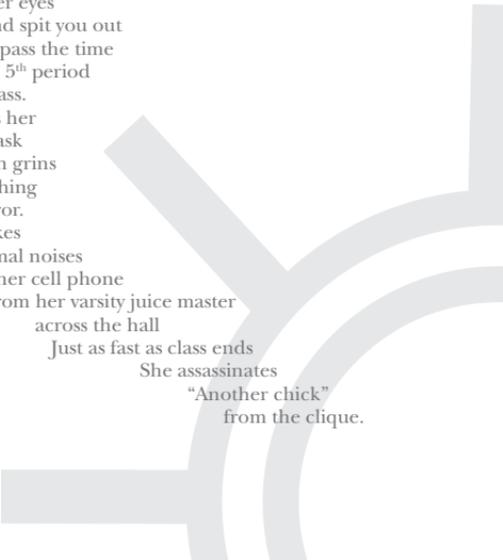
Shawn Gisriel

in slow motion, solemnly, and steadily she  
paused.  
as her broken eyes congratulate the silence,  
like the downdraft from a peek.  
suddenly she grasps your time.  
your ignorance is in the way.  
i'm compelled to watch.  
i'm compelled to cry.  
i'm infatuated,  
and i have a craving to die.  
she pounces on you and a glare blinds.  
within a blinkless eye your skipped.  
staring into your open chest that refuses to close,  
this is the blood i cannot stand.  
i can never understand.  
never could we understand.  
it comes and goes like hearts in this ghost town.  
no turning back, no turning back.  
i can never forget, i can't ever forget.  
i'm compelled to scream.  
i'm compelled to lie.  
i'm anticipated,  
i'll never be taken alive.

## PINK LADY

Kiki Valdes

Spread White bread  
she goes down hallways  
like day old butter.  
The next best thing labeled  
across her head  
Freshly sealed skirt,  
with no entry  
Pink can eat you  
with her eyes  
And spit you out  
just to pass the time  
to avoid 5<sup>th</sup> period  
gym class.  
As she powders her  
milky mask  
The stale beauty queen grins  
at the devil watching  
from her mirror.  
She partakes  
in animal noises  
on her cell phone  
From her varsity juice master  
across the hall  
Just as fast as class ends  
She assassinates  
“Another chick”  
from the clique.



## ON “HAVING A COKE WITH YOU”

Donald Tetto

I called you  
when I was outside  
because it was windy and because the sun  
was orange despite the cold.  
It was still winter but  
the first time in months  
that there were such sharp shadows  
on everything.

I took pictures of them, the shadows,  
but it wasn't enough so  
I called you and the wind  
beat on the voicepiece of the phone,  
so I turned my back to it and stood  
in a sharp shadow and the sun flickered,  
moved behind clouds like tunnel  
lamps flashing between cars  
at Penn Station.

( On "Having a Coke with You" continued )

I called you  
and the grass was just regrowing  
and the ground was soggy from  
the rain this morning. But I walked  
on it anyway and pressed rainwater  
out of the ground like dishwater from  
a neon yellow sponge and I called because  
I had just read Frank O'Hara  
and when I caught you, you were on the  
way out the door but  
I asked you to wait and you did and  
when I finally got down to reading the poem I  
was breathless from finding a bench to sit on  
and from the excitement of hearing your voice.

The sun was low in the sky  
and I rushed all the lines  
and had to shout over the wind so when I was  
finally finished  
you weren't sure if I was done  
or if I was unfolding the papers (the wind had  
wrapped  
around my fingers) or if I was just pausing to  
catch  
my breath.

## UNTITLED

Jess Harman

### ONE

And he says his hair is yellow  
but he doesn't understand  
the relationship between  
tints and shades  
and has never used color-aid.

### TWO

And she points at the sky  
"What color is that?"  
(her head is tipped to the side)  
and she insists on answers  
in more than one word.

### THREE

And they walk arm-in-arm, uncomfortably  
(because they never touch, unless it's uncomfortable)  
and the sky turns yellow around the edges,  
a watery-jaundice.

( *Untitled* continued)

FOUR

And they talk about science  
(and she doesn't care)  
And they talk about color  
(and he doesn't listen)

FIVE

And they watch the horizon  
waiting for moon-shadows  
(ultimate cliché)  
and she realizes, through generic-sky haze  
that yellow-around-the-edges  
matches the weave of his t-shirt.  
  
And compliments his hair.

## ONE MONTH BEFORE

Katie Miller

One Month Before  
He flooded my brain  
Carving anxious caves  
Crashing into every rock  
Wall and crumbling it down  
Flash Fires spark tragedies  
And every tree provides kindling for the terrors  
One Month Before  
I waited for something to happen  
Wishing my storm to be fictitious  
Daymares don't lie  
One Month Later  
A manic explosion  
Beginning the slow roasting of live sanity  
Whose cries are not heard by the victim

## UNTITLED

Lindsey Stewart

You are so tall, and so helpful.  
I know the man who fixed you;  
Every day I make him his tea  
(Darjeeling, Asaam if you don't have it,  
Please, Lovely Lindsey.)  
My man says you are a little slow, but  
Pretty much reliable.  
But:  
If it weren't for all the trees I could  
see you all the time.  
If it weren't for my bad back  
I could climb to see you.  
So:  
Instead I'll meet your gaze occasionally  
When I'm in the area  
And I will understand when you give me  
The time of day.

## UNTITLED

Yutaka Houlette

Perfectly balanced for just one moment,  
the two kids stare at each other in amazement  
as the seesaw weighs them as  
equals

## LONGING

Halldis Romsloe

Stillness wants to follow me  
when I wrap myself  
in the warm white cotton jersey  
sheets of your memory.  
Silver silence ensues,  
glittering,  
like the 5p.m. sun on west coast water.  
Every so often  
in a place I know you've never been  
I'll catch your scent  
Warm and stuffy and sweet  
the only thing about you  
I've ever known  
to be constant.

**EMPTY**

Miranda Girard

It smells like November in his one room apartment.  
Paint-slicked white walls blink  
Echoing the wink of the bulb that dangles  
Slow in the kitchen.

I watch him sit and stare,  
Thoughts hot-locked behind glossy blue  
Eyes. Light of the T.V. screen dances dim on his cheek  
And I watch and wait  
My sticky hand inched toward his, arched open

But happiness is a key he refuses to turn  
It rusts in his pocket, stuck  
To twisted gum wrappers and torn letters  
Held tight in weathered denim.

So I withdraw it, closed palm to my lap  
Pretending not to sink into the futon  
And live life in the cotton cushions.  
I wince at the cowardly taste of plastic  
In my hollowed throat,  
Want to scream, tear the seams of his  
Precious leathered jacket.  
But his eyes gape  
His shoulders slope  
And we are left alone.  
Empty.

**UNTITLED**  
Jesse Burrows

With wispy  
hairs  
rising through  
the fingers  
from the brims  
of the deep  
palm padding,

vestigial thumbs  
curl from doubled  
back begging,  
limp and to  
his massive  
birdie chest.

## BLONDIE

Jo Cosgrove

peach on your tongue  
7 am in the freckles of the morning  
driving home  
you said you preferred to be alone  
on the drive home

and speaking of lonely  
that tree painting we loved is gathering dust  
on the baseboard  
the one about exclusion  
the one that quiets you  
and leaves me sleepy-eyed.

worn down.

## GRAINS

Donald Tetto

I would be lying  
if I said  
I didn't miss  
making love to you  
or day trips to the city  
or splitting dishes  
at that Italian place  
you hate.

But I can not see the planks  
but for the grain:  
fifteen-minute naps, the way  
your hair falls in your face, the way  
you can't find things  
in grocery stores.

Being without you  
is not like living without breathing -  
it is, though,  
but it's more like living without orange soda  
or William Carlos Williams  
or windowscreens.

(*Grains* continued )

I want to open the windows  
but sand and gravel will fly in.  
I want to take a pretty girl by the hand  
and show her to the flour.

My fingertips itch  
and stretch,  
but touch nothing.

I don't so much miss  
your kisses  
as the small pinspecks  
that'd stick  
as they pulled away.

Between us,  
it's grains  
of sugar sweet  
and stinging salt  
that linger.

# IV FREEDOM/ CONFINEMENT



**POEM #2**  
Chris Paprocki

A jagged edge that fits just so.

Just to let me in,  
Just to let me go.

A space, a place, one that I leave a trace.

To sit and unwind,  
To wrap up and leave behind.

A sometimes open and sometimes closed,

With dark stark and naked,  
With light, might excite.

Without it I would only try and find

Some kind of edge of line,  
Some kind of corner undefined.

It carries me through the day.

In my hand I am free cause  
I have a room that fits my key.

## INKING HEADS

Kiki Valdes

You can fly across the wall,  
Leaving your name wet,  
Diving into a train,  
you can fly yourself downtown if you get caught.  
It's a habit of interest,  
an addiction with inky fingertips.

*An ALL city boy is who you wanna be,  
is who you are. (Who you've become)  
An all out battle for the Mayor of Brooklyn  
is the turn out.*

You fly with the skilled of them,  
dropped with the rest of them.  
Traveled like a bird dropping bombed eggs  
for a birth of the crew.  
It's a group of outlaw illustrators  
hitting a gallery wall nearest you, holy cow...  
It's the Ink Heads crew!

*The primitive minded who tag on life  
and spray paint their caves in Japan.  
Man has one instinct, to live and to seek  
and sometimes destroy.*

## A FLOOD POWERED BY TRAVESTY

Shawn Gisriel

I have just one light,  
one light in which my feet are guided.  
Don't you follow,  
though,  
or the light will provide  
a snare with your footsteps  
so all can hear  
your warlike preparations  
that dye our oceans red  
and darkened this world.  
this world stuck in motion as a train goes by.  
we are apt to shut our eyes against the painful truth,  
and listen to the song of that siren  
till she transforms us into beasts.  
are we disposed  
to be of the number of those  
who having eyes see not,  
and having ears hear not,  
the things which  
so strongly we strive  
for salvation?  
for my part,  
whatever anguish of spirit  
it may cost,  
I am willing to know  
the whole truth,  
to know  
the worst  
and help provide for it.

## UNTITLED

Katie Miller

You harbor a delusion based on my obsession  
My obsession is fed by your delusion  
Craziness  
I Remember the days of innocent crush  
And flattery in return  
Today there is no reality  
And all I want to find in my fantasies:  
What is real, what was?

## UNTITLED

Yutaka Houlette

All of the geese scattered from the tree  
as his nine iron flew out of his clammy hands  
and into the open sky  
in a beautiful, liberated parabola.

## NO NAME #1

Lauren Schneider

the air skye sweep  
of deafening winds  
left me to my own unfoldings  
of the passing mechanical dogs  
slouching hearts  
mispelled words  
and everything with wings  
formed by clouds  
and my mind.  
shapes that cloud  
my waning concerns  
answers to behind your words  
soundish swallows that pass through in my wish wash hair

today i passed everything  
but somehow not what i wanted

## FAITH

Jonathan Kirkbride

Soon there will be a way around  
the bouncing ball of despair.  
Unravel the addictions that keep you bound  
burn them like a flare.  
Answer to the God of light,  
ask him to shine his glory  
find him and he just might  
succumb and adore thee.  
Prevail now, young one, and look up  
at your mother's face.  
Drink from her wisdom cup,  
hold on for her embrace.  
Bound in the warmest of wombs,  
lies buried in the darkest of tombs.

## THE WAKE

Heather Nidowicz

You feel so cold  
Is it strange that I'm touching you

Did your chest just move  
Wait, are you still breathing

Do you feel embarrassed  
All these people are looking at you

You don't look as thin  
What did they do to you

I hope you're not scared  
I wish you weren't in there



## DROWNING

Jennifer Beser



I can't sleep  
Coldness overcomes me  
Shivering to the real  
Frozen inside  
I can't move  
Eyes so cold  
Motionless existence  
Crying timeless ice  
I'm blinded, I'm frozen, I'm scared  
Can't break the ice  
Trapped beneath the cold waters  
Numbness inside  
It's closing in  
No one but me  
I feel death coming close  
I can't feel, I can't breathe, I can't see, I'm  
suffocating  
I'm cold, I'm alone, I'm dying  
Eyes awake of nothing  
Pain thriving within  
I'm drowning alive

## WAR

Jennifer Beser

Souls of infinite fighting  
Create a circle of killing  
Dying of innocent victims  
Hands covered with blood  
What's right  
A side chosen  
Suicide of killer victory  
Holiest of wars  
Alive to fight  
Alive to die  
What's right anymore  
Prejudice, ignorance  
Religious fighting or careless actions  
Too deep to let up  
Infinity of wars  
History never dies  
Covered by lies  
Our hands are bleeding  
Hell has risen  
Are you ready to die

## SOLITAIRE

Halldis Romsloe

How dare you turn on the light  
as if you  
had the right  
to see  
the fickled calico of these walls,  
the unswept dust blanketing a floor  
that wears my footprints like tattoos.

How could you assume the right  
to turn on the light  
on a girl  
who was too busy  
being alone  
to answer the knock on the door.

You are not opportunity.

And she knows the difference  
between the smoky odor of burning skin  
and the purity of chlorinated light.

These walls move  
with the silence of death  
and the speed of static.  
Her undulating knowledge strolling  
through a moonlit indigo  
of liquid crystal.

The opened door  
and a room flooded with drought.

**TRUTH**

Alayna Wool

Search and seizure of the world,  
Right before our very eyes;  
Sit back and relax, enjoy the show,  
Be prepared for reality,  
Its coming to bite you in the ass.  
Time ticks and tocks, day in and day out.  
Life is now.  
Genetic makeup of domestication,  
Skewed views empowering the masses,  
Ignorance influencing the innocent.  
Freedom of choice, Liberate the soul.  
Interweaving fractions of a filtered focus,  
Spliced segments of a seemingly sedated scenario.  
Unraveling untold truths,  
Time to tear out my insides, to rebel against such silence.  
Find myself, listen to my voice  
People will hear.  
Feel my soul sing  
Exercise conceiving satisfaction,  
Submersing my thoughts no longer,  
The truth will set me free.

## LABOR FORCE

Reanna Scott

Captain father  
I salute you sir  
I obey you sir  
(slitting skin) I will give you sir  
All over me is you  
    And I am nothing

(Sideways slitting secret)  
I see you.  
Father.

Fast  
The cutting  
Of glass  
You were building an army  
Calling it a family  
see this sideways:

Sucking me over you  
Pirate sir,  
Sideways of survival

Chain captain owns five fine women  
    domestically

Locked  
Keyed  
Shut doored  
Bored down

Slammed tight:  
Five fine  
All empty of a telling bruise



## OLD MAN'S THEME

Kiki Valdes

His cigar smoke emerged,  
on the outskirts of his face as he sliced a coconut.  
The juices climbed  
down his wrists like handcuffs.  
He advised that a little rum would do the trick.  
His blue eyes had competition,  
with the sky.

And all of his four daughters  
loved to hate him.  
But indeed, their hearts carried a piece of his legacy.  
Cried out like golden chicks for food,  
when he was on the hospital bed.

He fought fierce  
like a rooster fighting a bull.  
Grabbing his life back from darkness.  
His cigar smoke still rises like the sun on the hottest day.

## VISIT FROM A DYING FRIEND

Donald Tetto

Even the sun dies, he said,  
and if you lived a hundred million years  
you could watch every star  
twinkle out of the sky  
like lights in the city below  
(or snowflakes,  
on touching warm pavement).

I told him I'd love him to  
even that moment of full black;  
but he told me that no one  
lives for that long.

We stood on the hill  
over the valley past sunset  
and I loved him  
(though there was no snow on the ground)  
and when he was gone  
the city was dark in the valley  
and I felt a hundred  
million years old.

## FOR WHAT IS GONE

Nikki Havel

Remembering what she was,  
there were always screams  
about life  
that we never understood,  
and the unexplained drops  
of blood caked  
to the floor.

Voices drip back to me  
and his reply comes,  
“This is earth, love,  
    we’re all stuck here.”  
Cries of defeat for what we once knew,  
Sending mine across the wires,  
“But for those who tasted the sky,  
    love, this is hell.”

We found her, later,  
on the floor,  
personifying disillusionment.  
Red welts on her  
pale canvases of flesh and blood,  
screaming angrily up at us  
*I’m tired.*

## THE QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST

V. Santos

sugar, nostalgia was tattered numbers  
the apartment had nothing to do with it.

practiced minutes wriggled through windows  
the sound in every corner slept the panes  
shuddered

an unconvinced serenity

out in their yards clasping pavement the petals  
are bleached at the tips to warn 'eat it all'  
this paralyzed space, an insulated vesper tine

three peaches brought home in  
a plastic bag  
the waking state soon collapsed  
and fell-

introduced a humming fog

mentoes were songs already familiar with,

the sweetness tangled and torn at  
(the crows that always came) purple  
under the eyes, the light stitched to foot-falls

truly blank.

## UNTITLED

Jesse Burrows

Dhal flat  
Steps  
In contra-dance  
Do-si-do  
And down  
The clapping chute  
Pulled by grassy  
Swinging  
Turn,  
Turn,  
Turn

The low birds  
Pick up and  
Drop down  
As a table  
Pick up and  
Drop down  
As a poor-man's walk  
Lifting  
In lesser  
And common  
Low birds

## MY DEAD MOTHER'S BOX

Reanna Scott

Woodly  
Bark of a structure  
Leaned against the storm of her face  
withered roots holding  
soiled cold

peeling paints  
sparkly nail polish spilled for cocking  
around the rickety  
Foundation of her bones

Thick dirt dried out soil sweat all over her walls  
like backyard tattoos scratched and infected panes- the glass is long gone  
Only tattered worn sheets flapping through the mouth of a window like a screaming wives- silent.

She is alone and so full of secrets it hurts  
like looking into the sun  
too much.

Rats and cats and bugs and birds nest in the hovels  
The crust in her fingernails  
The numb spaces between her walls  
nero-transmitter graveyard

She is infested with their survival  
All of hers is gone.

Kitchen floor lies still, stretched out  
once taught like new panties,  
yellowed linoleum peels up

Now scrapped and scratched wax  
after years of producing  
producing  
producing

Once a child sat crumbled there  
under the wife with stove heat and clanking  
floral design transferred  
to his humble drawing  
of mammas box

Once hot tea was made  
Consumed  
and it almost felt safe to be silent

The night booms  
like heavy chairs  
and echoes through  
her blown out hallways

## UNTITLED

Lindsey Stewart

Aflight with memories  
Image from a dream, maybe  
An out pour of stinging peach dust  
cause me to breath it in  
A yellow fog  
Dirty,  
and dark.

A tepid sea  
The Mediterranean?  
I wouldn't want to swim there  
and is that red the earth?  
And have my feet come away  
with vile brick oil?

There is electricity in the air here  
The atmosphere closes up around me  
Penetrated my skin, my clothing.  
All these bright colors infuse into me:  
Pink now the color of my hair  
Yellow the color of my eyes.  
I have blue teeth, purple hands,  
a red tongue and black lungs.



## CHAOTIC REALM

Robert McConnell



The interpersonal relationships  
of each individual  
are deeply rooted  
to the aura  
of the soul.  
Regret is corrosive  
and eats away  
at the soul.  
The atonement  
of the individual  
is through action.  
Through action  
we lose regret,  
through regret  
we lose spirit.  
Life is too short  
to prolong what  
your true potential  
can accomplish.

**SELF**

Hermonie Williams

oh, mine  
self  
and the self  
i thought i'd forgot-  
i thought i'd let rot beside the piles of  
mist  
i'd let crisp in the sun  
i'd let curl into fist-  
the tight, cramped hand that is mine  
self

but, mine  
self  
oh, the self  
i'd grown to-  
made known to these experiences i'd never wrought  
or thought  
never taught me how to agree with the  
withered She  
that is mine  
self

## UNTITLED

Jesse Burrows

The clays  
of coastal  
silt are  
unbleached  
in seven  
summers passing.

A beached  
as fish  
and wood  
and detritus

on the edge  
of the  
aquifer.

## UNTITLED

Yutaka Houlette

Don't touch the sea urchins!  
They are almost extinct in this part of the island,  
and she touched them  
and disappeared.

## ACCEPTANCE

Mario Dupree

Upon your love I travel  
To distant possibilities  
Many have come before  
They left only pain and misery  
Yet you have the potential  
To bring me into day  
And to ease the hurt that is years old  
Within this beauty I find myself lost  
Captured in an unfamiliar territory  
Trapped by this charm and wit  
Looking for no escape  
Wanting this chance to soothe  
Soothe my wounds  
These that are open, yet to close  
If closed, my possibilities lost  
Feet of mine know this road all too well  
Please no more wounds  
No more pain to bare

## BOW

Miranda Girard

*Fire 9 poetry contest winner*

Red suspenders match the red bow tie  
Prim around his neck.  
His gold buckle gleams as he leans  
Back in his plastic seat  
Khaki pants crinkle at the knee.

A loud hand stretches  
Basking in the white of the projector's light.  
"Professor Davis?"

*Eyebrows rise*

"What do you think will happen in the future?"

*A pause.*

*A long*

*Pause.*

"Well let me tell you.  
There were nights when I was four  
Mother in her metal helmet, right  
Hand welded to the lantern's handle.  
I watched her mouth move  
As a palm rubbed the cinnamon crumbs  
From my cheeks  
With rabbit's eyes she'd slide  
Outside.

(*bow* continued )

And for weeks  
When I was four, I'd hear her pumps  
Punching at the cobblestone  
Clamber to the window using skinned knees  
And watch her head flick  
Left to right  
Ready to tap on a neighbor's door  
At the sight of a window's glow  
She'd return- low lantern flickering like a firefly  
The polka dots on her skirt quivering  
Ready for the end  
Of the war.

That's real fear. That's what's coming."

*Silence.*



*The United Nations  
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*Dialogue Among*

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