



THE JOURNAL OF
POETRY & POETICS

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 10 | OCTOBER 2014

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ISSN: 2169-3013

THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

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p o e t i c a

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DESIGN STATEMENT

The print issues of *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics* are special editions, each published at the beginning of the calendar year. These issues reflect the mission of Tabula Poetica: The Center for Poetry at Chapman University to create an environment that celebrates poetry in various forms and venues. The annual print issue engages the reader with poetry as a material object and asks that the reader negotiate between image and text. The design of this issue does not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading of the entire page. The special print editions of *TAB* will continue to experiment and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

The monthly 2014 electronic issues pick up elements from the January 2014 print issue, which embodies an expression of time and space. From beginning of the journal, each page employs atmospheric and, at times, abstract photography of the sky taken at different times of the day. Text has been placed within various objects specifically chosen to interact with light. These objects include water, glass, blinds, wrinkled paper, and windows. The sequence of time is reflected in the progression of the journal, beginning with morning light and moving to night. Experimentation with space is conveyed through the different voices of the authors included in these issues. The print issue's spine is unorthodox, creating unexpected vertical and horizontal movement in the reading experience. The physicality of the object forces the reader to acknowledge its presence. The *life* of this interactivity becomes an individual journey of pages unwilling to be turned passively. The space in this issue challenges readers to take in more than merely text and image but also a full-body experience of holding and disorientation.

Monthly electronic issues follow each annual printed issue. Using these differing formats—print and digital—allows experimentation with design and materiality in a time when print and electronic dissemination coexist. *TAB* will not force either format to adapt to the other. The reading experience in virtual spaces is different than that of a printed journal. The electronic issues are shaped by Open Journal Systems, a federally funded, open-access system from the Public Knowledge Project designed to serve the public good globally. While the electronic files can be printed, each electronic issue will be formatted for ease of reading on the screen. Decisions about page size, typography, and composition are driven by the online reading experience, rather than to mimic a print version. *TAB* also makes use of the audio/video possibilities of digital dissemination.

NICK DEPASCAL



TRUSS

billable hours
all in and under

names on shirts
radiation in short

bursts please fill
out the long form

return dated and
signed elated at

which prospect
see say saw what

you did you did
you didn't compound

principles deduct
interest hands

blackened doubtful
ever much more

to be said the subject
on fire feels nothing

at all but color bitter
mess a calling yes but

bitterness punching
wind bone chilled

sweating sweet bitter
weather a day a call

in which nothing said
never the less afraid

of how we come by
numbers letters

erasing corners
lovers chewing

at their tethers out
side winter wishing

it was colder eyes
alleged sober relics

call out over and
over and over

DEBORAH H. DOOLITTLE



ROBERT BROWNING'S LAST NARCISSUS

That's my last narcissus planted in the ground,
keeping my hope of spring alive. I found
the single bulb a marvel to behold,
a dry, shriveled up button in a cold
corner of the gardener's shed, now buried
in the flower bed. It can't be hurried,
nor forced to sprout at any given time
but its own. Its depth and passion confined
for now to this uncertain patch of earth.
None may know how I really judge its worth.
Nor will they see it, for who dare enter
and trace my labyrinth to its center
without myself as guide? I do not want
to hear the chance remarks, like from an aunt,
who'd twist each sentiment a different way.
Never mind what others may think or say,
for calling my blossom of joy a more
disparaging name. I have shut my door
to all of that. I want to know the gladness
reflected in its bloom and not the sadness
that I currently feel. Compelled to repeat:
my last narcissus lies beneath my feet.

THE GOLDEN HOUR

after the painting Reading Girl by Jean-Honoré Fragonard

The way she curls her fingers
to cradle the book in one
hand is just that delicate:
long, sensuous, she could play
the harpsichord or mandolin
and look just as elegant.

The words range across the page
and how she re-envisions
them only she can say. She
gives very little away,
eyes half-closed and lips compressed
into a half-developed

thought. Dressed in gold and encased
in white cushions, ruffles, lace,
dark bows at bodice, neck,
in her hair, her small voice grows
smaller still. Her breath barely
rises above a whisper.

S. P A R K E R



PORRIDGE POEM

too poetic
too prosey
too purple
too much word play
too much at stake
with deep impressions to make

so in all manner of haste
with word choices to taste
not one word a waste
I stir in mirror images
creating dainty dishes
of raw served misses

condensed and ladled out by the spoonful
fragmented to fill the mouth that savors each morsel
taste buds are not overwhelmed
yet what is found abounds
and capitalism claims
another account of what poetics is all about

juxtaposed, I suppose superstition in the kitchen can cook a notion

so before he can roost and foul noise let loose
I'm joining the cooked goose
trying to be aloof and allusive
for alluded clichés are passé
there must exist more than we plainly see
or to the butcher's block it is to be

but it makes eyes glassy
and me gassy
these vaporous verses the elite disperses
they urge us to pen all originality again
as the samplers tell us it cannot be done
like a recipe chanced upon

why can we not stir
new life into wrung out words
splaying sayings
to open new interpretations
instead of simply satiating appetites
or cooking to order for others' reservations

ALEXIS GOBEL



Book review

**BEAST IN THE APARTMENT BY TONY BARNSTONE
THE SHEEP MEADOW PRESS, 2014**

Tony Barnstone's *Beast in the Apartment* is a book of poetry in which both time and space "pass like breath" ("The Burried Buddha"). This collection of spiritual thought and movement carries the reader through narrative and poetic prose with each poem, which all "rub against each other to see what might spark" ("Newton's First Law of Motion"). Successfully so, the collection's individual poems work together to point at the "beast [...] in the dark apartment" ("Beast in the Apartment") or, more abruptly speaking, the monsters in one's own head.

Barnstone, this master of sonnets and writer of formal poetry, claims to have starting writing this collection with, as he wrote in an email, "formal poems [...] that retain internal rhyme and rhythm," but the project evolved to become a "meditation of casualty" through content and form. Thus, his defiance of formal poetry resulted in a wonderfully jolting final collection of sonnets and free verse. The collection radiates casualty and self-reflection, with its quick-passing moments in time and its personal, conflicted characterization of the narrator. He successfully uses the external and internal sense of time to question and make sense of the natural world.

The collection unfolds in five sections, each one encompassing its own individual aspects of time and space. All of the poems are free verse or sonnet form and hang on the left margin, but range in different verb tenses and points of view. Each section includes one pair of partner poems; these complement or oppose each other.

The first section, "The Burried Buddha," portrays internal chaos and the "black hands" ("20 Watts") of a writer but also the hands of a human being, the "wooden Buddha on [the speaker's] desk" ("Newton's First Law of Motion") tauntingly and humorously judging their human-natured temptations and pleasures. The speaker's humanist outlook on the past is represented through moments of the surreal and the narrator's grasping for believing in something.

The second section, "All Fall Down," is the most abstract but maintains the element of time and relativism. It is filled with meditations of death, misfortune, and the internal self and is the most chaotic in content. Yet this section also contains the most sonnets, presenting the pushing and pulling of the individual's relationship with nature, in poems such as "Die."

In "A Watch From Istanbul," the third section of the book, all the poems use the image of a watch, while expressing elements of time and history. In the poem "Signature," for example, the narrator describes the watch as a "gold heart belonging to another age," as if the watch is a living, breathing reminder of time itself.

"Rota Fortuna," the fourth section of the book, carries the reader through association and relationship of both creatures and human beings. The partner poems "What He Said" and "What She said," for example, present a small point in time in which two people meet, but both characters' thoughts sabotage themselves, deeming that "we are all lost." This section shifts the reader to the conclusion, to the last section "Beast in the Apartment."

The last section, from which the book's title is drawn, is the most internally dark and gratifying finish to a memorable body of work. It is full of harsh realism, with the "fifty year old man in a lion suit" ("Beast in the Apartment") and "fingers whisk[ing] the air [for] something what's there – and something that is not" ("Vermont Ghost Song").

Tony Barnstone's collection rests on gentle morbidity and time-keeping sorrows yet exudes energy and contingency. The reader is frequently reminded that, even in the darkest ways, we are connected with humans and nature, as if we are all joined as one as the "planet [is] breathing" ("The Empty Apartment").

CONTRIBUTORS

NICK DEPASCAL

Nick Depascal lives in Albuquerque. His first book, *Before You Become Improbable*, was published by West End Press. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Narrative*, *interruption*, *New Haven Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Aesthetix*, *The Laurel Review*, and more.

DEBORAH H. DOOLITTLE

Deborah H. Doolittle lives and works in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Other recent work may be seen in *Bear Creek Haiku*, *Caveat Lector*, *Cloudbank*, *North American Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Poet's Espresso*, and *Trajectory*.

ALEXIS GOBEL

Alexis Gobel graduated from San Francisco State University and is currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at Chapman University.

S. PARKER

S. Parker spent the last six years as a public school teacher, traveling and writing during her time off. She's done photographic journalism for the *Cazenovia Republican* and written interviews and news reports for *The Stylus*. She's served as an editor for and published poetry and a short story in *Jigsaw*.