



THE JOURNAL OF
POETRY & POETICS

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 12 | DECEMBER 2014

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© TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics. Volume 2. Issue 12. December 2014.

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ISSN: 2169-3013

THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

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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.

S U S A N J O H N S O N



RETREAT

The reservoir shimmers like a torn page
of ocean folded into an envelope of woods.
First the beauty of it, then shock of the beauty,
then the shock of the shock. It holds a quiet

never found at the sea with its metal of gulls'
voices, waves grinding shells to sand. Making
sure we know it's alive. But this is alive too.
Hemlocks add another ring before our eyes

while snapping turtles slip their eggs under
debris on an open slope dense with trees.
Not silent, but a music full of rests.
Boulders the glacier dropped on its retreat.

C H A R L E S T H I E L M A N



JULY BREEZE AND CURRENT

A cliff's turned collar sheds sunset gold.

Bare rock darkens to accept
what the night sky lowers
through dense steam onto stone,

into river breath and this truck driver's gaze.
Pulling freight between white lines and starlight,

wanting to hitchhike upriver, scrape the dust
of many roads into a slow, cool swirl near
rapids, then lay out naked beneath shimmer,

breathing in and out, waiting for a crescent
to silver a clear path to needed change.

~

I see all women in the sway of river birch.

I lay out on warm stone while bats
wing-brush ciphers, dusk rolling
dark blue thighs onto the burlaps of sky,

my transit across thin crust is a mural
hinged on trust and faith. I imagine

the moon lowering a lace sari onto two lovers
sleeping back-to-back. Raising my arms,
I spread the ten roads of my fingers

inside cool river breath and this light.

EDWARD DOUGHERTY



Like that character in *Little Big Man* who walks backwards and speaks in riddling reverse, I'm a contrary man. In high school, instead of lining up against the walls with the other guys, I flailed on the dance floor. But, somehow, I didn't dance to the bass or drum beat; instead, I tuned in to the lyrics and the guitar. How you can dance to that, I'm still not sure. When it comes to responding to form in poetry, I'm still the contrary one. Shaped by Denise Levertov's poetics, I am committed to the idea that verse can be free from meter but not free from form. As Charles Wright says, "Good free verse is free in the same way that good abstract art is abstract. Which is to say, not very" (82). And yet, after decades reading poetry and crafting it, I can't seem to hear meter. In my ear, it's always "MY mistress' eyes [...]" as the speaker distinguishes his love from all those falsely compared in Shakespeare's Sonnet 130.

Imagine my relief, though, when Lewis Turco, in his professorial *The New Book of Forms: A Handbook of Prosody*, indicates ways that the system of metrics, like any poetics, is a priori, an abstraction prior to the language at hand. For example, he says, "English does not easily accommodate three unstressed syllables in a row; therefore, [...] the middle syllable is *promoted* to stressed status" (15). Why the middle one? Couldn't it depend on the rhetorical movement of the sentence, like in that Shakespeare sonnet? (Duh, that's "cadence," which "mainly refers to phrasing, which is foreign to foot-based scansion," according to T.V.F. Brogan, editor of *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: The Most Comprehensive Guide to World Poetry*). Then, shouldn't it be promoted according to the prevailing meter, the ear filling in the foot-tap? Turco says, "Whatever remains most constant is the poem's prosody" (19) and "scansion describes a norm, not an absolute" (27). Ultimately, I take heart in Turco's summation, which emphasizes the principle of counterpoint:

Variations in a line of English verse are important, for in normative accentual-syllabic verse, it is variation against the pattern, and not strict adherence to the pattern, that satisfies the ear. The poetaster (an unskilled versifier) memorizes a pattern and works with it, whereas the poet understands the pattern and works against it. Regularity of meter is uninteresting; *counterpoint*—rhythm against the normative beat—is interesting. On the other hand, too much variation is disconcerting and awkward. (26)

You can see both systems at work on the dance floor, too. The robot guy who's got too much regularity going on and the "disconcerting and awkward" guy about to bloody somebody's nose. Counterpoint in poems, some argue, results from the spoken rhythm of a line that moves parallel and simultaneously to the regular metrical line. For example, I hear Frost's sentences and voice inflections. In his famous snowy woods poem, does the speaker know who owns most of the woods around here but remain unsure of who owns *these* woods? Does he just *think* he knows?

The speaker and situation bear on any spoken line and, of course, on its rhythm. However, if meter is only the so-called norm, then such inflections may not touch the patterns of stress and slack syllables. "Double audition" was what C.S. Lewis called these two rhythms (Brogan, "Counterpoint" 243). In his *Princeton* entry, Brogan basically calls double audition hooey, since we can only really hear one line at a time. Still, contrary rhythms reflect my experience. Musicians tell me they can sing the melody and hear the bass line too, and inference tells me that anyone's who has pounded their steering wheel or dashboard while singing along to their car sound system gets the idea of double audition. More importantly, I relish the potential that we could hear variation against regularity or hear patterns in the disconcert.

Hearing doubly like this is exactly the zone of commonality that Alice Fulton named between so-called formal and so-called free verse. She says the regularity of meter is satisfying because “we can readily anticipate the rhythm of the lines to come. The pleasure lies in having our expectations fulfilled” (470). It’s the same deep pleasure we have in every genre; the romantic comedy is pleasing, in part, because the cute couple actually does get together (if we like them and if we buy that the complications are overcome, and if etc.). We want form to *nearly defy* our expectations. “Free verse,” Fulton goes on, “is most compelling when most rhythmic: the poet must shape the irregular rhythms of language to underscore, contradict, or in some way reinforce the poem’s content” (471). It’s pleasing when we find meaning in the chaos; there may be no predictable pattern of rhyme but we like feeling a reason for the music.

The key to either approach is the tension, the suspense.

And it’s not only in the form. The tension of expecting occurs in the phrasing and lines, of course, but also in the whole composition, even in the context of the composition. When Elena, a former student and Russian émigré, offered a piano concert, I was lucky to be one of seven people invited. She’d stopped performing and teaching music when she came to this country, but she was still a musician. Just rusty. The room’s three-story wall of glass overlooked December woods in upstate New York. Elena approached her instrument formally, noted her nervousness—and how cold the room was—announced her playlist, centered into herself, and began playing. Bach. A piece I love, so I was pleased by even the first phrases. As the music built, I worried for her, hoping she could enact this gift she had begun creating. Oddly, I was concerned for the music, too. Would it allow her to not only play the notes but convey all that can get lost when translated from the page to the air?

The tension in form, whether a live performance or a fully revised poem, is essential. Theodore Roethke, who wrote masterfully in various forms, declared, “rhythm is the entire movement, the flow” (71) and “rhythm depends on expecting” (78). The entire movement of that concert was not limited to the music Elena played but also was shaped by the context and the player as well. The Bach was the Bach, but it can’t remain fixed or abstract. Literally, it had to be influenced by the tall windows and the winter seeping into the music through the player’s hands and the grand piano. But more delicately, the notes on the page always have to be warmed by the player’s interpretation. Further, the way my emotions rose and fell with the music was influenced by my hope for Elena and my gratitude for this vast experience she was giving us.

Expecting is created by the content as well as the shape of the material. Somehow when we get exactly what we thought we would, it’s not what we thought we’d get. If it’s nothing like what we expected, we might not get enough either. I remember hearing about Phillipe Petit’s 1974 walk between the Twin Towers just as they were being completed. Once he stepped on his wire and was 110 stories above lower Manhattan, the walk had to be immediate despite being meticulously planned and practiced. He spent more than six years mulling about the project and then eight months in New York working out the details. Still, that hour feels improvised, fresh in the present, in the suspensions. Petit makes it seem so. Watch his performance—walking back and forth eight times, kneeling down with that enormous pole jutting out. The rhythm of walking is created the moment he stepped off the South Tower, but the expecting builds each time we think he could fall, each time we think the dance will end. When that tension diminishes, he creates a new expectation: he goes to the middle of the span, and lies down. Face to the sky. Intention and spontaneity. Deliberation and freedom. Some say he spoke with gulls flying by. Contrary forces working together.

Applied to poetry, expectation can be created at the micro level as well as the macro level. At both levels, the poet writing so-called free verse has to haul the wire to the top of the building, shoot it across the span, ratchet it tight, and then do the dance. We have to create the expectations. Then, nearly defy them. Or, like a good joke, we need to sidle up to the central issue so people don't even realize it's central, but when the surprise comes, people know it was set up in everything that came before. The spontaneity is planned, the surprise feels inevitable. Ferlinghetti was exactly right: "the poet like an acrobat / climbs on rime / to a high wire of his own making" (30). Well, not right about poets being *he* all the time. And I'm not so sure about the "rime" part, either. But making our own wire, yes.

Just as the looseness of cadence counters the pattern of meter, a pattern within unmetered lines can create this tension. Stress and rhyme (usually restricted to end-rhyme) establish their pattern, but as Emerson says, "Another form of rhyme is iteration of phrase" (42). Anaphora or other reiterations create eagerness for another round or a resistance to that expectation. In H.D.'s "Adonis," she uses all the techniques.

1.

Each of us like you
has died once,
has passed through drift of wood-leaves,
cracked and bent
and tortured and unbent
in the winter-frost,
the burnt into gold points,
lighted afresh,
crisp amber, scales of gold-leaf,
gold turned and re-welded in the sun;

each of us like you
has died once,
each of us has crossed an old wood-path
and found the winter-leaves
so golden in the sun-fire
that even the live wood-flowers
were dark.

2.

Not the gold on the temple-front
where you stand
is as gold as this,

not the gold that fastens your sandals,
nor thee gold reft
through your chiselled locks,
is as gold as this last year's leaf,
not all the gold hammered and wrought
and beaten
on your lover's face.
brow and bare breast
is as golden as this:

each of us like you
has died once,
each of us like you
stands apart, like you
fit to be worshipped.

H.D. establishes the refrain of “each of us like you / has died once,” then defies us at the start of part two, and, so, it’s pleasing again when it returns in the fourth. Even the variation, the standing in the third stanza, returns in the final stanza. Do I even have to mention all that gold? It’s like a long solo when we enjoy it at first, then it draws our attention to itself—*again?* we ask—but then it keeps going, and we admire the endurance. (It’s a risky maneuver, though, because once the reader is aware of a recurrence, repetition can feel , of course, repetitious.)

There exist smaller points of tension as well, more like the footfalls on the wire than the larger amazement of the performance. These draw us on, like the phrasal repetition of “has died once / and has passed through” in the second and third line, and then the list of modifiers in the third and fourth lines. Different phrases but the same grammatical pattern, and she employs that throughout. Each time we sense the iteration, we briefly wonder if it will continue, and we also notice each time that expectation is defied. Then, in the ending, the deep formal and conceptual satisfaction happens because several versions of the repetition converge to emphasize our spiritual similarity with Adonis.

While meter, rhyme, and other iterations operate at the level of the phrase and line, the poetic form itself can assist a poet in establishing tension. As soon as we read a title like “Little L.A. Villanelle,” for example, we know something of what’s coming. We anticipate the form’s inherent recurrences. But the actual tension comes in, as when I was listening to Elena’s Bach, when we wonder, can this writer pull it off? Will repetitions merely fulfill the form or will they also fulfill the poem? The poet is already up on the wire. Carol Muske sets the scene in her villanelle’s first line, “I drove home that night in the rain” (line 1) but it manages to also set the expectations because the emphasis is on “*that* night.” In desiccated southern California, a rain that overflows the “gutterless streets” would be a stand-out event. Though the words repeat as the poem progresses, cadence varies. In the next stanza, listening to a “cheap love song on the radio” (line 4), the speaker notices the “maddening, humble gesture of the wipers” (line 5) so that the refrain in the last line now emphasizes “in the

rain.” Such a movement of meaning creates a counterpoint to the repetition because we get the words we expected, but we now get new implications. This shift is a function both of knowing what to anticipate by being familiar with the form and how Muske works at the micro level using voice and context.

Moving one step beyond what Muske does in her villanelle, the form itself can be implied. Robert Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays,” for instance, is shaped like a sonnet and it moves within that shape like one, too, starting with the nearly iambic first two lines and down to the final couplet. But he starts with an inversion of an iambic foot (SUNdays TOO), which then deftly emphasizes the little adverb that signifies a whole lifestyle of faithful service. Then, the third line only has six syllables (even I can hear that it’s not pentameter). It’s a sonnet, but not. Among other features, its variation against the pattern make it compelling.

In the same way, James Wright’s “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota” echoes a translation of a T’ang era Chinese poem. The description progresses from overhead to the speaker’s right, as if off-hand, leisurely observing the “bronze butterfly, / Asleep on the black truck[,]” through the cowbells, even the “droppings of last year’s horses.” Lulled into an easy recline by these sensations and the golden tone in which they are rendered, readers are startled, awakened as if from a nap, by that last line: “I have wasted my life.” The poem owes much to the Western tradition as well as to the Eastern, even the sonnet. The ghost of form leads us to expect resolution, something connected to the previous pastoral scenes, but Wright reverses that expectation. Instead of the box clicking closed, it springs open. Wright’s poem operates under a different metaphor. Poems like Muske’s where the form is established before reading its contents, are like a football player catching a kickoff—the player is all but tackled before he wriggles free and sets off again, pursued by a single defender angling across the field. We marvel at the performance, knowing the goal and method of the form (or game). But Wright’s poem is more like the form of a field goal attempt that beraks out in a screen play. Or maybe it’s more like a joke. Its resolution is like a punchline, but we can’t forget the punch part; it should pack a wallop. Sudden. It both comes out of the blue and yet it’s all there somehow.

Some argue that this ghosting, like the double audition in individual lines, is the only way free verse is interesting. But expectations can arise without reference to these forms and instead, like H. D.’s poem, emerge from within one. Flowers on anniversaries or birthdays are expected, and that’s one kind of delight in form, but flowers received just-because have a whole other elation. The action is the same, but the experience is not. When the gesture emerges from the lived details of daily life, somehow it has more meaning. Poetry’s formal delights work operate similarly. It’s worth watching how form emerges from within its distinctive content.

The suspense emerges from the relation of events to purpose, to the characters or speaker. Whether a film, short story, essay, or poem (in meter or not), stories have hundreds of ways to twine their threads and then tighten them. Maggie Anderson’s “Long Story” is a remarkable example. It grounds the storyteller and setting from the first lines: “I need to tell you that I live in a small town / in West Virginia you would not know about” (57). The poem evokes a place like few I know, but it reflects on the idea of narrative, too. “History is one long story of what happened to us, / and its rhythms are local dialect and anecdote[,]” the speaker points out (58) before saying, “Anything that happens here has a lot of versions” (58). Around these guiding statements, the poem characterizes the people so that, by the final stanza, we’re oriented to the region and its ways. Our narrator is a good tour guide, repeating the stories she’s heard from Uncle Craig and the kids. All this sets

the stage for the final episode, which three of the kids “swore it was true.” The starkly stated ending resonates because we have become familiar with this particular place and its personalized history: “they sealed up / forty miners in a fire” (59).

In a similar way that the ghost of form and meter can create pleasing suspension, prose poems and fabulist fiction slip the knot of storytelling structures to deliver other possibilities. It’s as if writers are entertaining the ghost of narrative. For example (and keeping with the mining theme), Mark Nowak’s *Coal Mountain Elementary* pairs newspaper accounts of Chinese mining disasters with eyewitness accounts of the Sago, West Virginia, explosion in 2006. These are set against elementary school teaching materials, provided to school districts by mining companies. His fragmentary method, what one reviewer called a “striking, ‘synthetic’ compositional technique based on the ‘sampling’ or juxtaposition of counter-narratives” (Pohl), resists standard narrative structures by dodging the storyteller, sustained point of view, and suspenseful buildup of plot. And yet, it works. What draws us through the story isn’t story’s usual question of what will happen next so much as the question, what’s going on, exactly? It cross-pollinates the musical method of sampling with the visual collage, and the hybrid blooms a new form.

Blue Front, the tour de force collection by Martha Collins, employs similar juxtapositioning of actual documents, but to even greater effect. Her story traces versions and details back to a lynching in Cairo, Illinois, which her father, as a boy, witnessed. Collins and Nowak employ multiple points of view while Maggie Anderson limits herself to one who speaks for others. The tensions created by speaker can propel a poem, whether narrative or lyric. Like a play, readers feel as if they overhear a conversation or intercept a letter, and the intimacy itself sets up the tension. Soon the initial questions of Who are these people and how do they know each other? give way to questions of What’s at stake between them?

Averill Curdy’s “To the voice of the retired warden of Huntsville Prison (Texas death chamber)” immediately torques both intellect and emotion by establishing this monologue in the title and follows with the poem’s opening: “Until wolf-light I will count my sheep ... Night is already a thirsty county in Texas” (lines 1-5) Disturbed by the heat (and so much more, we immediately suspect), the speaker confronts “my genial, / My electric ghost” (line 9-10). You might expect a moralizing rant from such a set up, but the poet surprises with the interdependent nature of the relationship: “We are convicted / As we are also pardoned” (line 17-18). At first, this statement suggests that, within the criminal justice system, the methods are the same, but the metaphysics of guilt and redemption shadow of this statement as well. Having turned the monologue from what we anticipate once, the poem does it again when the speaker reflects, “What keeps me awake? Nothing / More than a fly’s dysenteric violin”(line 30-31). Clearly, there is more to this insomnia than an annoying bug in the room. Such deflection is like Phillipe Petit kneeling down on the wire, a pause, an added twist to heighten tension since he’s already walking a quarter of a mile in the air. The internal motives and passions of this speaker are rhythms of obsession and pain, confrontation and deflection. The final stanza resolves all the musical themes of the dialogue, the warden’s work, and the sleeplessness, but it doesn’t resolve any of the moral questions the poem raises. Listen how it fulfills some expectations and defies others:

What puts me to sleep

Is your clement voice, saying
The dark has no teeth. While men like you live
In this world do I dream
I am either safe or spared? (lines 32-36)

These many ways of drawing out a reader's expectations and then using them to foster the rhythm of a poem demonstrate what J. V. Cunningham said: "A poem is a convergency of forms" (qtd. in Fulton 471). Not all of those forms need to be on the page; they can be in the reader already. The question isn't whether a poem is either free or formal, but, rather, does the poem create its own tension and then how does it handle the expectations embedded in that tension?

Poems employ the full range of approaches. A George Oppen poem, so devoid of imagery, can border on philosophic essay, while a John Haines poem can feel painterly. Ai's dramatic monologues evoke whole lives as HD's feel like scripts. Because of this variety, I remain in the middle, contrary to both sides. I am pulling for more meaningful repetition and tension in so-called free verse. As Roethke aptly stated, "Freedom has its tyrannies—even in verse" (83) But I also desire more elusiveness from work that delivers what the form leads me to expect. I agree with Charles Hartmann when he says, "We comprehend the poem only as a process, not as an object" (83). It's the dance, the high wire act, the delight, and the defiance—it's the moment between buildings that counts.

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ALEXIS GOBEL



Book review

**REVENANCE BY CYNTHIA HOGUE
RED HEN PRESS 2014**

Cynthia Hogue's, *Revenance*, is a pleurably haunting collection of history and the human condition of selective memory. The term "revenanc," which comes from the French meaning a *visible ghost*, clearly shapes Hogue's collection of the battling of science and the unexplainable, or life and the afterlife.

Hogue's collection is separated into five sections, each possessing many different forms and ways of using white space on the page. Hogue's evocative asides give the poems multiple voices, along with the emphasis of ideas from the speakers.

The first section evokes the execution and digestion of sound through natural imagery. In the poem "In New Hampshire Woods," for example, the sounds and images represent the "rising flitter of syllable," with its ongoing-ness and connecting of stanzas, as if the poem is "speaking in tones / that differ as chords." The section also captures the essence of being a writer. In "The Women Who Talked With Trees," the speaker has to hide her novels "in her desk," representing the burden and responsibility of being a writer or using "tree-speech" while becoming connected with nature.

Section two starts with an interview with Olga Sedakova, a Russian poet. The absence of recordings left Hogue to rely on a backup recorder, which "mangled the speech" of their interview ("Interview with a Samizdat Poet"). The loosely recorded conversation, put into poetic form, represents the woman's collection of memory and language. Although the conversation is in fragments, the spirit and undertone of language feels "as if you were inside a fairy tale."

Just as in the first two sections, the third section possesses even more of the evocative asides, which end each quatrain. Working in various ways, they contribute to the flow and pacing of the poem, as well as representing "art's abstraction" by revealing the speaker's voice through something as simple as a line break ("On Securities and Exchange"). There are also poems that use white space as a way to emphasize time and space. "In the Time-Space Studio of Morgan O," for instance, spreads each stanza from left to right across the page, using hyphens and colons to guide the reader to the next stanza.

That third section of the collection is the most abstract, whereas section four is the most narrative. Here, the poems combine modern science with natural phenomenon in order to depict human emotion and memory. The poem "On Principals" uses the irony of human principals, such as "believ[ing] killing could make us / just" so that principles are not definite, especially in the human mind.

The reader transitions into the human mind as he or she moves into section five. This section is composed of block prose and the most interaction between human beings. The presentation of word combinations such as "her ears, cane, brain" give a mystical energy while presenting the connection between humans and ghosts, or the revenants that echo the book's title ("Care Giving: an Elegy").

Cynthia Hogue's collection ends with the surrendering voice of the speaker, which achieves "*that* clarity," or the clarity of letting go of principle and wonder and leaving memory up to language ("Clearly in Fall").

CONTRIBUTORS

EDWARD A. DOUGHERTY

Edward A. Dougherty's collection *Everyday Objects* is forthcoming from Plain View Press. He is the author of five chapbooks, including *Backyard Passages*, and the books *Pilgrimage to a Ginkgo Tree* and *Part Darkness, Part Breath*. His account of his "Apprentice Days," first published in *Memoir*, will be reprinted in *The Working Poet*.

ALEXIS GOBEL

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SUSAN JOHNSON

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