

T A B

THE JOURNAL OF POETRY & POETICS

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 2 | FEBRUARY 2014

CHLOE HONUM

Snow White
Evening
pp. 5–7

SALLY ROSEN KINDRED

Little Red
Red Tiger Prayer
pp. 8–10

JONATHAN TRAVELSTEAD

Paper Lanterns
pp. 11–13

ALEXIS GOBEL

Book Review: *Saint X* by Kirk Nessel
pp. 14–15

CONTRIBUTORS

p. 16

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

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without prior written permission from TAB. Rights to individual submissions remain the property of their authors.

Department of English
Chapman University
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866
www.chapman.edu/poetry

ISSN: 2169-3013

THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

T A B U L A
p o e t i c a

 CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY | WILKINSON COLLEGE
of Humanities and Social Sciences | Department of ENGLISH

Editor in Chief: Anna Leahy

Creative Director: Claudine Jaenichen

Graduate Assistant: Michael Tesauro

Criticism Editor: Brian Glaser

Translation Editor: Alicia Kozameh

Readers and Book Reviewers: Alexis Gobel, Breanna Henry, David Krausman

TAB Internal Advisory Board: Joanna Levin, Chair of English; Mary Litch, Director of Academic Technology; Drew Farrington, Strategic Marketing; Laura Silva, Wilkinson College; John Benitz, Theatre; John Boitano, Languages; Penny Bryan, Education; Douglas Dechow, Leatherby Libraries; Menas Kafatos, Sciences; Rei Magosaki, English; Lisa Nashua, Office of Development; Kevin O'Brien, English

The internal Advisory Board represents a variety of disciplines and perspectives; is consulted individually and/or as a group for advice and ideas; meets once each semester for reports, updates, and needs of the journal; and is invited to assist in other ways as needed. The Chair of the Department of English, the Director of Academic Technology, Wilkinson Account Manager in Strategic Marketing, and Wilkinson College's Publicity Coordinator hold standing positions on the Advisory Board. Each additional board member serves a three-year, renewable term.

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.

CHLOE HONUM



SNOW WHITE

Queen, you were starlight
obsessing over an empty cradle,
then over the door to the cradle room,
then over the hallway to the door.

I too feel my life is moving backward.
I spend hours recalling
how I reeled, as if from dream
to dream, when you knocked,

how crows swooped and dived
like black fire behind you.
The prince tells me I moan
for you in my sleep—

good star, bad mother, lone tree
in a vast field on which the seasons hang
their sheets, wet and colored
with all the illnesses of beauty.

EVENING

I want to try to tell you
about remorse, but I've grown
fond of silence, how it sits
beside me like a pet.

On the porch a crow begins
to interrogate nightfall,
as if its eyes will not adjust.
A neighbor boy

opens his bedroom window
and allows to wander,
at the end of his flashlight,
a golden moon. Now the wind

won't let the leaves alone—
they swirl against my door
like words to a sentence,
out of order and burning.

SALLY ROSEN KINDRED



LITTLE RED

To treat it, the doctor said, we don't need a name for it. I picked up my basket, put her white coat inside. Folded, it smelled wild, gristle in ice. Lupus, Lyme, rheumatoid arthritis. Tied my good-girl hood across my head, like a saint's caul, like a fever. Walked out through the cold woods toward my breathbed, toward my prone grandmother prayers—skin creased with hymnless pain, weak light in the wrists and ankles snarling. Snowdrops on the path of needles, torn teeth on the path of pins. By the time I reached that house, I'd be meat for heaven's feast. See it: a plate swollen white, a table heaving too-late mahogany lust, tea steeped from stars. But out here, in the alders, a noise, anonymous as stained-glass hums on the tree-spines, dim growls from outer space, lunar lace. It could be the wolf. It could be the moon. Lupus, lupus, Lyme. We don't need a name. Crumbs of light hunt through my elbows, weaving into their soft walls. Huntsman comes with an axe of names. Dawn comes howling down the path of pins. I want to move my hands from this wound, put down the basket, move body into bread, become a loaf, immobile. A name for it. Hide hunger, hide my hands. Hide. Path of needles. We don't need.

RED TIGER PRAYER

Holy is the dried glue on the child's
new picture, the cat already peeling
off the red construction paper. Holy the howl
of that paper cat, the child's first scratch
with death bled from magic marker,
the night he's up at four to say
the picture dreamed him sorrowed out
by tiger's ink, his flesh
gone balloon-flat on the pillow.
Holy orange marker, clawing its way
through the seams of his dreams.
And the storm-glass eyes gleaming.
Then rain. Praise his faith
in my raised head: how could I
not rise to meet it?
Holy the whiskers, holy the waking,
the mother's body glued by its joints to the bed,
her swelled wrists pinned to the sheets
by arthritis. Holy the body that can't leap
to save the sorry tiger from his rage
or snarl down grief in sorrow's son.
Praise the failed joints in the mother's body,
in the roof of the sodden house.
Holy that roof's crooked breath under rain.

JONATHAN TRAVELSTEAD



PAPER LANTERNS

Daughter of a marine
sick, delirious now nearly two years,
you are the first woman I learned to fear
the way you did your father's white glove treatments,
the man who threatened to give you away
for a smear of dust.

Your Saturday cleaning manias
as I folded hospital corners in clown sheets,
and made tight triptychs of bathroom towels
only ended in my pillowed crying because their edges
rarely aligned as perfectly as the welts
on my calves.

Skinny-belted woman,
it is easier to remember your temper
as a sign you never wanted me.

Open palm stinging lines across my face
at a diner where, that once, I didn't hold open your door.
Thanksgiving. A bite of ham
struck from my mouth because my napkin lay, unused,
rolled on the table. Slapped again at Cedar Grove Methodist
when saying the Lord's Prayer.
My head lacked the proper angle of respect.

I've carried resentment
for your Puritan, Southern discipline-
a smoldering ember in my belly.
I speak, and potash rises into the air
like exhaust from the shame
you branded into me.

Today, I choose something better. Eighteen.
Through the thin plaster
you heard me crying for the truck-driver's daughter,
the first of a string of women
I will never learn I can't save from their fathers.
How you eased open my bedroom door,
laid beside me, traced letters of my name
into my back.

Hard woman
who saw children reflected only
in shined brass and porcelain,
how is it now that I slip toward thirty wishing
you could see me now, you tilting Patsy Cline's
"You Belong To Me" as you pump
the Singer sewing machine up and down my torn jeans,
each note sparkling like glass fragments
you brushed from my knees?

Mother, forgive me.
It took so long lancing the infection
I allowed grow inside me,
and now a sweet pain rises there
like the flickering eyes of paper lanterns
lit and carried away by the night.
Please forgive me for taking so long to know
I loved you even then.

ALEXIS GOBEL



Book Review

***SAINT X* BY KIRK NESSET**

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012, \$15.00

Kirk Nessel's *Saint X* evokes the destruction of beauty and also of expectation. This book of poetry traps, chews, and then spits the reader out into an often unrecognizably eerie world. In this world of *Saint X*, there exist unmade choices and vigorously circular outcomes, transforming the reader—and the familiar petal-plucking of possibilities—into a “pout-faced child who pounds I will, I will not” (“I Will, I Will Not”). The successfully mangled characters and unnatural, strange images create a forward motion in an effort to deal with loss and the acceptance of self.

The three sections of this book parallel three steps of dealing with loss: confusion, frustration, and then acceptance. The first section, “I will, I will Not,” incorporates abstract confusion of the aesthetic surroundings, turning beaches into “plastic mosques” where the “sea [...] hisses,” while also providing evocative juxtapositions such as the “champions [that had...] terrible guts” (“Time on the Down of Plenty”). Nessel twists lovely and sentimental images by changing them into grotesque portrayals of “irony yet to be milked” (“Your Own Master”). The state of confusion and the circular outcome of decisions force the reader to question the very idea of choices, whether choices really exist at all.

The lack of choice in life and loss, as it is portrayed in Nessel's prose, leads to frustration in the face of the uncontrollable and the inevitable, which is revealed in the second section, “The Collapse of the Heart is a Myth.” This wonderfully pessimistic and cynical section provides the reader with “God swing[ing] from eves [...] unbent by heartache” in the poem “Madame Salvation” and the irony of the genius with a “thin glare of tear on his cheek” in the poem “Boz Drinks a Bumper...” Likewise, “The No-Theory Theory” deflates belief and upholds the unsettledness of an acceptance of theory by stating that there are no answers. The cynical speaker of this section, who claims that we are “once again [...] more memory than meat” (“Island”), represents the progression and response to unresolved confusion. The voice is not one of complaint but, instead, one of frustration with answers, or with the lack of answers. The last poem of the section, “Willing to Be,” points the reader to the next section, which is one of acceptance; this poem's narrative somewhat optimistically recasts the old adage about lemons and lemonade: when you have cactus, “draw water from cactus.”

Saint X's last section, “Erasing the Shadow,” apologizes for the frustration, then asks to move forward. The speaker raises a “cap to the thorn,” as if he or she is acknowledging and then giving thanks to imperfections. “Saint X” conveys the regaining of hope and remembrance of someone who made “failure look perfect” through an elegy of “an ongoing poem.” “Poem” also portrays the acceptance of loss of a loved one. Further, “Hiatus,” apologizes for going through “the phase of identity.” It is as if the speaker whom the reader has come to know throughout the book is apologizing for the accumulated confusion and frustration, as if the speaker is battling himself or herself while going through hardship.

Nessel's *Saint X*—and the reader along with it—turns invisible corners and staggers through its ironic and emotional narrative. The battle between hope and hopelessness, beauty and the grotesque, and self and world and the constrictions of truth are all conclusions of the patterned narrative of loss and are realized through the voice of the surrendered, yet progressively hopeful, speaker. This intent is not apparent to the reader until the end of the book, just as the future is not apparent as one moves through stages of loss.

CONTRIBUTORS

ALEXIS GOBEL

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

CHLOE HONUM

Chloe Honum is the author of *The Tulip-Flame*, which was selected by Tracy K. Smith as winner of the 2013 Cleveland State University Poetry Center First Book Prize. Honum's poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere.

SALLY ROSEN KINDRED

Sally Rosen Kindred is the author of two collections from Mayapple Press, *No Eden* and *Book of Asters*, the latter of which was published this year, and , and a chapbook, *Darling Hands, Darling Tongue* from Hyacinth Girl Press. Her poems have appeared in *Quarterly West*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Verse Daily*, and other journals.

JONATHAN TRAVELSTEAD

Jonathan Travelstead served in the Air Force National Guard for six years as a firefighter and currently works as a fulltime firefighter for the city of Murphysboro in Illinois. Having finished his MFA at Southern Illinois University of Carbondale, he now works on an old dirt bike he hopes will one day get him to South America.