



THE JOURNAL OF
POETRY & POETICS

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 5 | MAY 2014

MARILYN ANNUCCI

pre.mo.ni.tion \ n \
iso.chron \ n \
pp. 5–7

MICHELLE CHAN BROWN

Inheritance
pp. 8–9

JOY VON ILL

You Asked What Harvesting Meant
pp. 10–11

PHILLIP STERLING

Monkey Business
pp. 12–14

CONTRIBUTORS

p. 15

© TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics. Volume 2. Issue 5. May 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.

MARILYN ANNUCCI



pre.mo.ni.tion \ n \:

1. [to warn in advance] Something in the grass in the stones
between the brick campus buildings / in the slope of the hill /
the way he lugged / that canvas bag of books / too full /
his hair thick his glance / an uncommon attention / 2. [to know
the inevitable]: inside an office / the blue in his shirt / he made her
laugh / and when he spoke / in the classroom / Steinbeck's
"Chrysanthemums" / by then it was too late / *Elisa poured herself /
into the flowers / the blooms as big / as her hands* / He opened
his own hands / they kept opening / the chrysanthemums
were enormous / red they must have been / red / he understood /
she wanted so much / more than

iso.chron \ n \

(fr. Gk *chronos* time] (1881): a line on a chart connecting points at which an event occurs simultaneously or which represents the same time or time difference

I was vacuuming and you were
dying somewhere
east in the world of maps and miles
which is not
the sphere of grief or love
because you found me and I
turned
from the dust / from the walls / from the stairs /

and collapsed

sobbing
on a Friday afternoon

How did I know
I could have disappeared
like a bead
in the carpet like hardened
mud from a boot
had I not turned off the switch
had I not turned from
the terrible roar of your leaving

MICHELLE CHAN BROWN



INHERITANCE

A child, I spied a triangle of dank
hair through the shower door. Had to
shut my eyes or do my mother violence.
A child, I demonstrate love during tea service.
in the milk-lit atrium of the independent-
living facility named for Kennedy.
The piano's tinkled. Real butter,
real war, real far, shadows of spiders
on a creamy wall. My brethren
want to burn the old for oil.
A child, I spurn my mother's
need, the ugly cousin of desire,
that decoy. In the lobby, dark
nurses paste enamel birds
to the windows, insurance
against the arthritic troubadours
singing their last century straight
through pharmaceuticals. To stay great,
generation, mate, track and savor
the sour economy, the cherry
blossoms forced into January.
This new touch of my mother—
soft. Sexless. The nation's native
sons lock their jaws, tip
liquor in their father's Dixie cups.
The nurses will get nothing much.

JOY VON ILL



YOU ASKED WHAT HARVESTING MEANT

Do you remember the time we went apple picking? The apples were as green as the leaves, but you said *They're ripe. They're ripe.* I put my head in your shoulder joint, imagining what it feels like, to be pulled fruit before it's thick and sweet.

PHILLIP STERLING



MONKEY BUSINESS

I step onto the deck I built off the back of my house years ago and for the first time realize there are no monkeys in my trees. There are no colobus monkeys, no capuchin-like monkeys—no spider, woolly, or howler monkeys—and no macaques. “Interesting,” I say to myself. Then I return inside, retrieve my binoculars from the dining room table, and step out again to confirm it. There are no signs of monkeys in any of the maple, willow, evergreen, flowering crab, or thornapple trees on the quarter-acre lot behind the house. Nor are there monkeys in my ancient oak, which not only defines the far edge of my rowdy yard but stands well above the rest of the trees. I’m astonished. I’ve owned this property for the better part of eighteen years. Why is it just now that I’ve taken to notice the absence of monkeys?

One explanation, it occurs to me, may be literary.

What had launched me onto the deck in the first place was Ezra Pound’s poem “The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter,” which I’d been reading. It’s one of my favorite poems, a poem I’ve returned to dozens of times in my thirty-some years of teaching—maybe more than dozens, if I count the semesters I offered multiple sections of American literature or the years I taught the poem in more than one semester, not to mention the times I’ve alluded to “The River Merchant’s Wife” in community or high school poetry workshops. Yet, in all that time, I had never before considered the poem outside of the context in which I was teaching it. I had never before considered what I wasn’t hearing.

In Pound’s poem, “The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.” The line stands out for its poignancy, capturing with uncanny simplicity the sadness and longing that the river merchant’s wife feels. Her young husband, whom she desires to mingle her dust with “forever and forever and forever,” has been gone for five long months, and she grieves his absence.

It is an absence with which I’m familiar. More than five months ago, I packed off to college the last of my four children (the custody of which I was “granted” in a divorce), and so now live solitary among ghost-laugh. It is an absence with which, I am convinced, Pound was familiar as well, given the sincerity of his poem, despite the unlikelihood that he, like me, had ever heard monkeys in the wild and, therefore, really could not have known whether they were sorrowful or not. To be sure, the majority of Pound’s readers would have very little experience with the emotive (let alone linguistic) meaning of the shrieks and grunts and hubbub of our specious cousins, given that our exposure to primate vocalization is for the most part reduced to the cacophony of monkey islands at various zoos or safari parks, or from the dubbed or canned monkey-speak of Disney TV shows or Tarzan movies.

And so, one might ask, how can I possibly know, *as I do*, what sounds the river merchant’s wife hears overhead? I know because, at times, the trees in my yard make such noises. They are times, like today, when, in order to escape from the wrench of loneliness, brought on by my solitary reading, I am jolted from my blue chair, and I seek some affirmation of the world beyond my reading (*of belonging*, say, to a world beyond; of *being* in it). I take to the deck and listen. In the slightest wind, my trees creak and moan, cry and whistle. It is the sound of the trees’ empty branches.

Like a dove’s mournful coo, you might say. But no, it is not the sound of mourning, despite the dove’s name, though some birds do make a noise like grieving widows. (A trope, I’d argue, all too common in American backyards and literary texts.) Granted, there is demonstrative sorrow in bird language: a sorrow of flocks and beavies, of gaggles and murders, a sorrow of dole and flight and piteousness, a sorrow of charm and fleet. And yet, in its very ubiquity, such sorrow is rife with crowd-

pity and civic harmony. It is a public sorrow. It is not what I hear. What I hear is more exotic and unfamiliar, a noise that manifests itself so appropriately in Pound's unique poem that I recognize it and am moved by it. In part because I do not know what it is, its absence charges my imagination.

"And *yet*," you interrupt, "monkeys are among the most social of mammals. Wouldn't dismissing birdsong for its aggregate suffering, for its antiphonal symphony, require us to dismiss as well the communal dirge of a monkey troop?" Not necessarily, I will answer. For it is not the monkeys *themselves* who are sorrowful; it is the river merchant's wife. To her, the noise—a noise so familiar that it's more often ignored—has suddenly become full of sorrow.

In literary terms, we call such projection *pathetic fallacy*, and I suppose that, in Pound's poem, the image of monkeys making sorrowful noise overhead could be interpreted as such. The monkeys are likely not making any different noises than they were before; what has changed is the river merchant's wife's awareness and perception of those noises. In her lover's absence, *everything* bespeaks of sorrow—the different mosses, the paired butterflies...even time. Consequently, accepting that the noise the monkeys make is suddenly recognized as sorrowful (as if they hadn't always been) assumes on the reader's part an acceptance of the speaker's familiarity with monkey noise. The familiar is suddenly redefined in a way that makes it *unfamiliar*. Makes it new. Even startling. We find meaning where there hadn't been meaning before. We are moved by what we realize is *not* there; what we realize, instead, is the *poetry* of such moments.

My trees have no monkeys; my house has no children. Their absence makes a sorrowful noise.

CONTRIBUTORS

MARILYN ANNUCCI

Marilyn Annucci is the author of *Waiting Room*, winner of the 2012 Sunken Garden Poetry Prize (2012), and *LUCK* (2000). She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and is an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. For more info, see <http://www.madpoetry.org/madpoets/annuccim.html>.

MICHELLE CHAN BROWN

Michelle Chan Brown's *Double Agent* won the 2012 Kore First Book Award. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Blackbird*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Witness* and other venues. A Kundiman fellow, Michelle was a Rackham Fellow at the University of Michigan and received scholarships from the Sewanee Writers' Conference, the Vermont Studio Center, and others. She edits *Drunken Boat*.

JOY VON ILL

Joy Von Ill lives in Omaha, Nebraska. She works for a credit card processor and earned an MFA in poetry from Queens University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her work appears in *An Untidy Season: An Anthology of Nebraskan Women Poets* and the online magazine *Fruita Pulp*.

PHILLIP STERLING

Phillip Sterling's collections of poetry include *Mutual Shores* (2000) and three chapbook-length series of poems: *Abeyance*, *Quatrains*, and *Significant Others*. He retired from Ferris State University in 2013.