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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.

G A B R I E L   E S C O B E D O



### LATE NIGHT TRAIN STOP

On the sidelines of the skylines  
I pick at the loose skin around my fingernails,  
Hearing my nails click together  
Like the tick of the clock.  
11:30 pm  
Last train out of San Francisco.  
The ride ends with  
A disrupt stop, a jolt in my seat  
Like a twitch of an electric bolt shock.  
A voice plays in the overhead speakers;  
It is deep and echoes like God.  
“Sorry for the inconvenience folks,” he says, bored.  
I can imagine him holding up bagged eyes  
And scratching his nose.  
“It seems someone has landed on the tracks.  
Please stand by.”  
Mariachi Man looks around confused,  
Thick sausage fingers grasping the neck of his guitar.  
Old man chuckles and stares out the window.  
5 minutes pass and I mumble something awful:  
“Hurry up.”  
Everyone seems to agree.  
They hold a bored and impatient expression.  
God speaks:  
“Yeah, we can’t seem to find him. Sorry folks.  
Please allow us a bit more time.”  
10 minutes pass.  
Everyone gives aside glances.  
Homeless man sleeps away the time.  
Old man shakes his head.  
Mariachi Man sighs and plays a tune.  
“Odaley, that’s my stuff, man!” Old man exclaims.  
15 minutes. Nothing.

The speakers make a high pitch kettle song call.  
It stops and God mumbles sleepily:  
“Yeah, we can’t find him. So we’re just  
Gonna proceed. Thank you for waiting.”  
The subway shakes back forward.  
The grinding of the wheels make a  
Chuck chuck chuck sound.  
The train seems to rattle.  
“I think I felt him,” goofs the old man.  
Everyone chuckles and looks out into the black windows,  
Holding a new anecdote to save for quiet moments.  
Fourth subway death this month.  
What a day he must have had,  
To wait  
And jump  
Right before the start of the new morning.

### LUCKY PENNY

It lies in a slick shine,  
Greasy with grime and  
Darker from time.  
It rusts in a rough shell,  
And its birth year reads 1972.  
That print remains clean  
As its first day as currency.  
My fingers scratch the black top  
And pick at the penny like a Band-Aid.  
Lincoln's head stands on its stump  
With a rotting skin disease  
And mangled up hair.  
1972.  
A weary traveler for 42 years.  
Passed around, slid through shots,  
Seeing palms, pockets, and pavements.  
It has rolled the Earth,  
Never closing its eyes  
To the world around.  
It carries the weight of the journeys,  
Without shame or complaint.  
Lucky penny, weary traveler.  
On to its new adventure.



KEVIN HOLTON



**SNOW BLIND**

Clarissa dances among drifts.  
Form illuminated by sun-stained  
snowfall, blinding blankets  
Recording footsteps through light.

Shadows anchored to weary feet  
Attempt to teach that darkness is  
More natural than blindness.

Beyond comforting walls,  
Strangers stare at side-winding scar,  
Tracing its hungry path from eye  
Along jaw to mouth that cannot smile.

Eyes shut, hand placed as visor,  
She hides inside so snow can't remind:  
*I walk only when light falls.*

C I N D Y   K I N G



**AILANTHUS: TREE OF HEAVEN**

The pretense is what really redeems. When  
birds fly, it's the body dumping the soul, or a dive  
bar opening like a portable mattress, only less  
theatrical, less than what we hear about girl  
in a tree or a feather falling. The pretense

is the bar where he held so many bottles  
and so few women to his lips; topaz, citrine,  
buried treasure, lost like feathers  
of rainforest trees. The blue  
shadow, her eyes, open, blue and clear against

lashes, her head lying on a pillow, frightful  
to remember when the sun shows up, uninvited,  
rising over the trees. He would reminisce about  
neon lights and the parking lot where girls would lie  
about their age. The parking lot remembers only cars

left until morning. Remember the girl he saw,  
bloodshot in brake lights, who he heard  
crawling in gravel. From his bed he listens to a mattress  
on which a girl is jumping. Pillows can kill, feathers,  
and only trees can stop them: Ailanthus,

planted for its beauty but whose flowers smell bad,  
is the hated of whom is crawling the parking lot  
like bar feather birds. It could never be drunk  
on rainwater or blue as she could be to those who  
spoke to her or lie beside her on an inflatable mattress,

even now with leaves about to fall and trees dying.  
Pretense is never what he needs in times like these,  
because it works below the surface, requires digging,  
and shovels make him tired, even if he hasn't been  
drinking. Death is no bar, bird, or bed to rest in.

Remembering sounds of the parking lot, he hears  
her again, listens to an argument against something  
but is not persuaded; he didn't lie about his age.  
The pretense, she said, would redeem him,  
feathers around a bed, a tree for a man who crawls

across gravel and likes to drink  
and sing until the sun's up. What he sings is  
that he no longer listens. Shovels remember:  
the shadow, what is so blue on lids of closed eyes.

A D R I A N A M E D I N A



**THE TULIP-FLAME BY CHLOE HONUM  
CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY POETRY CENTER, 2014**

With an inscription from Sylvia Plath opening *The Tulip Flame*, readers are immediately introduced to the pervading presence of suicide found in Chloe Honum's introductory collection. Like Plath, Honum (whose poems appear in *TAB* 2:2) uses natural imagery alongside tragedy, challenging readers' notions of nature's supposed consolatory influence. The book's sections cycle through portraits of dance and loss, themes that intermingle across the poems. They follow a loose chronological form while readers silently witness the speaker confront the pain of living with, and loving, a suicidal mother.

The first section, "Seated Dancer in Profile," depicts the speaker's budding understanding of her mother's desire to die. Still a child, the speaker copes with this knowledge by immersing herself in dance: "drag[ging] aside the living room chairs, like heavy dreams" to practice ballet ("Ballerina in Winter"). Her youthful hope deceives her into believing she can spur, in her mother, the desire to live, simply by asking:

[...] Because I asked  
her to, she said she wanted to live—promised she was happy  
she hadn't died. Birds flew by like white scarves in wind. I was  
fourteen, a trembling ballerina, a stone. My love was a knife  
against her throat ("Visiting Hours").

Here, Honum successfully braids the natural element into the scene with birds that are re-imagined as scarves, creating an effect of seeming serenity. There exists a tenuous connection between life and death, however, as the mother concedes only because of her daughter's emotional entreaty. A sense of insecurity is felt in these lines, as the otherwise strong ballerina is in despair at her inability to create in her mother the desire to live. Honum's language is a powerful yet delicate force that mimics, perhaps, the strength of nature and dance. With jarring grace, her language does not allow readers to ignore the ever-present proximity of death that lingers throughout her poems.

The speaker acquires a deeper understanding of her mother's pain in the section "Alone With Mother," but there remains a distance between mother and daughter. This distance is best revealed in "Thirteen," where she admits, "Silence grew inside me. By winter / my voice felt like a bowl / of very still water." Silence, however, happens to be her mother's native tongue. In the poem "Alone With Mother," there is a sense that something is missing in the fourth stanza, which is one short line, that contributes to this feeling: "[...] silence / a kind of love between us." The silence left by the irregular stanza reflects the silence in the relationship. The mother's suicide also occurs in this section and is most directly addressed in the title poem, "The Tulip-Flame," where Honum writes, "Last year our mother died, as was her plan." Here, a painting done by the speaker's sister portrays a tulip-flame which "startles the scene" and is representative of the mother, a beautiful and vibrant, but tragic, figure. Judging by its length alone, this section is the most pivotal one in the book. In it, the reader is not only privy to the intimate moments between mother and daughter but also to the conclusion of those intimacies.

Moving from the loss of the mother, the next section, “Fever,” quickly turns to the loss of romantic love for the speaker. The young girl is now a young woman facing sorrow of her very own. In “Fever,” we are confronted with an image of restless desperation: “Alone ... / I sweat in our old bed. In the bay, the storm’s orchestra tunes.” Honum weaves the sounds of nature into the background of her misfortune. However, her ability to integrate love, nature, and suicide into her poetry is best demonstrated in “The Good Kind”:

Our hands were so young.

The hurt we’d cause  
was always there, waiting,

like death—the good kind.  
And didn’t we hear it

while making love  
in the steamy grass:

birdsong, as it sounded  
in the minds of the trees. (33)

Here, the speaker refers to her mother’s suicide by suggesting there is a “good kind” of death even while talking of love and birdsong. Even when topics change from maternal suicide to romantic tragedies, the shadow of death is around every turn.

The final section, “Dusk,” is a cumulation of the various misfortunes the speaker has experienced. The speaker reaches for closure to her mother’s passing, her lover’s abandonment, and her friend’s death. In contrast to her original request that her mother “Go” in the poem “Thirteen,” “Come Back” signals a maturation in understanding her mother’s pain, the speaker now having gone through her own. As the final poem in the book, “Come Back” is the prayer made to counter her former imperative plea. It follows the same structure as “The Tulip Flame,” signaling that it, too, is in remembrance of the mother. The poem culminates on the cusp of forgiveness, yet it is a forgiveness the speaker cannot fully grasp, as she admits, “I can’t see all of any horse at once.” The daughter’s inability to clearly make out horses amidst a storm points to a haziness that is reflective of her inability to fully understand her mother’s decision. She is never quite able to reach her mother, even if it is only “field and dust” that separates them. Because of the distance her mother created through self-imposed isolation into her bedroom and into nature, the seemingly short distance between the two is magnified, making it an impossible crossing. In spite of this, the daughter continues her quest for reconciliation with her mother. It is forever beyond reach, however, as she awaits her mother’s impossible return.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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Gabriel Escobedo is a Mexican-American writer living in El Cerrito, California. Born and raised in San Marcos, California, he is currently a student in San Francisco State University. His interests include writing, photography, and music. His poems in *TAB* mark his debut publication.

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Kevin Holton is a prose and poetry writer currently living in New Jersey. His work has been featured in *Pleiades* as well as several popular anthologies. He is a member of Mensa and Sigma Tau Delta.

### CINDY KING

Cindy King is an Assistant Professor at the University of North Texas Dallas. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Callaloo*, *North American Review*, *River Styx*, *American Literary Review*, *jubilat*, *Barrow Street*, and elsewhere. She will attend the Sewanee Writers' Conference on a Tennessee Williams Scholarship this summer.

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