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TABULA

p o e t 1 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 the print issues do not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience. 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 2015 print issue explores mapping as place, location, and orientation. The journal's design this year encourages reading mindfulness with the intention of getting lost, disoriented, having to navigate a way through as someone might navigate a journey and encourage discovery. The journal emphasizes the iconic ritual of unfolding and refolding maps and also the visual weight of traditional street maps in order to communicate credibility and an authoritative source of being an actual place. But this place is no place.

We examined work by Jacques Bertin, a French cartographer and a visual semiotician. In his book, *The Semiology of* Graphics, he synthesized design principals with rules applied to writing and topography. His work was dedicated to the study of visual variables (shape, orientation, color, texture, volume, and scale) of maps and diagrams to code visual combinations that would create successful map-reading objectives. We challenge these guidelines by employing visual variables associated with illegibility, including graphic density and angular illegibility. The front side of the map, which contains the poems, tightly compresses layers between text and texture, eliminating hierarchy and contrast. There is no right side up so disorientation is part of the reading experience. This is further emphasized by orientation conflict in which each poem is placed on its own angled baseline.

This back side of the map provides information about the authors. In order to discover the author of a poem, the reader must flip between the front and back of the map to determine its placement on the latitude and longitude grid. This side of the map uses photography of places so specific that the reader is excluded from knowing the place. With the common use of GPS and everyday devices that lead the way rather than show the way, this print issue empowers the reader to lead their own way.

Electronic issues, on the second Wednesday of every other month, follow the 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 and the reading experience for each format drives the design. 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 are formatted for ease of reading on the screen. Decisions about page size, typography, and composition are driven by the online reading experience. In this electronic issue, the design of the author pages play into the print issue by including author bios and designating "location" on a zoomed-in part of the map. TAB also makes use of the audio/video possibilities of digital dissemination.

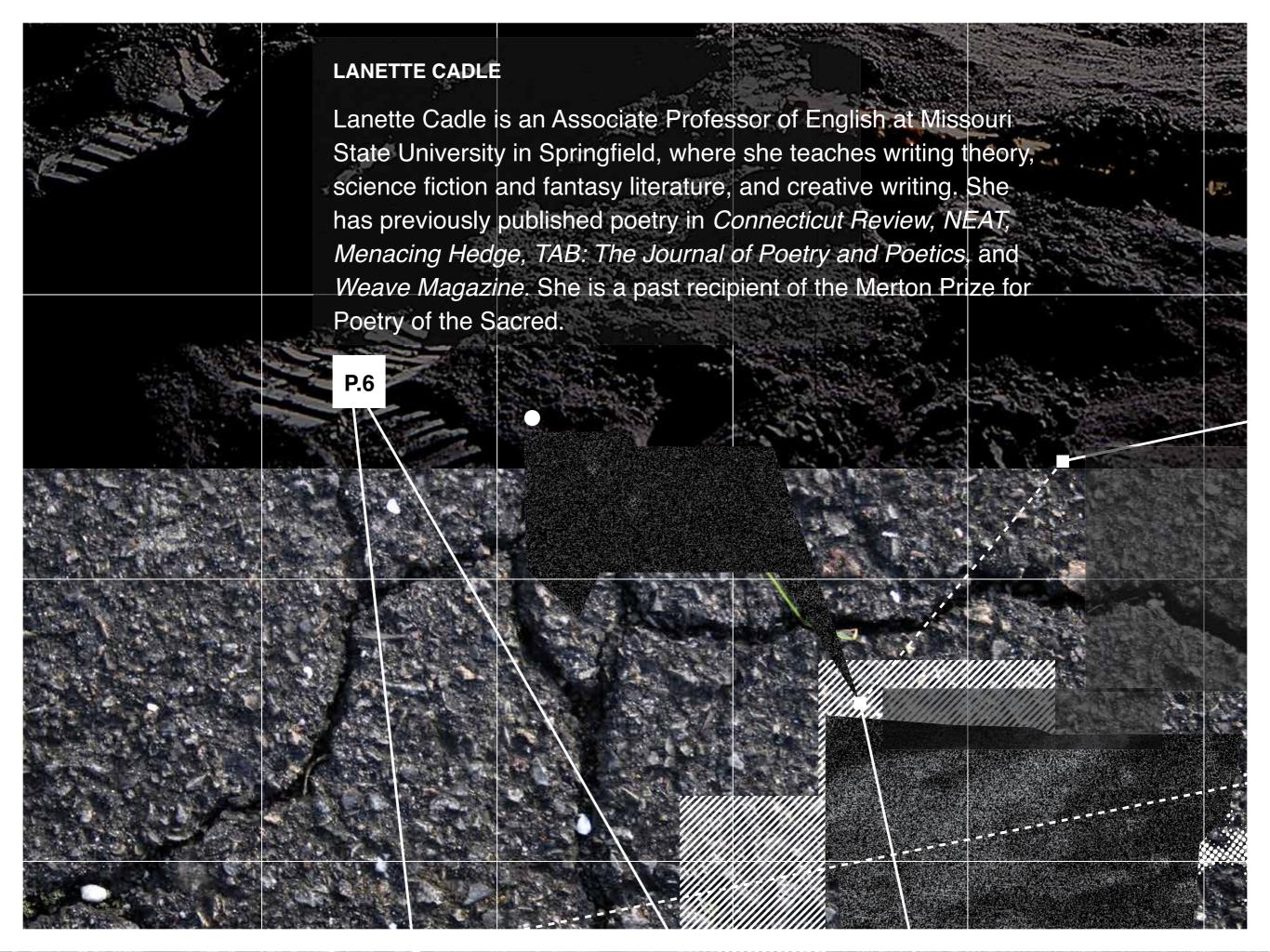
## **GET A COPY**

To receive a complete copy of the print issue as a map, please send a check for \$10 made out to Tabula Poetica and mail to:

*TAB*, English Department Chapman University One University Drive Orange, CA 92866

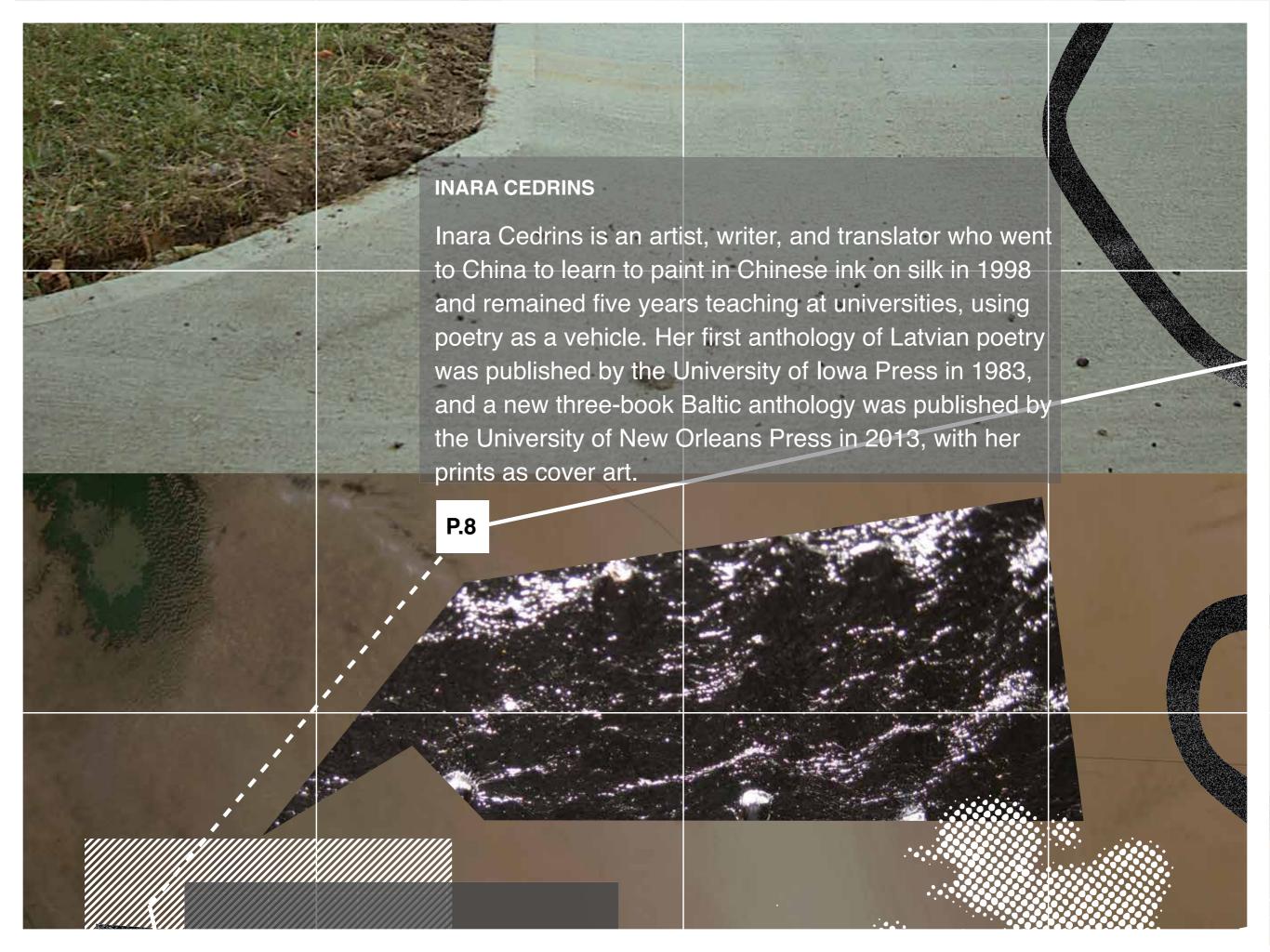
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Contributors receive complementary copies and can request additional copies. *TAB* is distributed at the AWP Conference each year.



## THINGS FOUND ALONG BOYER ROAD BETWEEN EL DORADO, KS, AND THE DUMP

A Mary-Jane patent-leather left shoe, child's size six. A half-full pack of Marlboro Reds. The first sunflowers enjoying their cliché. Two Spangles bags, no food. A five-dollar bill held down by a rock. Nails. A railroad spike. Hedge-apples. A sign: Bad Dog. A Hereford with barbed-wire scars, head shimmied through a fence reaching for foreign grass. More cattle packed tightly, pointing like an arrow southwest. Yellow-tinged clouds, the ones that shout: tornado season.



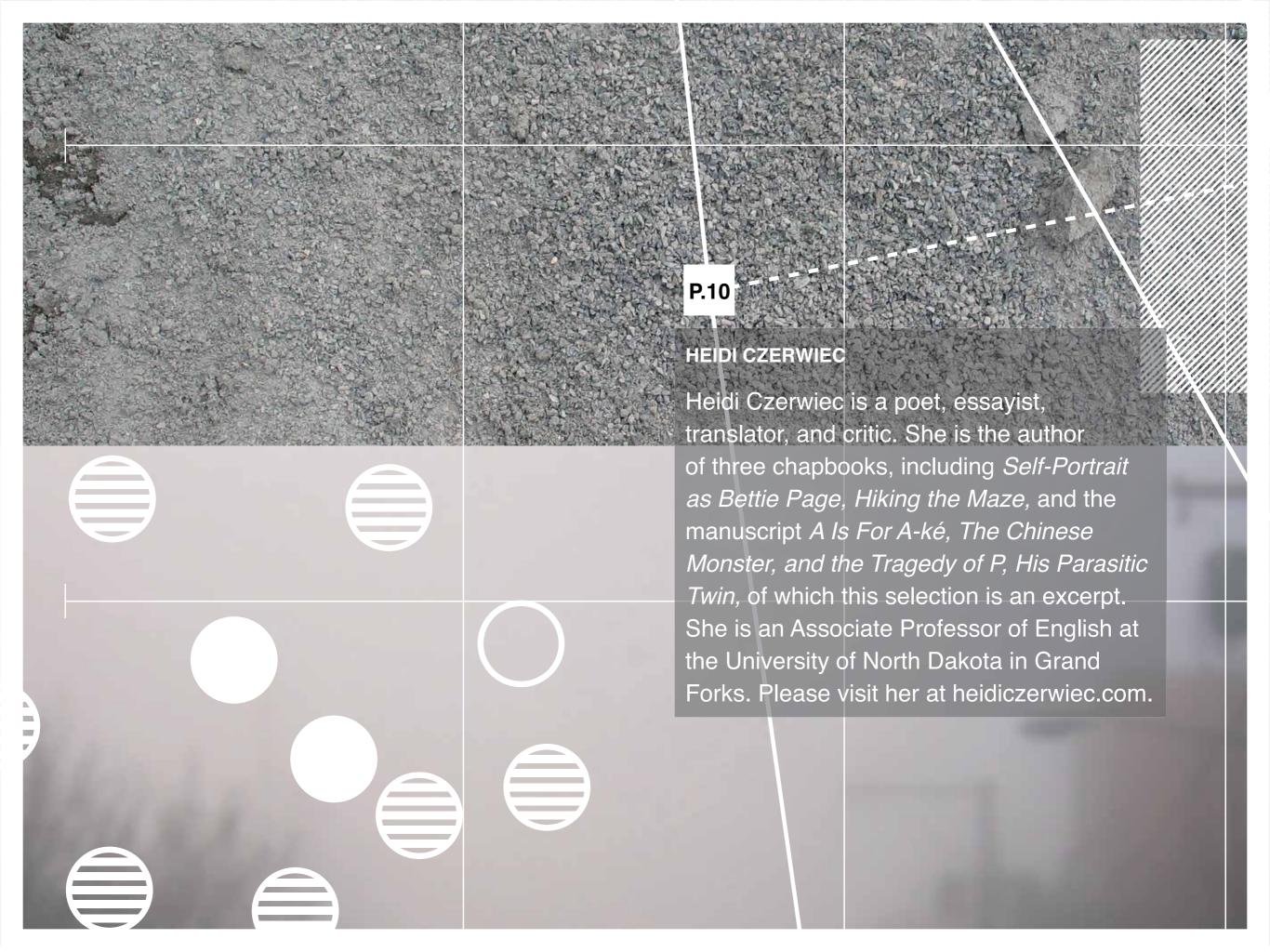
#### FROM CHICAGO FACADES

## XXV.

What's the difference between a caterpillar and a centipede? someone asks, watching the centipede on the basement floor of the shelter, they're built about the same, like a stretch limousine. He's told, one becomes a butterfly. I ask how to translate I am formidable because of the light in me into French, because I want to use the word formidable, and Aytl tells me it just means wonderful in French, the nuances we attach to the word won't translate. I don't agree, but don't say so. I can go along with that, I answer smiling. She thinks the word for light, *lumiere*, is ugly; it doesn't seem so to me, but she suggests saying fire. That'll work. It's to go with the calla lilies in the conservatory, one unfurling, one revealing its stamen like the wick of a candle in an alcove. Aytl's fussing about the word *lumiere* reminds me of my dislike for blue, and a teacher saying to me, blue's not a bad color. Burnt sienna wash under my paintings, the hotness of Venetian red. I have revived, my battered feet rested, the walk to Lincoln Park not as long and much more pleasant.

### XXVIII.

The Chinese phrase bu keqi means don't be formal, don't be polite. Xihuan brought lichees for me today, and we companionably peeled and ate them while the lunch was being set out at the South East Asia Center. Styrofoam cups of milk, a little bowl of clear bean soup, and then we were served dinner plates of rice and peas and braised fish. The tinkling of Chinese music, we picked meat from the bones. "Catfish," Tou Min said with satisfaction. Her eyes are like tea-colored marbles, luminous. In her country she was a mechanical engineer. They feel easier with me now, we went back to our exercise: "shrimp is more expensive than catfish." They thanked me for teaching them and I said mei wenti, no problem explained that the formal response would be 'you're welcome' or "it was my pleasure." It really was a pleasure to be with them and to resuscitate my Chinese. Still on the lam, I roam the city. The citizenship test questions include, are you a member of any club, organization? and they snap no! It's not bad to be a member of a club, I try to explain. Have you ever been arrested? Arrested means when the police take you to jail! one of them tells me, and I'm startled, try to say, in America they can't do that—but realize they can and do.



# **EXCERPT FROM A IS FOR A-KÉ, THE CHINESE MONSTER** AND THE TRAGEDY OF P, HIS PARASITIC TWIN

Based on the true medical case of a young Cantonese man with a parasitic twin in 19th Century China in the lead-up to the First Opium War with Britain

#### **R IS FOR REVOLTED**

The Cantonese revolted. In a fever of provincial rage fueled by opium they vowed to endeavor every means to sever

ties with Britain, ban them forever from trade with the Chinese emporiums. They revolted, and in their fervor

dumped chests of resin in the Pearl River, torched the sweet-smelling effluvium, and vowed to endeavor every means to sever

foreign passage on Shameen Bridge, to take over the port. The British watched the pandemonium. They were revolted. It seemed a fever

burnt through Canton. They calculated covered losses, their cost, and in their opprobrium vowed to endeavor every means to sever

with all locals till their profits were recovered. Amid the tumult, the twins sat sullen in their slum. They revolted each other. A-ké, in opium's fever dream, vowed he'd find means to forever sever.

#### S IS FOR SOCIETY FOR MISSIONARY MEDICINE

Canton, 1838

**Dear Sirs:** 

I have indicated in my missives, the Chinese remain deficient in medicine & surgery. Amusing & ridiculous compounds of astrological dogmas & dissertations take the place of principles of physiology now received in the West.

Yet, with regards to the current unrest, such restrictions on commerce do not awaken amongst them that love of science & spirit of inquisitiveness.

The case of A-ké vexes—you have all I conceive can be known of this curious being, previous to his death—&, indeed, all that will ever be known if it should die in this country where the vulgar, to whom this poor boy has been presented, take him as a mere show.

Could it be carried to Europe by the cupidity of a speculator, the more refined might be afforded a view, which would amply repay the venture.

—Highly desirous as it would in the event of the lad's death permit the application of the demonstrative knife of the anatomist, & reveal the interior secrets of his anomalous formation.

The uncle, I believe, is reasonable & may perhaps be prevailed upon to see the profit.

I submit to you as one most qualified to extract from these facts all that is truly valuable—

Your pupil—

### **V IS FOR VICTORS/VICTORIA**

Afterwards, foreigners fence their compound,

In England, the Queen reads the front page

isolated on this island

trapped within a gilded cage

framed by their own design;

and thus overcaffeinated and Cathay'd

they'll even call it a "garden,"

she'll place a china teacup on a lacquered tray,

and bide their time as back and forth they walk

take up some embroidered decoration,

pretending their prison isn't made of silk

and live inside her pretty fabrication.



# **ODE TO JETLAG**

You can be in two places at once, finally have the here and there be the same in your fog of where am I. The language you overhear, sounds with no meaning, could be your mother tongue, English or Deutsch or just noise you can't see through, a peripheral haze with no way to filter in this place of the in-between where you can make time stand to erase the tedium of the everyday.

#### **DEUTSCH KLASSE AM MITTWOCH**

Meine Deutschleherin asks if I've seen Otto's Apfel, Hast du seinen Apfel gesehen?

I stutter with emphasis "Jaaaaaaaaaaa."

so the class laughs at the delivery, my, for once, perfect pronunciation. I can't choke out the core of the sentence tell her where I put Otto's Apfel, not the closet nor the Kühlschrank.

Maybe der Apfel ist an der Universität unter the desk I sat at 21 years ago in Herr Meinrad's class, unsere Klatsch immer about Bier, German plumbing, and fascination for Gesundheit: I almost see der Apfel, shriveled and lacking its former heft und fiber like my language tongue that can't taste the difference between hatte und hätte, my grammar rotten and full of holes, nicht frisch:

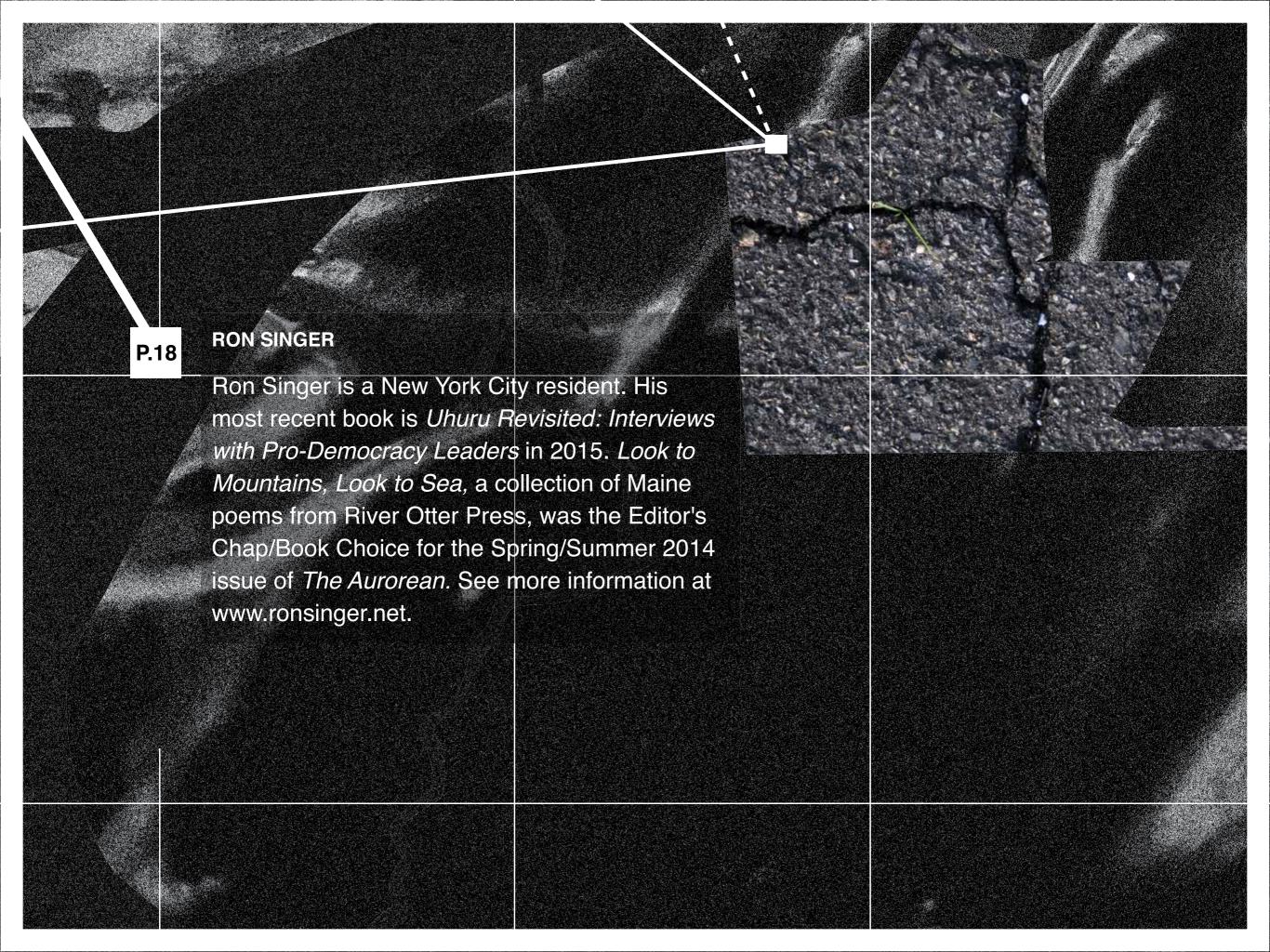
> Ich hatte den Apfel gegessen. Ich hätte den Apfel gegessen.

(If only) I had eaten the apple, I would have eaten the apple (auf Deutsch), not auf Deutlisch, my hybrid seed of language that only the other American student in class finds lustig.

Unsere Leherin, Nicola, throws Otto's apple unter dem Bus and makes us roll after it, sing about Präpositionen that change their case when they want:

```
neben|zwischen| |hinter
vor| über unter
auf
      an
      |in|
```

As we sing, we wave our hands by Otto's apple, and I imagine Ottos's Kopf and where I would like to put the Apfel.



### **NIGERIA:**

To meet a policeman in Nigeria, or, for that matter, a soldier, on the highway, provokes hysteria.

In Hell, devils not a bit bolder will fleece you, strip you of soul and shirt. Of the two Hells, Nigeria's colder.

"Bring your particulars!" the thief will blurt. He means "papers," never quite in order. The only way out is to pay till it hurts.

This happened to me—that is, my driver on the road from Abuja to Ekiti. To get past Captain Crook cost us a fiver.

The next day, we were stopped in Ikare, a populous town where I used to live. "Give me something to send me on my way."

Two shakedowns in two days! It gave me the shakes. "Something to send you on your way?" I screamed. "I'll speak to the Governor of this state, ore mi-o. He'll send you on your way!"

> Ekiti, pronounced eh-kee-tee Ikare, pronounced ee-kah-ray ore mi-o, pronounced oh-ray-mee-oh, Yoruba for my friend



# **TWO BIRDS**

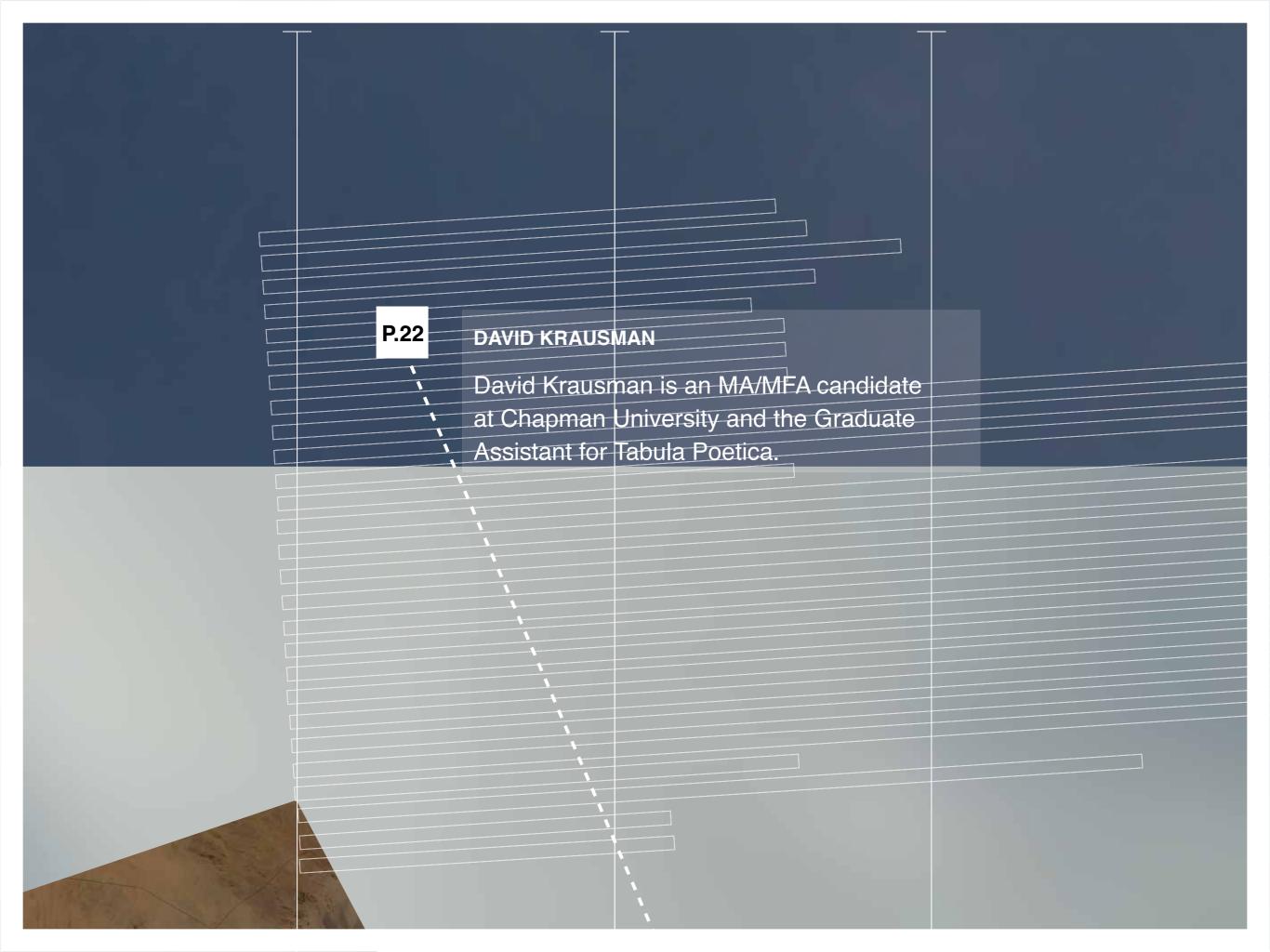
Across our northern skies, two birds charge and wheel, the smaller sleek in hot pursuit. Perhaps the larger

skulked to raid the newborn nest. Perhaps a tuft of food its beaked desire lured. Whatever the cause

of this flight's rage, they grapple, peck, fall and swoop. The chaser nips the other's tail, ignores the odds,

defying physics, brave in sheer revenge, aloft. I watch them wing throughout the morn, then turn to walk

long-rutted fields. Briars, hawthorne rise to snag. Their gnarled beauty hosts a single feather, black.



# AFTERNOON MASALA BY VANDANA KHANNA PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PRESS, 2014

Vandana Khanna's *Afternoon Masala* takes the reader by the hand in a sonorous adventure exploring the "new worlds and old rivers" weaving across our individual paths. Afternoon Masala bridges the gap between past and present, India and the United States, who one was and who one is, and even reader and speaker. Shifting from Bombay to New York with the turning of a page, Khanna's second award-winning book demonstrates how those worlds and rivers forge such paths rather than lead one to them. Rooted in her own journey but speaking to that of us all, Khanna crafts a compelling and fresh inquisition into the self whilst maintaining a charming closeness and warmth like "the bite / of sunlight and chilies."

Many of the poems have been featured previously in other publications and maintain their own distinctiveness in the time and space of the larger book. Yet Khanna's poems interact with one another, sometimes pages apart. The collection's thirty poems are divided into three sections, and the links among poems allow the poetry to speak over such a separation. These connections shift in form—sometimes a word, an image, or a sound—but appear in such a way that the reader can deftly pluck them and appreciate.

When the speaker tells us in the collection's introductory poem "Insignificant Beginnings" that she is "among all the words / of ancient and holy languages, / there... —in translation," a path through the collection subtly materializes under our feet, only to be realized looking back, when the speaker bridges the ethereal heavens with the action and fast pace of a Bollywood movie as "the action does the translating" in one of the collection's ending poems, "The Masala of the Afternoon." While each poem is home in its respective section, there exist echoes like this and others for which the reader becomes on the look-out, creating a beautiful breaking down of a past locked away and, instead of a preserved past, offering one that curls and folds its way into the present.

Take for instance the way in which "Madame Destiny" intertwines past, present, and future into an understanding of the speaker's current self:

Inside, Madame Destiny Murmured into our hands. chanting our bad luck away: unaligned stars and ex-boyfriends, phantom mothers-in-law... Against all prophecies and promises, our crooked love lines frayed at the ends like jeans. Our hope turned stale as a Hindi pop song-gone in the flick and bruise of a blue bar light.

This bridging process, seen here with the speaker reflecting on the mystic foretelling of what was and was not to come against the visceral frayed jeans and pop music, unifies the speaker of the past with the speaker of the present. They are separated and united in space and time though memory and premonition, celestial and earthly. Similar solidifying occurs again just momentarily in "Inferior Goddess":

I am the goddess of the laundry basket, the microwave, of the backyard, with earth beneath my feet, a shag carpet of a lawn confused and surviving. Nothing sprouts as expected.

Each of these elements, related yet different, are shared within the space of the speaker's body. The speaker acknowledges that even divine awareness does not circumvent the forging of this multi-layered idea of the self constantly in touch with roots and the seedlings of the past. The earth is ever present earth under the speaker's feet and the associated future embodied in the "surviving" grass.

The title Afternoon Masala offers a beautiful reflection of the poems within. The vibrant, multitudinous and many-formed nature of the masala spice blend allows for a decadent and layered understanding of the self with poems that transcend a static identity. These poems constantly feel the ripples of the past at their toes. Where many collections rely on any number of anchor poems between which others are strung, each of Khanna's poems is able to maintain its own place and identity while connecting and tethering to poems throughout the collection. In this strong collection, Vandana Khanna is certainly living up to the reputation her award-winning talent has built for her thus far. Her poetic voice embodies an unmistakable sincerity and genuineness in the truths that the poems compel us to consider.