

T A B

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THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

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p o e t i c a

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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, 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 the print issues does not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience. The special print editions of *TAB* continue to experiment and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

The 2017 print issue examines the effects of noise and text delivered to the reader as visual volumes on multifaceted layers. Textures and patterns act as a sounding board, adding a variety of tones intended to create an atmospheric pairing with the poems themselves.

Electronic issues, on the second Wednesday of every other month, follow this 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 are formatted for 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 possibilities of digital dissemination.

To order a copy of the print issue from 2016, 2015, 2014, or 2013, please send a check for \$10 made out to Chapman University to *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, Department of English, Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866. *TAB* is available at the AWP Bookfair.

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

Stephen Campiglio

Stephen Campiglio directs the Mishi-maya-gat Spoken Word & Music Series at Manchester Community College in Connecticut. His poems have appeared in journals and in the anthology *New Hungers for Old: One-Hundred Years of Italian American Poetry*. His translations of the poetry of Giuseppe Bonaviri (1924–2009) won the Willis Barnstone Translation Prize. He has two chapbooks, *Cross-Fluence* and *Verbal Clouds through Various Magritte Skies*.

AT HAND

While hiking a rail trail in late summer sun,
I doggedly revise the poem in my head,

a division into mutual parts that simulates
the two phantom rails of the bygone train.

In the abutting field of goldenrod and brush beside a pond,
the spectacular dream-bird appears and lifts off.

Its sharp utterance issues forth in meters;
the sense of it beyond my grasp.

But its measured wing beats remain impressed upon me
after the form and sound fade away—

the unstable stanza in my head—
a leaky beaver dam feeding the braided flow downstream.

MAGIC STRINGS

Bunch grass on the roadside intimates a sentient body—
a sentinel of grass that appears in the headlights
through snow fog above the soggy ground—
corridor for *souls in transit*.

A bog's
specialty:
resounding croakers.

The ridged bark of the hardwood resembles a riverbed.

The road home, mindfully marked.

The next morning, my four-year-old son,
watching me tie my shoes, says, "Those are funky socks."
"Where'd you learn that word, *funky*?" I ask him.
"I found it," he says.



Harriet Castrataro

Harriet Castrataro's grandmother wrote poems and stories, and her mother wrote plays, so she grew up loving words. Castrataro worked in a rare books library, taught college writing, and advised hundreds of Indiana University health students. She is now retired, living with her husband in Bloomington, Indiana.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes I wish
I could put morning
In a white silk bag
And carry it to evening.
It would not be heavy.

Lisa Eve Cheby

Lisa Eve Cheby's writing appears in various journals and anthologies, including *The Rumpus*, *Ghost Town*, *Role/Reboot*, *Tidal Basin Review*, *A cappella Zoo*, *Drawn to Marvel*, and *Coiled Serpent*. She was a 2017 SAFTA Writer in Residence. Her chapbook *Love Lessons from Buffy the Vampire Slayer* from Dancing Girl Press was featured in *The Wardrobe's Best Dressed Series*. Cheby holds an MFA from Antioch and an MLIS from SJSU. See more at <http://lisacheby.wordpress.com>.

WHY I LIED WHEN MY SISTER ASKED ME WHAT WAS WRONG

December 2016

i

Have you ever felt the pleasure of deseeding
a pomegranate picked from a friend's tree?
The cold water on the skin, the hard casing
of each seed in its embryonic sac?
Then the sweet wetness of each seed breaking
in the mouth, the mouth that cannot speak
the self for fear of angering the sister?

For Thanksgiving I told you I was going
to London. You replied,
"That's nice if you can afford it."

I liked the photo of you
in your golf-plaid skirt
with your new set of clubs.

On Veteran's Day, like every year, I shared
the photo of Apu, a refugee in Army Green.
You commented: "I too wondered."

ii

Have you ever delighted in the ripe firmness
of the skin of a persimmon, bit into this fall-spiced
fruit picked from a tree shading a poetry reading
behind a Hollywood home?

That night, women read about our common struggle
to speak the self.

I spoke this half-truth of what was wrong:
"I caught a cold in London."

It's the first time I heard your voice
since early November,
or you mine.

What took us so long to hear?

Did you hear when I did not confess
that a glass of wine is the only relief from this grief,
from all I am too polite (afraid) to ask (admit)?

So we talked about Christmas trees —
mine a live noble fir and yours synthetic
with pre-strung lights that dance to music

sterile as your remodeled kitchen
where once I suffered

for making coffee
I would prefer to drink
with a book

in silence

I sneak out to the backyard,
shovel a hole between the shed and white fence,
bury my guilt and bleeding heart
with the coffee grinds.

iii
Do you remember the joy of baking medve labs:
pressing the buttery cocoa dough into tins
and onto our tongues? "It's not the same
without you and mom"

we agree.

I get out the tins, form the dough into
frogs (your favorite) and butterflies,
crescents and roosters (mom's favorite),
poinsettias (my favorite) and leaves.

iv

I did not visit this Christmas.

This is not what is wrong.

I want to say what is wrong

what divides us

is as stark as

stripes and stars against red and blue—

who is the stripe and who is the star,
both white and waving to a sky we believe
our parents share with us

—bound by threads we yearn to unravel:

v

Your colleagues mistook me for you
when I laughed.

I cannot not hear you
and mom when I laugh.

Remember how our classmates were afraid
to eat “the bear's footprints”?
Next year Mom called them cocoa prints, a new class favorite.
You, Mom, and I laughed.

Apu's nephew, Uncle V, old enough to be his brother,
drove me around Canberra the day we met and discovered
a shared family trait: bad humor.

We laughed

at how across decades and continents, a stranger
can walk into your home and be family. You confess
you felt this when Uncle V's grandson visited you.

He laughed

with your son, who twenty years ago, a toddler, recited a litany
of the makes and models of the cars on U.S.19. We marveled
how much like his father, who was never a father, he was.
You tell me how little he 's changed,

laugh nervously,

and still I can't explain

vi

what I really want to know is

do you realize

will we ever have
an honest

will I ever break

this silence

my silence?

vii

I held your hand as you drove skyward
over the gulf-spanning bridge

so I could read poems to the new generation
of Novo Collegians. You sold
my books as I signed and talked with poets, friends.

Driving home, you cried because you could not
name the root-
anxiety. Was it the height
of the bridge, the whoosh
of cars passing, the weightlessness
of venturing outside the five mile zone of comfort?

Or was it the realization of the power you have,
pushing the gas through the engine,
that could propel the mass containing us
through the web of wire and metal
like a magnet drawn into the steel-blue water below?

Have you ever felt the joy of blackness
so cold your lungs gasp
as you reach the sunshine through only
the will of your own force?

viii

Choose one to complete each statement.

Choose as many as apply.

You may use each more than once.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. How I hope you can read this | A. with love |
| 2. How can I let you read this | B. without condescension |
| 3. If I let you, will you read this | C. with hope |
| 4. How can I write this | D. with compassion |
| 5. I hope I can write this | E. without judgment |

Nicholas Christian's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Lindenwood Review*, *Cobalt Review*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Poetry City, USA*, *Pulp Literature*, and elsewhere.

Nicholas Christian

WHEN THAT NORWEGIAN COUGHS BIRDS TIRED OF FLYING

There are deserts we don't allow ourselves
depth under the thickening, dirty root
of the tongue in the heart. How much does it mean to say
a thing matters? We chew apart gums all night

listening to the muted drumbeats of hard, longing skin;
I expect when it's all said and done and we've eaten my lips
that even the heron on its breaking line is something only turned
away over a rooftop once or into a salt water scree uncaring.

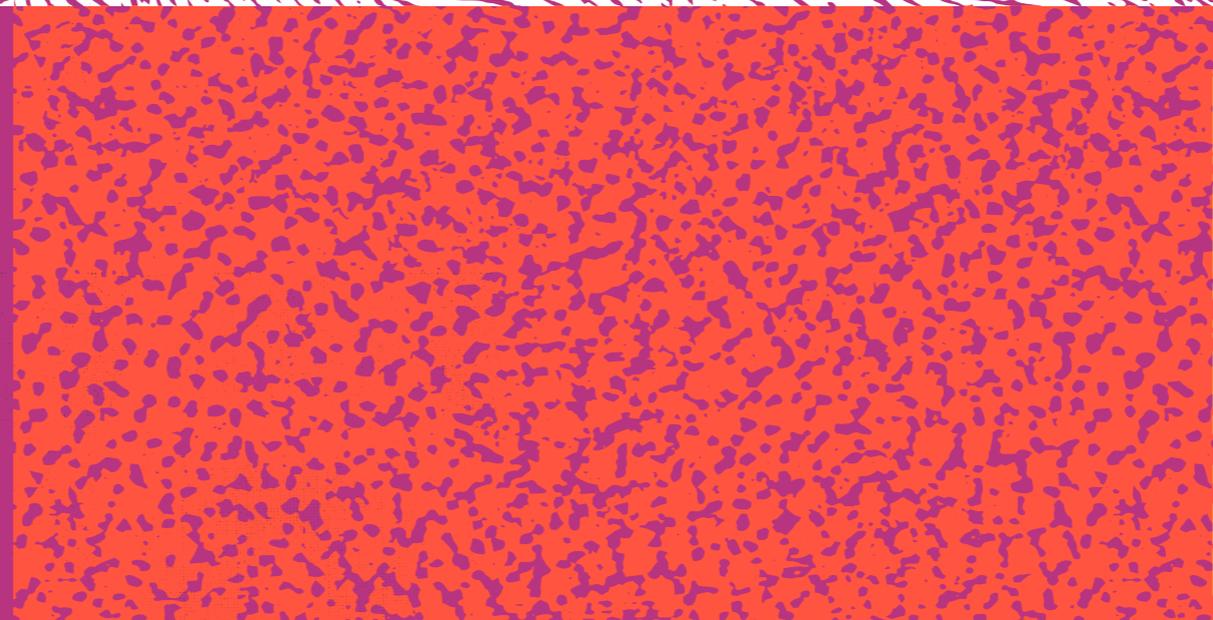
I know that I am always being where we are too late.
Drink from this cup I did not make and fall with me
naked and stupid—one hundred million years we'll dive
like tail feathers in amber promising that the sky hit the ground;

that wood in fire snaps like hollow bones now; now every direction
is the same Robert, imagine you were adequately feathered,
but when you read you are a fish learning to dance over and over
in rainless water. In these long winter nights I can feel what we've stolen.

Alex Vartan Gubbins

Alex Vartan Gubbins was the recipient of the 2014 Witter Bynner Translation Grant (Arabic) and a finalist in the *North American Review's* James Hearst Poetry Prize in 2015.

Recently, he's been published in *Masque & Spectacle*, *By & By Poets*, and *Bird's Thumb*. He holds a BA in African Languages and Literature from University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MFA from Northern Michigan University.



RECIPE

To my friend, Mano

When I order the Monti,
you lift your right hand quick
from your pocket and squeeze
the air like you've plucked
a secret from the kitchen
to show me a part of you
still back in Aleppo.
The photograph you flip to
on your phone: vines streaming
a red wall with green leaves
that sweep into a clean street
you claim to have discovered
a crush's lips twenty years ago:
Mina, with opal hair & feather lashes
polished under meniscus moon,
like crystal on the desert's edge
that tucks childhood into a dream
when you sniff the pulse of flour
and egg and lamb in stone oven,
when the city meant pulling in
her body to give in to instinct,
when you blasted Nizar Qabbani
on a battery radio to drown out echo
of lips smacking in the alley
between church and pharmacy,
where you'd rush if asked
by mother to pick up prescription
because you knew Mina would
whisper breaths like flowing river
on your cheeks, her hips moving
into your grip, her olive neck
you know now a color of the past,

when sunsets would spiral rainbows
through the stained glass image
of apostles, when the bells
& call-to-prayer would tighten
together in the sky, & walkers
would gather for a hookah
after dinner, when chatting
& feeling a full stomach
were understood
in the same tongue.

**GYUMRI'S LAST TUFF STONEMASON
SEARCHES FOR GODDESS ASTIG**

because each hammer blow
to the centrum
pledges hours & oomph

because during the earth's forming
lava must've cooled a spine

because the ground's tremors
while shattering stone
is a rope between their hands

because he believes lips are buried
in the grain's glass puddle

because shims can fill the prophecy
we knew to be: everything breaks,
everything needs an inch of light

because to smooth away ridges
carves a labyrinth for the blind

because he's vowed to finish
her corners as his ancestors
angled Gayane Church

because before alphabet & cow
came rapping through the night

because his joints are a pull-cart
dragged dozens of trips in winter,
quarry to building sites

because his skin becomes rubber,
the tarp a wing, & chords bones

because of melted snow, candlelight
amps to glisten her hair of moss,
of granite lines, of tones

HER TREE

Ellipsis fruit
falls from a branch
the snap a citrus serenade

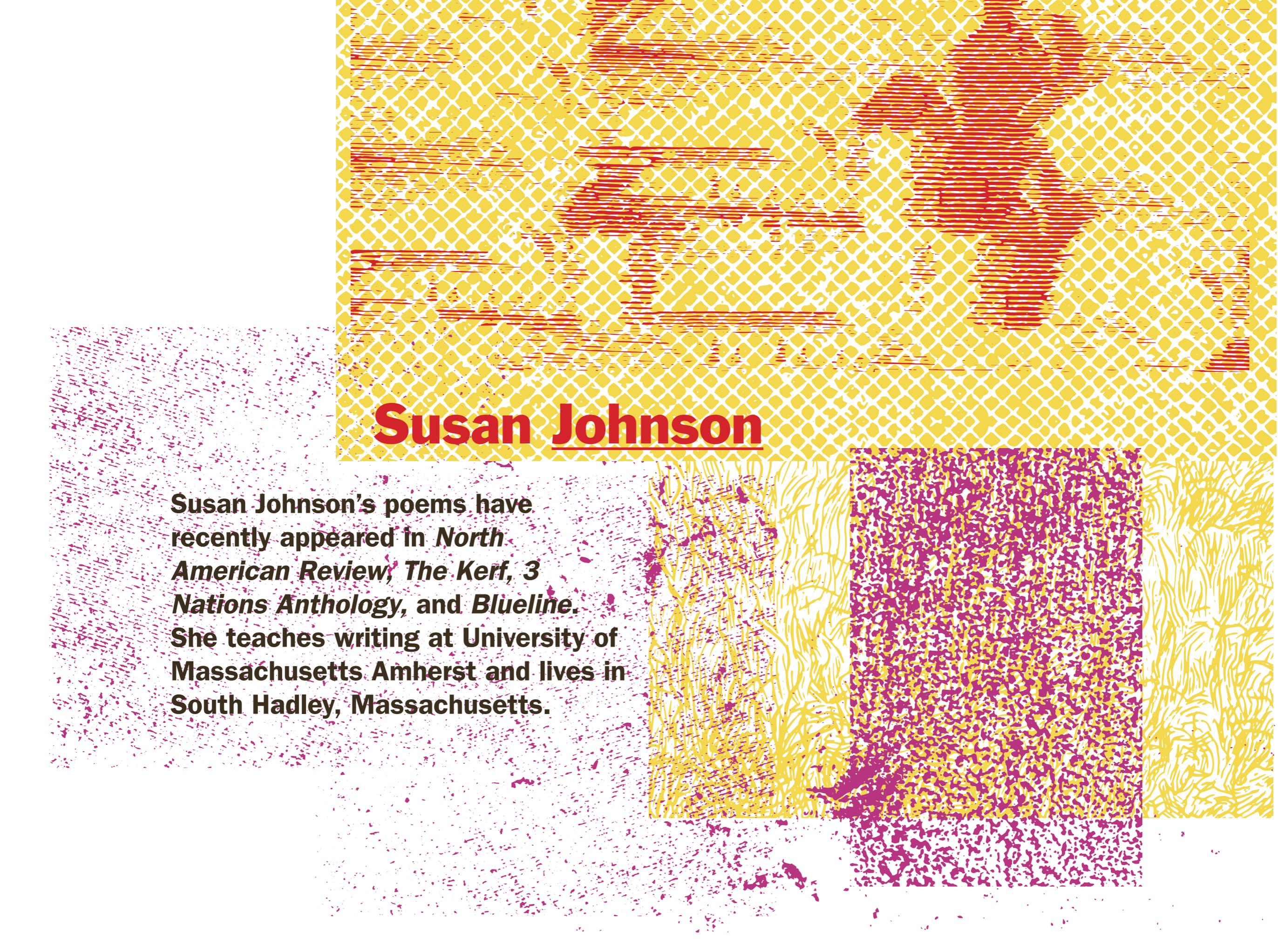
She rubs the sour plump to limestone
such power when the acidic is squeezed
measured sweet & hung on like bells

To dominate the shapes when two in hand
careful study of branches a browning bark
like old meringue abreast over trunk

To restore the resting root she lies upon
embraces upward the towards of the sky
she-body beneath lightning skates

The through wreathing canopy spins
tentacle rays pulpy droplets
she the ringer of feeling she has legs

Here to touch a grass her hair
before dark the burning cold
never's old around the edges



Susan Johnson

Susan Johnson's poems have recently appeared in *North American Review*, *The Kerf*, *3 Nations Anthology*, and *Blueline*. She teaches writing at University of Massachusetts Amherst and lives in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

COVER OF DARKNESS, COVER OF LIGHT

Under cottonwood, under little leaf linden,
under cliff swallows and cliff nesting ravens,
under willow yellow with life and hemlock

yellow with death, under the impression
we will all be here tomorrow and the sun's
rays will refract blue as we walk under

sugar pine, under osprey who know
the fishing here is good, under paper wasp
castles whose cells repeat like wallpaper

repeats creating new patterns that are
really the old pattern even as they fly off
the page, under a ceiling pressed into tin

under renovation, restoration, everything
under repair for which we are under prepared,
underpinning such anxiety, so many tasks

left undone, how little we understand of all
we don't understand, such actions undertaken
under the cover of darkness, cover of light.

SOME PEOPLE ARE CITIES

A woman paints a room so she has a private
place to go. She's hungry so she paints
a chicken, paints an egg. I'm not sure how
to paint fire, she says. Still the painting invites

her in, sets the table for tea. A spider web
of steam maps her breath. Smoke becomes
ash becomes dust. There's no escaping,
she thinks. She climbs a mountain top but

there is no top. A branch just misses her head.
The unexamined life is best left unexamined,
she thinks, as she watches mergansers on
an oak log absorb the roiling below. Who can

bother counting the days? Some people
are cities, she thinks, their lives a bustle
of buildings, sidewalks full of strollers,
strivers waiting for the lights to change,

their lives to change so they can be more
than they seem, become part of the scene,
late night displays. Blinking blinking. Wow,
All Bags 10 Bucks. And some are forests

breathing in a pine needle quiet that ascends
root to canopy, canopy to sky, a still sort
of motion that pauses between brush strokes
finds the blue blazed trail and stumbles on.

Lynn Pedersen

Lynn Pedersen is the author of *The Nomenclature of Small Things* from Carnegie Mellon and the chapbooks *Theories of Rain* and *Tiktaalik, Adieu*. Her work has appeared in *New England Review*, *Ecotone*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Slipstream*, and *Nimrod* and has been featured on *The Writer's Almanac* as well as the Poetry Foundation's Poem of the Day. Her website is www.lynnpedersen.com.

AUBADE WITH TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING

At some indeterminate longitude & time—
you have no sextant to gauge the stars, no visible horizon—
you cross the boundary between night & morning
like Voyager 2
on its way out of the sun's domain into
the interstellar realm.

You—suspended at 36,000 feet, morning's spectrum
of rays just breaching the planet's bulk—
will soon leave behind the thrust & hum
of engines, be cast into the ripe exhaust
& stampede of city life.

For the duration of flight, anything
could occur on Earth—earthquakes, floods,
outbreak of war—events
over which you have no agency.

Nocturnal to diurnal creature,
you—land vertebrate hurtling through space—
how lucky you escaped gravity for a few prime
hours in this mechanical cocoon.
You—no longer arriving but arrived.