

T A B

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Department of English
Chapman University
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866
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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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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.

Lauren Camp

Lauren Camp is the author of three books, most recently *One Hundred Hungers*, winner of the Dorset Prize from Tupelo Press. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry International*, *North American Review*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal* and as a Poem-a-Day for Poets.org. Other literary honors include the Anna Davidson Rosenberg Award and prizes from *RHINO* and *Western Humanities Review*. She is a Black Earth Institute Fellow and the producer and host of “Audio Saucepan” on Santa Fe Public Radio.

www.laurencamp.com

HEALING

1

Each day, I stand for ten minutes in cowfaced pose,
trying to find the center of my spine.

Each day, burn artemesia on Leg Three Miles (Stomach-36).
Let the heat rise, soothe the sinews.

Needle the tension. Wishbone. Slurs of my body.

2

In the gym, many vague choruses smother
each sweated churn and shudder:
stances and isometrics, plank.

Others have greater sadness.
One man careens up the stairs on one foot,
long hair swinging, weight banging.

3

The day rain comes down in one giant muscle,
I see a small tassel of light move through trees
beside the yellow fire hydrant.

Sudden sun-drenched geometry.
How beautiful this small hope.

4

My brother has an interview for an 80K job in Manhattan.
Ask him why he hates, my father says,
why his condo went foreclosure.

Laura, who lengthens my left leg each week,
fills out an aid application between episodes of cable TV.
A short sale on her house—all her payments: worth nothing.

5

Another tireless refrain of wind.
My husband scrabbles his body under the covers.

An owl hoots three times, halts
and starts again. All night,
we hear the grain of his story.

6

Picasso said *first I find something, then I go looking for what it is.*
the orange t-shirt on a man with pale legs;
a mound of hail in May;
two navel oranges next to a dispenser of rose-scented lotion;
indelible melancholy;
a small slab of salmon in ginger sauce;
dust racing over train tracks;
burlap on fence posts,
my old passport, a map of Hong Kong;
a Facebook message from a woman with no face.

7

Another locker room grid.
People keep opening doors of their broken selves,
and laying them at my feet.

The accountant extends her audit figures,
and divides: data, evidence, employment, need.

We have doubt in common. I say *yes*
17 times in the din of perpetual
TV monitors. I still have an elliptical distance

to reckon. My body moves forward, judging the rate
of my motion, tallying circles. What I need
is a long spell of silence, and the ability
to hold it between the up and down of myself.

8

Driving off, purple asters mass the road.

On the radio, Wayne Shorter squirrels
his saxophone between heartbeats of rhythm.

Each note spreads over my hands,
over dashboard and wheel—flexible, enduring.

Richard Carr

Richard Carr's *Fitzpatrick* is forthcoming from Broadstone Media and is his tenth full-length poetry collection. "Experience / Knowledge" and "Language" are from a manuscript called *Abstractions*. A former systems analyst, web designer, and tavern manager, he currently teaches English in Minneapolis.

EXPERIENCE / KNOWLEDGE

Experience doesn't care if he is cremated
or buried whole
so long as he is planted with an acorn.

Knowledge assures his old friend
that it will be done,
knowing, as he does, the potential of acorns.

The two enjoy their coffee in silence,
the one comfortably retired,
the other resting his feet between shifts.

LANGUAGE

An awkward godparent
who vouched for my infant head
and dabbed the droplets from my skull,

the piano teacher
with a car-wrecked hand
who talked me through my lessons,

a sometimes friend
who laughed with me over beers
until our ribs shared the happy pain of it,

the doctor who told me I would die
without his care,
Language,

the embalmer
who glued my eyelids shut,
murmuring kindly as he worked,

turned and fell to silence.

James B. Nicola

James B. Nicola's poems have appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *Tar River*, and *Poetry East*. His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a Choice award. His two poetry collections from Word Poetry are *Manhattan Plaza* and *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater*. A Yale University graduate, Nicola has been giving both theater and poetry workshops at libraries, literary festivals, schools, and community centers all over the country.

<https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola>

WHAT SHE DID

She did his shirts. For years. He liked clean ones.

She heard his life for years. He liked to talk.

She was his wife for years. His very wife.

He took pride in his sensitivity
and acted like an eager listener, too.

She liked to cook for him and he came home
to dinner every night until the day
he didn't. She cooked, he did not come home.

She stewed and served and sat. And seethed. And stewed.

On other nights his plans had changed, he'd called—
or asked his personal assistant to.

But one of them forgot, that night. He knew
she loved him, but they never had a child,
so often she'd imagine one, whose grue-
some acts answered neglect. No one can tell
what happened. Neither one of them survived.
I heard the flames down the street, but arrived
too late to help. Stricken by the sight,
I told the officers later that night
I knew them. Somewhat. No one knew them well.

Sheila Squillante is the author of the poetry collection *Beautiful Nerve* from Civil Coping Mechanisms and three chapbooks of poetry: *In This Dream of My Father* from Seven Kitchens, *Women Who Pawn Their Jewelry* from Finishing Line Press, and *A Woman Traces the Shoreline* from Dancing Girl Press. Recent work has appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Indiana Review*, *Waxwing*, *Menacing Hedge*, and *River Teeth*. She teaches in the MFA program at Chatham University, where she edits *The Fourth River*, a journal of nature and place-based writing. From her dining room table, she edits the blog at *Barrelhouse*.

Sheila Squillante

WINTER, BREAK

The sun shone upon us until yesterday.
Not thin strips of light, no wan slant,
but full face blaze and glow. So like summer,
though it was Pittsburgh and December.
Party trick, climate jolt, who knows.
We turned ourselves into house plants
happily. Christmas cactus,
mother-in-law's tongue, lucky
bamboo. We greened, greedy
in every window. We grew.

/

In every window we grew
creatures, microscopic and ravenous.
We can hardly keep ourselves fed
yet turn the sea monkeys toward
the drear morning, sprinkle them
with algae and pretend them to be pets.
We want to go into the earth now,
seep through crumbled concrete,
to chew on Morning Glory roots
before the ice heaves burst the road.

/

Before the ice heaves burst the road
there will be yellow buds tricked toward
opening. We will watch the periphery,
every unseasonal swish of green a near
tragedy. We know some things now
that we couldn't have known before the hills
grew straight up from the river bed. Before
our desires broke the soil, too early, too lush.
But oh how we secretly willed them, though
we knew they would crack against the cold.

/

We knew they would crack against the cold,
but we left them on the white bench anyway.
Terra cotta pots we angled away from the shade
tree in summer. Leafless branches now, we love
their scrawl against this grey always. These days
are waning, we know. There are things we
could have done to prepare for dark. The light
box in the basement, a mug of coffee, blueberries,
exercise, sex. Instead we take up the shards and crawl
inside each other's dazed and anxious radiance.

/

Inside each other's dazed and anxious radiance,
nothing rings or beckons. Dull, comforting expanse,
the sound turned low, our eyes not straining to adjust.
We must try, we say, to move with intention into
if not through the workaday world. We wait too
long to dress ourselves, pour more coffee than a body
ought to have. We say, there will be other opportunities
to run errands, speak with neighbors, email friends
we miss. It's been months since we ventured anywhere
and we resent the brightest days the most.

/

We resent the brightest days the most because
they make us feel like terrible people. We lie
in bed lit by rectangular glow and listen to cars
on the highway. Not many yet because it's early
and this is a holiday week. We click and scroll past
other people's Christmas pictures, grim headlines
about children who keep dying by gunfire. We hide
our bodies close but under separate covers. Sometimes
the train wakes us earlier still. The long, low pitch of
the whistle tells us we've failed the world.

/

The whistle tells us feel we've failed, the world
prefers us dull and overwrought. Spent. We're so good
at this. We used to call it survival, up every three
hours all night long to soothe, change, pace and feed.
A blank rhythm would take us so that we could both
forget we had bodies and also be nothing more
than skin and need. We probably imagined we'd grow
sturdier, more capable in these motions. We'd move
through the long hours with purpose or something like resolve.
Maybe we'd even dance a little as the sun broke through.

/

As the sun broke through, we considered our options:
root ourselves to broken floorboards, clean out storage
rooms, shop for seafood, maybe dance a little, stay in bed.
More to the point: what's wrong with us? Why can't we
just get right up and start moving like people do? But it's
nice, too, to feel closed up, shut in. There's no snow
but there should be. Why don't we imagine that—
dense drifts blocking the back steps, ice heaves cracking
asphalt all the way down our street. What choice do we have?
It's dangerous out there. We can't leave the house.

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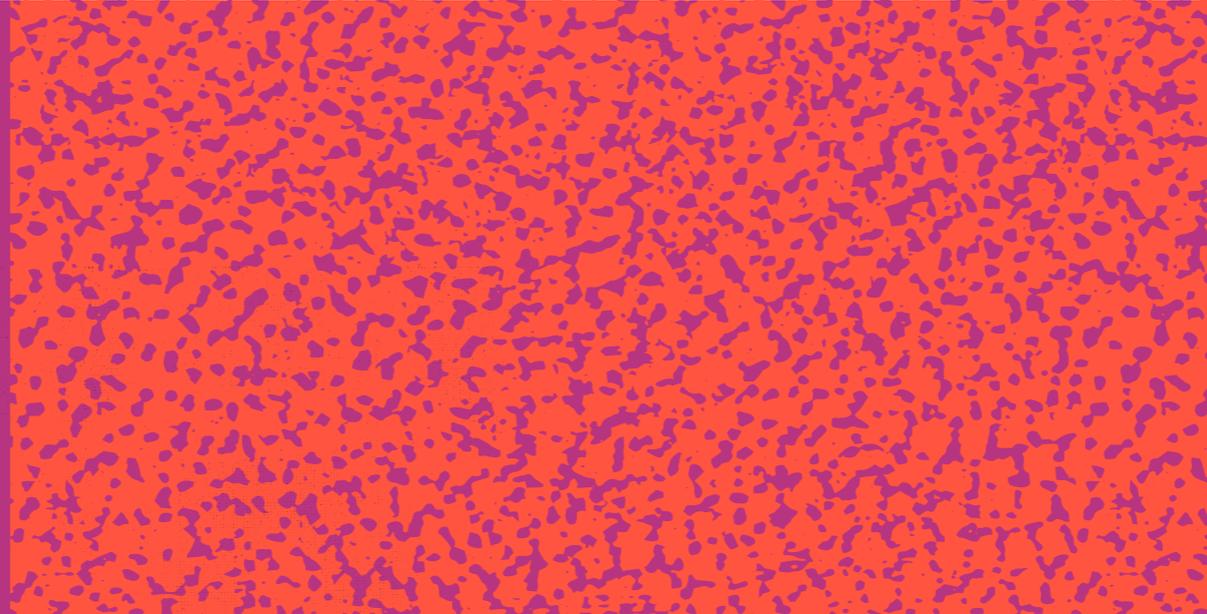
We can't leave the house without feeling dangerous
and bold. Watch us drag ourselves through grocery
aisles. Seltzer and clementines to slake, whole-bodied
fish squinting into feckless fluorescence. Here, we flirt
with commerce and connection: spend more than we earn,
practice chit chat, hold eye contact with cashiers ten seconds
longer than feels easy for anyone. Watch us strut
from parking lot to trunk. We load the bags haphazardly.
Bread and eggs on the bottom, milk, heavy, on top. We like
to play the profligate. We know what's good for us.

/

We know what's good for us though we don't always
like it. Plink pills into porcelain and set them
next to breakfast. They spin in the dish as we consider
what we'd be without their buffer. One, two, we
swallow with water or spit, and we do not dither
or choke. Not while the kids are up and the old
cats nap against radiator heat, not while frayed prayer
flags flap above cracked concrete and green things
ache toward ice-glazed glass. We'll splinter like sun
in the kitchen windows: bright, mythic and undone.

Anastasia Stelse

Anastasia Stelse is a native of southeastern Wisconsin, the former assistant editor for *The Intentional*, and a graduate from the MFA program at American University. She is currently pursuing her PhD in creative writing at the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Writers. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Fairy Tale Review*, *New South*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, and *Meniscus*, among others.



KEEPING ON

East of Little Burg, the rivers open
into a lacework of trees and cabined lakes.
Dawn draws me from bed at 4 AM.
I hitch canoe after canoe onto my truck.

This early, tourists close their ears to the call
of the northern saw-whet owl. Near
the cabins, fish scaling sheds—catchalls
for waste. The tourists, never trained by fear,
do not offer guts to placate the owl's shrieking.

A wolf stalks deer trails at night.
But they are rare, disappearing like snow, leaking
through bone rivers. Fur pure white
and fading. The ground below us hollowed.
My father died. I mixed his ashes with river. Swallowed.