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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.

C A R O L F R I T H



ETRETAT

Cliffs. Striations in the gray rock,
and below the cliffs, sea salt, dissolved,
predictably enough, in the sea.

Monet painted these views of Etretat
in 1885. Alice Hoschedé was his mistress.

Angry seas, high waves.
No water lilies.

Lilies would have to wait for Giverny.
Alice would have to wait until her
husband died.

Everything gets lost in the translation,
everything waiting its turn.

Alice died in 1911. Monet painted
water lilies with a red cast.
Canvas after canvas.

He painted water
lilies with a blue cast. After

his cataract surgery, huge canvasses.
Nymphéas. Which means *water lilies*.

Every lily, translated. Everything
waiting its turn.

JOSÉ FELIPE ALVERGUE



spatially
becom[ing]
[of]
all sides

realms produce lively divergences

differe[n]ces]
fur[ther]
dis[ta]nce]

INTERSTICE (CA. 1899)



S A R A H G I R A G O S I A N



TOWARDS A POETICS OF THE ANIMAL

I have an incurable attachment to lost things. Words, for example. The word I have been thinking about lately is in the process of being lost to history. Although obscure, the word suggests a philosophy of feeling connected to the animal. The word I happened upon is *mansuetude*, which is etymologically related to hands and handling. The prefix *man-*, the root of words like *manual*, *manage*, and *manufacture*, relates to hands—to being handy. The suffix *-suetude*, according to the OED, conveys the idea of custom. The term roughly translates as *a state of becoming accustomed to the hand and subsequently becoming milder in the process*. Think of a feral cat grazing near a back door. Then think of that door opening to reveal a glass of water, a dish of food. Then, a few days later, a soft voice and an extended hand. And by small but measurable degrees, the human comes to mind the animal, and a mutual regard develops between the two.

The OED defines *mansuetude* as a Middle English term, meaning *mildness*, *gentleness*, and *tameness*, yet in our contemporary lexicon, there is no exact equivalent for the word. The words that come closest—*taming*, *domesticating*, *breaking in*, *training*—all suggest dimensions of power and control: the idea of forcing an animal to human submission. My interest in *mansuetude* is that it inflects reciprocity rather than domination and that it has been applied both to the human and animal. It refers to a process of mutual subjectivation, pointing back to a history when the human hand was not associated with breaking the other, but rather with a potential for positive, reciprocal interaction. This is a kind of conditional form of feeling: not attributive or possessive but, rather, a relational term connected to self-affection through handling of the other. By this definition, touch is sensitive, immanent, powerful, and transformative.

I have always felt that the human form is a limited baseline for being and for understanding others. Binocular vision has its limits, and uprightiness distances us from the earth. What would it mean, for example, to imagine oneself in the place of the worm? To be not just the tiny dash beneath our feet, but to be in tempo with the pure vibrations of the earth? What is it to be coterminous with the rhythms of the rain and the hideaways below the topsoil? And what would it mean to create conditions more hospitable for life to flourish, as worms do when they digest the earth's materials and produce vegetable matter?

I want to suggest that living with animals is in many ways a project of the imagination and of making language suppler, more physicalized, and more in touch with its origins. To confound our humanness, to find within ourselves our animality, which surface in dream-work and poetry, atavistic memories and in our desires, we recover the materials needed for our own survival. For every discovery that makes us less human, we are also becoming queerer, more at home with our own otherness.

In writing this, I am pursuing spaces of rupture and binding. I write in collage, which is not only my mode of composition but also a theoretical proposition, a spatial and temporal intervention, and an investment in a mode of relation. Collage involves the making of contact zones where different forms and ideas touch, brushing up against each other and overlapping, infecting each other or jimmying open new possibilities for thinking through animality and poetics, as well as the queer contours of their convergence. In using principles of juxtaposition and contiguity to create concurrences or asymmetries, I intend to put pressure on my ideas about queer feeling, the animal, and lyric poetry.

Collage is a heuristic mode different than narrative; it wanders and meanders, building its own internal necessity even while disturbing its profluence. As a genre, it introduces discontinuity into discourse. As a process of accretion, it is comprehensive, yet fractured: based on the gathering together of various and diverse materials, styles, and genres. As a mode of relation, it embraces in-between-ness and resists resolution or closure. Embedded in its own texture and form is its queering potential. In opting for collage, I am undertaking an engagement with palimpsest, juxtaposition, layering, and fragmentation, processes of assemblage that queer normative modes of expression and representation. I write myself into this medium because I wish to get folded into its own process of meaning-making.

The personal dimension of this collage is occasioned, in part, by my reading of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's thesis that "there are important senses in which 'queer' can signify only when *attached to the first person* [...] all it takes—to make the description 'queer' a true one is the impulsion to use it in the first person" (Sedgwick 9, original emphasis). The first person that I use in this essay is undergirded by a sense of the *I* as an intrinsically relational construction. As Lyn Hejinian reminds us, personality, which develops through relationships, is not a concept bound to the self alone; it is relational, rather than essential (Hejinian 202). Recognizing personality as a relational dynamic enables a more comprehensive appreciation of lyric possibility. In my own poetry, I am pursuing an *I* that deconstructs its own humanness in its adoption of animal masks, which also has important implications for thinking through queerness and lyricism. The affective intensity of the lyric can be productive in shattering the delusion of coherent subjecthood and introducing other forms of experience that are and are not human. As such, the *I* that writes this essay is also writing through and beyond the *I*; it interpellates all of the others—the humans and animals, the living and dead, the imaginary beings, the singers and poets, the characters and the ghosts—who gave shape to a *me*. Queer lyricism is poised to offer a critique of the person and the language of personhood, which hinges traditionally on the rationalist injunction to make coherent or transparent meaning.

Animating this essay is the question: What is a poetics of the animal? Is it a play of surfaces, sounds, moments of contact? Is it of the unconscious, the marshy realm of dream-work? And must it be mediated by allegory, symbol, and metaphor, or might there be a non-figural, semiotic, or animistic mode of approaching animal thought?

Inevitably it is physical, gestural, of the body. The texture of my cat's damp fur in my hand, her reflection in a minnow pool, her trills in the early dawn: these encounters and gestures I reformulate into meaning. I draw upon them to imagine my cat's world, even while interior meaning is opaque and the work that I do is suppositional. And ineluctably, like the play of light upon the clean surfaces of a prism, my cat, looking back at me, refracts a litany of selves: my being, my world, my culture, my sex, my race, my radical otherness. As Jacques Derrida notes about himself, I too am both a cultural animal and a radical foreigner in my own body. I feel that familiar careening sensation of being held at the threshold of language as I try to describe myself through her eyes and her through my eyes.

When language has failed me or I have failed it (I am neither master nor prisoner to it, and yet the vocabulary of futility creeps in and the syntax of subject and objecthood become confused, slippery), I am drawn to an animal language. In

Western traditions, animals have been identified as lesser because of their absent linguistic capacity. If humans assert their subjectivity through speech, it has been argued that animals lack the capacity to perform their subjectivity through language. The so-called failure to speak has been traditionally read as an ontological failure, which is used to re-inscribe the border between the animal and human. Martin Heidegger, for example, denies language to animals, writing, “Where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of what is” (Heidegger 73). However, tribal cultures have long understood that all life, including plant, animal, and stone, has the capacity to speak and be intelligible. This is not an anthropocentric projection but, rather, a broader and more spiritual vision of reality, running counter to models of human exceptionalism.

Denied subjectivity, the animal in a Western tradition was historically cast adrift from a community premised on human fraternity. The same can be said of those relegated to the fringes of society: the criminal, homosexual, or racial other also exist within a zone of dehumanization. Legitimizing state racism and homophobia, biopolitics rests on a model of sovereign power that founds itself on its capacity to mark off this othered space. How might we then conceive of a non-sovereign power that emerges in the conjunction between the human and animal and that grounds itself in language and communication?

For Jacques Derrida, the trace of the animal, of the radical other, exists within the very structure of speech, and yet it would seem that being without speech, animals enter an aporia in which they are both of and beyond human language (Lippit 15). Thinking though of the “trace, of iterability, of differance,” without which language would not exist, Derrida argues that these concepts or possibilities are themselves “not only human,” thereby carving open a space in which both animal and human being are mutually bound to the constitution of the other and to language itself (Derrida 116).

And if we can think beyond human speech, we may find that, while animal language may seem to be limited semantically or representationally, it is in fact inherently powerful for the reason that it is not a codified system and therefore cannot be passively exchanged. Instead, it is gestural, based on an organic principle connected to attention. The survival of social animals hinges on their ability to read and respond to others. Animal signaling is occasioned when there is mutual attention between the signaler and the recipient of the signal. Both have a significant stake in observing one another when their own survival may depend upon it. Based on the consciousness, such communication is immediate, variable, and corporeal.

According to the evolutionary biologist Amotz Zahavi, animal signaling is also costly. Extrapolating from Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection, Zahavi sought to explain what Darwin could not: the waste or excess that an individual incurs in displaying its sexual fitness for potential suitors. While for Darwin natural selection is premised on the species’ elimination of unfavorable traits over time as a mechanism for survival, Zahavi developed the concept of the honest signal and the “handicap principle” to explain the phenomenon whereby individuals possess characteristics or behave in such a way as to communicate “honestly,” even at the cost of making themselves vulnerable to attack (Zahavi 1-11). According to Zahavi, these handicaps are signals to other individuals. Extrapolating from sexual selection, he applied his theory of signaling to all realms in which individuals communicate. As he reminds us, where human language often “fails” its expressive function, the nonverbal, vocalized language of animals is generally able to convey intensity and degree of feeling relatively accurately.

Think of a baby bird, crying for its mother to return to the nest. This signal, the baby's cry—in its repetitive cast—conveys the intensity of its need for contact, operating as a gauge of quality. With this persistent cry, the infant bird risks the detection of a predator, and yet because its cry is risky, the mother knows that it is “honest” and that her infant needs her attention. This form of signaling involves a testing of bonds; it is a kind of communication authenticated by the cost that the individual incurs in exposing its need.

In my own case, I have often felt a frustration with the capacity of symbolic language to express gradations of difference: to convey degree and quality of feeling. There is always a social dilemma inherent in the structure of language and—by extrapolation—the text: that of trying to capture in words one's affective experience, particularly the degree of feeling one experiences, to the other. That dilemma I associate with both wounding and desire, or the wound that lies at the heart of language. This wound is in many ways a human burden. What one wants is the accuracy of the honest signal. And this desire for affective accuracy and reciprocity, I believe, is what bridges the connection between the animal and poetic thought.

It is that lonely, fertile zone between desire and “honesty” as I have here defined it that is the terrain of the poet. And in that space, we create metaphor and innovate new forms to temporarily stabilize the chaos of feeling. What might poetry learn from a modality of language that in its economy of sacrifice is authenticated by the other?

That desire for an animal language hijacks this poetics. Being swept up by this desire, I am also writing about eros in its broadest sense: eros not exclusively in its sexual sense, but rather in its relation to creation and to the sensuality of life and work. Audre Lorde defines the erotic as “a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feeling” (Lorde 54). I love Lorde's definition of the erotic as a measure between identity and its undoing: the re-imagining of the self after coming up against or alongside strong feeling. And I love this suggestion of the erotic as a lifelong shuttling between our identities and the slapdash messiness of our feelings. If patriarchy robs women of this more expansive conception of eros, reducing it to a form of “pornography,” Lorde considers the erotic as invested in a recovery of the fullness of our feelings, a striving after “excellence” (Lorde 54-55). In my own poem “Eros,” I think of the concept as a verb or dynamism that puts in play a form of thinking–feeling that moves through and beyond personhood and identity:

Eros:

the well-kissed fold in the belly;

love

(the verb)

bouncy in its parentheses;

the giant squid's foot-wide eye

mostly veiled from us,

and the idea of its eighth arm

twining with another;

the thrill of restraint
 against desire,
the anonymity of the caretaker
 who will anoint us
 in our final bath;
the blindfold
and the lightness of the hand
 on the small of our back.

In conceptualizing my impulsion towards a queer animal poetics, I must also address my own very human identities and consider the ways they bring into relief the limits of language. The moment that I name each social group to which I belong, I confront both the constraints of prose and the prose-ness of my own life. For example, while I can say that I am white and a black ally, a feminist and a lesbian, these categories risk inflecting a particular typology or a form of binary thinking, in which my identity is conceptualized in opposition to masculinity and heterosexuality (of course, sex, gender, and sexual orientation are not so neat and binary).

Conceptually, it is useful to recognize that my identities are socio-culturally rooted and contingent upon a system that is gendered, classed, and racialized, yet they are also limited. The moment that I name them, I exclude all the other subject positions I inhabit, transverse, evolve through, trouble, depend on, and imagine for myself. Often, my identities escape by their own complexity any label or categorical determination.

By a queer logic, how I relate to the nonhuman world and to other racial, classed, gendered, and sexual experiences are as related to my own being as those identities that I claim for myself. Queerness, which I also claim for myself, offers tension against the principles of identity, which can impose strictures not only on sexuality but also on humanness itself. When struggling through the impingements of my own human identities, I have turned to animals and poetry for answers about myself. These have been important queering resources throughout my life insofar as they complicate my own subjectivity. It seems significant now that as a child, before I could call myself a lesbian, I intuited myself as queer—that is, unable to master or integrate into my being the identities that the world assigned to me.

Lyric poetry, which inflects the realm of metaphor and imagination, makes room for a plurality of selves and the chaos of feeling. Like queer theory, it enables me to think through the complexities of being in a way that an identity-based language does not. It accommodates what does not lay down to prose. It greets paradox and antithesis.

However, in times of crisis, it seems that we as poets are especially pressured to defend the relevance of our craft. (Of course, the question of relevance is an anxious one that permeates the whole of humanities today). The questions handed to the poet often relate to potential: What is the power of poetry in a time of emergency? What is the role of poetry in anguished times? And given recent developments in our ecosystem and our political life, how can poetry act—perform action—in a fragile world? Lyric time moves at a different clock-pace than the temporal exigencies of ecological and political crisis. How and when can it intervene?

What are needed are new metaphors (as well as more refined conceptualizations of the structure of metaphor) that prepare us for practical action. I am interested in the power of metaphors that emerge from the combination of imaginative projection and empirical observation of organic lives different than our own. How we relate to those lives and how we imagine their worlds and their sensoriums—or their sensory experiences—can provide practical knowledge about ourselves, others, and the world that we share. Metaphor is more than mere ornament and figurative representation; it is vital and deeply connected to our own cognitive and affective processes. We make meaning through metaphor and through neural tricks that confound the boundaries between the literal and figurative. We use metaphor to test and expand the boundaries of the physical world, just as we use collage to test the medium in its materiality. Metaphor too is material in its effects; it infects our behavior and rewrites our existing reality.

And I cannot say with total authority that what I am doing in writing poetry is representing the world around me. Being of nature, am I not, in some sense, presenting it, acting as a conduit of it, even while I recognize that Nature (with a capital N) is an unstable cultural and historical construct? Native American poetics are interesting to me for the reason that they often reveal an ontology in which the *I* is equivalent to a *we* that extends beyond the human realm. To be an *I* is to be of the sky, the earth, and the animal.

Poetry is always en route to an elsewhere. I wish sometimes it were a shady place with cocktails and big, affectionate animals. But lyric poetry takes me to difficult places: to war, to a lonely world where a hermit's voice echoes and echoes across the standing water, to an airtight apartment where the laundry is rumped or in piles and a woman counts some change. I feel lost sometimes in these worlds, but being lost has its advantages. A thin and porous line exists between being lost and losing myself, in which I am the proper object of lost-ness. Losing myself, I enter worlds where the conditions for subject-ness and object-ness collapse, where I am no longer a locatable *I*.

Queer lyricism can serve as a social intervention that calls upon a praxis of relating, a temporary blurring of subject positions, and even a feeling of lost-ness. One of the tasks compatible with a queer lyric poetics seems to be the imagining of forms of sociality that are not humanist, that trouble identity discourse, and that instead recognize in embodiment, a shared condition of all life forms, the grounding for a politics.

Human understandings of embodiment are of course limited. For example, I cannot know how a whale processes the world around it, although I can speculate about some of its faculties and behaviors based on a handful of facts. I have read that the whale perceives the ocean as black rather than blue and has broadside eyes that may allow it to look at two prospects from different angles at the same time. The implications are significant since perspective effects how an individual filters sensory data, creates memories, and makes meaning about the world around it. As a poet, I can hypothesize about its phenomenology and imagine the different forms its attentiveness might take. Through informed, imaginative projection, I can try to represent the quality of light the creatures around it reflect or its physiological reaction to the sight of a predator, yet the phenomenology of the animal will always remain opaque for me. Ultimately there can never be complete transparency between two consciousnesses, animal or otherwise. The introduction of doubt, however, is useful in that it

sets into relief the negative space around the whale; it teaches me about restraint and alterity, and the ethical and temporal import of the imagination. Empirically, we understand animals provisionally, in a series of moments, not necessarily in a continuous present. Sometimes, though, we each experience flashes of insight, moments of mutual understanding, and through the accumulation of these instances and our own imaginative powers, we form connections, queer intimacies.

Lyric poetry facilitates these connections or queer intimacies by shuttling between subjectivities different from our own, enhancing personal and social experience, accenting the borders of our epistemologies, and calling upon the imagination to expose the actual conditions in life that stultify and impoverish us. For John Dewey, the imaginative experience is morally charged and distinguished from automatic actions or stock judgments that occur in life. To subject experience to the intervention of the imagination is to take part in an ethical act, as the imagination exposes actual conditions in life that can be limiting and references novel possibilities for being (Dewey 342). The imaginative projection that undergirds lyric poetry enables us to inhabit bodies other than our own, to transverse the identities that we cling to or reject in life. The poetic imagination, a source of resilience and immanence, is a particularly useful queer resource. Given its plasticity and non-totalizing character, it is poised to give us back novel possibilities for being. I am interested in a lyric poetry that is metaphor-enlarging, that enhances and deepens the mysteries of life, that sensitizes us to sensation itself.

Lack of empathy has always seemed to me to be connected to a failure of the imagination. The denigration or disregard of animals and marginalized beings signals a bankruptcy of imagination. For many, animals are disturbing because of what they reveal about us: they push us to the edge of thought and dramatize the limitations of our own vocabularies for relating to others.

Language does not provide transparency; it can ever only approximate meaning, just as our lexicon for relating to difference is lacking. I am forced, for example, to choose between words like *train* or *domesticate* to discuss how I relate to my cat and to conceptualize how we have come to inhabit the same space, to live together. The better word, the one that suggests intimacy and mutual transformation—*mansuetude*—is a linguistic artifact without the cultural currency that it once had. Often, today's animal representations—whether in biology, poetry, or prose—set into relief the borders of our own understanding and the insufficiencies of language to approach those we deem “other.”

I imagine queer feeling to be based upon a kind of surrender of habitual modes of perception and cognition and an openness to the intervention of the imagination. The queer lyric solicits from reader and writer a different form of sensibility that does not circumscribe or limit sense (in its corporeal and psychic valences) but, rather, makes feeling (with all of its vagaries and contingencies, its weird and non-linear time-patterns, and transformative capacities) a site of activity that disturbs sense so as to return it back to a common vocabulary. Queer lyricism may test received meanings by freeing the senses of their traditionally formalizing roles and opening us up to the consciousness-heightening experience of feeling oneself feel and, in turn, feeling the self's own otherness. With its affectively rooted forms of sense-making, queerness seems closely related to touch. The touch that I invoke is erotic and charged with the capacity to disrupt the coherent subject and to undermine the senses that we refer to as common.

In the lyric, there is an immediate subjective re-positioning; as readers, we participate in meaning-making, we inhabit the position of the speaker, and, by extension, we deconstruct and re-write ourselves. Potentially, lyric poetry invites us to feel oneself as an organism—to feel the tensile and tenuous thread between a so-called common sense and a brand of sense that does not submit to rational or deterministic discourse. In many ways vertiginous and visceral, it dramatizes the incoherence of pre-conceived psychic, rational, and corporeal definitions of sense. And in dislodging sense, a queer lyric may unhinge established meanings. To inhabit a state in which there is the play of contradictory meanings is to be receptive to the paradoxes and volatility immanent within feeling itself.

How else to describe our feelings to our animal companions? Those with whom we work, live, and play. How do we take account of the pleasure we have in our connections with animals, even while we impose an ontological border? How to explain the repulsion and splendor of the sublime animal, like the deep-sea creature blinking its soul through walls of darkness? Or the fear and attraction of that dense thicket where the animals go when a storm or death approaches? It is a queer kind of love.

If difference can be conceived as a basis for relation, if the nonhuman world can be imagined as a site of queer intimacies, and if mystery can be tolerated in the place of human mastery, what kind of community would we (human and animal) enter? What are the risks and rewards of constituting such a community?

In my dreams, I slide into new forms, an elephant body and a pregnant mother that gives birth to a hybrid animal morphology. These beings have found their way into my poems. In dreams, there is little friction in my contact with creatures. I participate in a new style of bonding with others, without the demand for coherence or rationalism or a priori understanding. I am naturally of them, not beyond or above them. The animal that therefore I am emerges as a fluent student in Wonderland logics. Do these dreams describe an animal becoming that is also an atavistic returning? Something consoling and immanently powerful exists in the uncertain time signature of dreams. Lyric time, too, misbehaves. Not merely a discrete moment in time, lyric time may enter the realm of pure metaphor, casting doubt upon the narratives that we formulate in our waking worlds.

I am interested in a poetics that is aware of the peril of writing when writing involves an objectification of the world around us. I am riveted by a poetics that points back to itself (sometimes giddily, sometimes soberly, sometimes guiltily), that embraces irony, equivocation, punning, deliberate artfulness, whimsy, and poetic excess. When we enter into lyric worlds, we are often taking incursions into perilous cognitive and affective zones. This is the price of feeling.

I remember once in elementary school sitting beneath a sputtering fluorescent bulb while the teacher tried to teach us about long subtraction. Everyone could see the windows peripherally when a crow—glossy and magnificent—collided with an un-smudged window. *Bang!* The sound was like a gunshot. I remember the crow's head, cratered inwards and flush with the glass, sliding down the window in slow motion. The teacher screamed. Someone else started to cry. When the class emerged from the school, the crow lay dead on the spring earth, the wind ruffling the feathers of a buckled wing. It was inexplicable, mysterious. We were all affected.

The memory is as perfect in my mind as the day it happened. Since then, I have thought about misprision as something costly and violent and wondrous. Having experienced involuntary hallucinations, I too have learned to trust only halfway my eyes and to be suspicious of claims of transparency. All of us at some point in our lives have come across a far-flung something in the distance that could be anything: a being or an object, a boundary or the weather.

I am enthralled by the idea of a poetics that situates itself in this space of indeterminacy, that understands meaning not as something handed over, but something to discover at a time we cannot know beforehand. I associate visual acuity in poetry with not merely precision, but a meta-awareness of the body and the fragility of our own formalizing or regulatory faculties. Writing that underlines the imaginary, constructed character of the poem's reality can become apertures into the text's guiding authorial presence.

Modernism gave birth to a lyric intensity occasioned by the stripped-down mechanics of representation, rather than the representation itself. I think of Elizabeth Bishop's self-monitoring speakers who employ and discard similes, Djuna Barnes's bestiary *Creatures in an Alphabet* that accents the linguistic constructedness of animal representation, and Marianne Moore's animal ars poetica poems. These lyrics can offer a route out of imperializing notions of normative or so-called coherent meaning that are often declaimed as such at the expense of the so-called other's mode of experiencing and interpreting the world. Animals experience the queerest of worlds, one with such impermeable boundaries: windows and superhighways and strong fences. And because I cannot wait for the world to set itself right, I write toward a poetics of the animal.

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Book review

BLITZKRIEG BY JOHN GOSSLEE
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Blitzkrieg by John Gosslee, published last year by Rain Mountain Press, is an innovative collection of poetry, prose, criticism, and illustration that captures a beautiful proliferation of text into the greater world. This collection is inspired by the intriguing life that Gosslee's own poem "Portrait of an Inner Life" took on post-publication. By documenting the enjoyable, thought-provoking journey of his own work, *Blitzkrieg*, in about fifty pages, demonstrates a multitudinous life with which a text can be blessed and artfully captures both the tribulations and celebrations that a text put forth into the world encounters.

This art, however, is not immediately discernable by or explained to the reader, so the reader may be confused pacing through the opening pages. *Blitzkrieg's* introductory section, a collection of fourteen poignant scenic poems, may at first appear to struggle for cohesion as Gosslee drops in and out of these moment-of-life poems. The poems, each no longer than fifteen lines, offer a blitzkrieg in and of themselves in brief and impactful resonations. Disorientation becomes method here.

The emphasis of the collection is on place and consists of a series of poems that create a scene in just a handful of lines. While some poems, such as "Manhattan in the Fall," are tethered to specific places, other poems, such as "A Water Can Sprays a Flowered City" or "2nd Avenue," remain geographically ambiguous, perhaps to retain a sense of movement without the rigidity of a road map or itinerary looming in the reader's mind. The lines of the poems offer lovely, albeit brief, moments in these places. "I Stop like an Axe Flung into a Tree," "In the Presence of a Shadow," "Lorelei" and "Silent" are particularly noteworthy poems of the collection, each masterfully creating a physical scene by invoking the emotive force of the speaker.

The second section of the book, "Migration of Portrait of an Inner Life," is where the art of *Blitzkrieg* comes to fruition. In its sixteen-page essay, Gosslee gives the reader the comprehensive biography of his poem "Portrait of an Inner Life." The reader travels with the single poem from first draft through edits, publishing battles, and criticisms. The reader glimpses the burgeoning life of the poem itself. Having eventually found great success with the poem, Gosslee goes on to document his subsequent just-short-of-legal projects with his poem—"it is art," Gosslee claims, "which makes it right"—in order to put poetry out into the world. This endeavor includes chucking numerous bottles containing the poem into numerous bodies of water and also a sticker campaign. At least two thousand of these stickers have found themselves on bathroom walls, office drawers, and other places.

The question of cohesion in the first section is thus answered, the diaspora of "Portrait of an Inner Life" linking wonderfully to the brief scenic poems. One wants to instantly go back and reread the earlier poems, wondering if a sticker or bottle could be outside (or inside, just unmentioned) the speaker's scope. Gosslee cannot possibly fathom all the niches into which his poem may have found its way, so the preceding identified and unidentified place-poems create a wonderful effect for the reader, as one is left to ponder all the places a text can reach.

Blitzkrieg ends with a section titled "Ephemera," a documentation of the various art forms into which the poem is reborn, including some photos of Gosslee's own poem-in-a-bottle and sticker endeavors, along with a number of illustrations inspired by his work. In black and white and shrunken down to page size, surely the works of Yumi Sakugawa and Scott

Kirschner are not given full justice, though it is enjoyable all the same to see various visual interpretations of Gosslee's own text.

Though admittedly thrown at first by such a thin volume offering poetry, prose, criticism, and illustrations, I concede this collage approach serves the project set out by *Blitzkrieg* in a rewarding, fascinating way. How better to document a poem taking on a multimedia life of its own outside the page than in a multi-text approach? Readers and particularly writers can appreciate the artful way *Blitzkrieg* demonstrates a text springing off of the page and into the world and how we might, as poets, continue to challenge and use materiality.

CONTRIBUTORS

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José Felipe Alvergue's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Apogee*, *Black Clock*, *Nocturnes*, *Kadar Koli*, and *P-QUEUE*. His chapbook *us look up/ there red dwells* was published by Queue Books, and his book *gist : rift : drift : bloom* is forthcoming with Further Other Book Works.

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Carol Frith, co-editor of the poetry journal *Ekphrasis*, has chapbooks from Bacchae Press, Medicinal Purposes, Palanquin Press, Finishing Line, Rattlesnake, and Gribble Press, with a full-length collection from David Robert Books. Her poems have appeared in *Seattle Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *POEM*, *Rattle*, *RHINO*, *Measure*, and others.

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Sarah Giragosian is a visiting lecturer at Bridgewater State University. Her research focuses on the post-humanist and queer stakes of North American modernist poetry. Recently, her refereed article "Repetition and the Honest Signal in Elizabeth Bishop's Poetics" appeared in the *Association for Evolutionary Biology and Ethical Behavior in Literature Journal*.

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