

# T A B

THE JOURNAL OF  
POETRY & POETICS

VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 6 • NOVEMBER

*Amy Ash and Callista Buchen, p. 6–8*

GRAFT AND ANSWER

*Timothy Kercher, p. 9–11*

ARS POETICA

AS I STROLLED THROUGH  
GAGARIN SQUARE

*Kelly Morse, p. 12–14*

GRACKLE

BICYCLING BY ST. MARY OF THE  
ASSUMPTION CHURCH, 11 PM,  
BOSTON, MARCH 31ST

*Phoebe Reeves, p. 15–18*

LIGHT ARIA

*Sarah Ann Winn, p. 19–21*

PICARD ADDRESSES THE REPLICATOR  
BLUEBEARD'S GARDEN

*Jack Giaour, p. 22–24*

BOOK REVIEW: *MIRROR INSIDE COFFIN*  
BY MAUREEN ALSOP



© TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics. Volume 4. Issue 6. November 2016.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without prior written permission from TAB. Rights to individual submissions remain the property of their authors.

Department of English  
Chapman University  
One University Drive  
Orange, CA 92866  
[www.chapman.edu/poetry](http://www.chapman.edu/poetry)

ISSN: 2169-3013

THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY





*Editor in Chief:* Anna Leahy

*Creative Director:* Claudine Jaenichen

*Graduate Assistant:* Mike Gravagno

*Criticism Editor:* Brian Glaser

*Translation Editor:* Alicia Kozameh

*Readers and Book Reviewers:* Nick Dante, Jack Giaour, David Krausman, Robert Matt Taylor

*TAB Internal Advisory Board:* Joanna Levin, Chair of English; Mary Litch, Director of Academic Technology; Laura Silva, Wilkinson College; John Benitz, Theatre; John Boitano, Languages; Douglas Dechow, Leatherby Libraries; Rei Magosaki, English; Kevin O'Brien, English

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, Wilkinson Account Manager in Strategic Marketing, 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 2016 print issue explores the representation of energy. Energy is best conveyed by experience, in context, generating an emotional effect. Yet, we *learn* energy in 2-dimensional static visual representations like weather system reports, combinations of molecules, and diagrams like the ones used to explain the energy forces of how the Twin Towers collapsed during 9/11. This issue contains four energy panels (movement, connection, destruction, sustaining) dedicated to the exploration and relationship among diagrammatic representations, the expression of energy, and poetry. Diagrams interact with text and visual compositions that occupy the space and create new visual representations of energy. The contrast and radiance of the back panels is a complete manipulation of diagrammatic language, returning movement, and chaos that leaves an emotional imprint to the experience of the viewer. Perforated panels empower the reader to redirect energies, recreate sequence and narrative.

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.



**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

Or become a member with a charitable contribution:

[https://secure.touchnet.com/C20539\\_ustores/web/store\\_cat.jsp?STOREID=1&CATID=130](https://secure.touchnet.com/C20539_ustores/web/store_cat.jsp?STOREID=1&CATID=130)

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



## A M Y    A S H

Amy Ash is the author of the poetry collection *The Open Mouth of the Vase*. She is an assistant professor at Indiana State University. Her collaborative poetry with Callista Buchen has appeared in *Heron Tree*, *Spiral Orb*, *Stone Highway Review*, and *BOOAT*.

## C A L L I S T A    B U C H E N

Callista Buchen is the author of the chapbooks *The Bloody Planet* from Black Lawrence Press and *Double-Mouthed* forthcoming from dancing girl press. With Amy Ash, she has led collaborative writing workshops and presented on collaboration at various conferences, including the Steel Pen Writers' Conference and Winter Wheat. She is an assistant professor at Franklin College.



## GRAFT AND ANSWER

### *Collaboration as Conversation*

We finish each other's sentences, but not to say what the other meant. To collaborate, I choose to welcome another voice, inviting it to interrupt, to finish, to reframe, to change, and I talk back. We are a chorus. We are collage. The sound, the movement, the suggestion shapes meaning. This creates space for possibility. I choose to let go of my language, let it breathe in someone else's lungs, to return to me altered, transmuted, transformed. Respond, resound, reverberate. The individual recedes, and the poem becomes. Composition becomes an act of listening: on the page, we are saying. We have said. The poem is turn-taking, the poem is lip-reading, and we are the same plane, we balance and tilt. We are equal. We call and call, we response and response. We are without leader. We huddle close to quiet. We hear. We choose to leave the sentence unfinished, to let it wait, flapping, without body. We trust the voice that returns, that changes and challenges, and the breath that builds.

### *Collaboration as Play*

Without control, we are released into lightness, into shared responsibility, greater risks. Why not, we say. Let's try, we say. Without agenda, we can succumb, we can wander. Without atlas, we celebrate being lost, being found, lifted off the lines of the road, the words we create.

To partner is to discover new space. To throw off individual gravity, wade through the air between poles. To hide, to find, to change course, to turn in circles if only because we like to feel the breeze we make ourselves. We travel, we weave.

We refuse to consult the rulebook, but do not question the move. The die cupped in our palms, we bring it up to our mouths, whisper to it. We let go. Game cards crushed in our palms like petals, we create new combinations, new arrangements, new patterns. This one, the sharp edge of ankle bone. This one waxy pink like the underside of a tongue. What might they reveal?

I am laughing, you are laughing, and the tears are all mixed up.

### *Collaboration as Community*

Fingers and bodies entwine, like the lilac bushes and oak saplings in our backyards



growing inside each other. A puzzle: which branch goes with which body? We are how many hands, how many blooms. We don't ask what makes the part, what makes the whole. An orchard is a regna. The exquisite corpse becomes corpse, yields new growth, seedlings and shoots. Across farm and forest, across mountain, across water, across prairie and plain. Across time, across distance, across language. We village into being. We forest ourselves. We graft. We bramble and cluster. We grow.

### *Collaboration as Cure*

For falter, the way stumbling looks like dancing. What we stumble upon. Another nudges another along, the way we walk better holding hands. There is a dark room in a dark house and single chair, but a door, but a window. *Open* comes from *together*. We can crawl forward. We can outwit the light. Even in falling, there is forward progression. This staircase welcomes us. Jump, it says. And we believe we will fly.

We subvert fear, loneliness, the promise of isolation. This room. Someone feels along the walls for where the corners meet. Someone breaks the glass. Someone finds another window. Someone stops to mend curtains, as if suturing a wound. Someone reads the scar that speaks. A language that is not mine, not yours, but ours. And we answer it.

### *Collaboration as Discovery*

A mound of clay takes shape, under hands that mold and move, press and pause. Something unexpected and extant merges from this form. Wrist deep in damp dirt, we are pulling, pulling. What we remove and discard, what we bury. What we will find there, later, after the rain.

We return to the house, the front door curled like a tongue. Even in the stillness, we feel its warm breath. When I ask you what this means, you answer: what this means, what this means. You are pointing. We have no map, no plans crayoned to track what was before, to look for old clues hidden by steam and growth. We could be unraveling string, building a grid. Someone finds a bucket of tools. You hand me a shovel. I toss you a rake. Here, you call. Here, I call back. Here, here, here. We could be buried. We could be burying.

What is here, what we make, we will find.



An abstract graphic on the left side of the page. It features a black background with a pattern of red dots. The dots are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some dots appearing larger and more prominent than others. The pattern is dense and covers the entire left half of the page.

## TIMOTHY KERCHER

Timothy Kercher lived abroad for four years in the country of Georgia and for two years in Ukraine and has now moved back to his home in Dolores, Colorado, where he continues to translate contemporary poetry from the Republic of Georgia. He is a high school English teacher and has worked in five countries, including Mongolia, Mexico, and Bosnia. His essays, poems, and translations have appeared widely in literary publications.



#### ARS POETICA

If a man is cruel enough, he will ask you to define this. On some days, you might say that it is simply the skull of a giant, is the clouds in a skull-contained sky. On others, you would say it involves an unnamable beast and a propensity for the hunt. But these nights on your chair when a line seems to have no end, when the full stop of space is hidden in the dark, where a poem emerges only like raccoon from a sewer. You guess that the raccoon could be you. Or the raccoon could be what's been living inside you. All you know is that it needs to get out.



**AS I STROLLED THROUGH GAGARIN SQUARE**

I saw a man walking a bear cub on a leash.  
Initially, I felt a mix of wonder and disgust  
at the utter absurdity of the scene—  
a bear on a sidewalk awash in headlights and darkness,  
lumbering among the people and vehicles  
heading home for the night—  
but then it dawned on me  
that in my notebook I am doing the same—  
my pen, the leash  
leading  
the cub,  
the walrus,  
the white-dwarf star.





## K E L L Y   M O R S E

Kelly Morse is the author of the chapbook *Heavy Light* from Two of Cups Press. Her work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Mid-American Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Journal*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of residencies at Vermont Studio Center and the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts.



GRACKLE

running though the rage the running  
the long hot field  
sparrow's eye pierced like a cherry to its stone

used to pretend I could outrun wolves  
playground's grassy edge frayed at the fence  
skirt a clapping flag as I ran and ran

body bracketed now by age and injury  
the field congeals beneath  
thighs knock orbits and not fast enough

I always wanted to feel their scratchy feet  
but was afraid of the beaks  
snipping through a blanket of seed

sparrow with its packet of life  
spilled in my hands  
I look for stones

body was a pole to push my raft downriver  
every pistil holds a stone  
in the arms of the roots that raised it

stones to kill the grackle  
cars pass by on the old highway  
but there is only grass



**BICYCLING BY ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH, 11 PM, BOSTON, MARCH 31ST**

The sky licks itself out  
and down over the city

a fine mica paste; night refracts  
with cold. Licks and seals

itself, like an envelope  
flap, a mouth that closes

round a communion wafer,  
holds shut the white

fibers that spackle the tongue  
and wake in darkness.



## P H O E B E   R E E V E S

Phoebe Reeves's chapbook *The Lobes and Petals of the Inanimate* was published by Pecan Grove Press. Her poems have recently appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Phoebe*, and *Memorious*. She earned her MFA at Sarah Lawrence College and now teaches English at the University of Cincinnati's Clermont College in rural southern Ohio, where she advises *East Fork: An Online Journal of the Arts*.



LIGHT ARIA

*for Neil DeGrasse Tyson*

What is light? A measure of time passing or measured  
by time's passing?  
The aperture allows the light to enter single file,  
but what does it bring?  
Image, record, imprint—the light's  
memory of what it has touched: your hand, the peony's wilting petals  
scattered over garden ground.  
Each color comes  
like a flavor on the tongue,  
and layers over the one before.

What is light? The plight of stars  
long dead  
still singing,  
the upper limit of distance,  
the event horizon beyond which any  
and all possibilities  
are in motion. The original motion,  
the neutrino in its speed,  
the big bang unfolding like water on a dry sponge.  
I see the white pine in my neighbor's front yard  
wave its green limbs in the wind.  
Green: color, light.  
Wind: no color, no light.  
And the motion they make  
is dancing.

What is light? I wake  
in the dark of predawn,  
the east just barely coral, the moon  
waxing in the west, and I know  
when I see the sun crest the rise  
it will not



yet be risen, but refracted  
in a graceful curve  
ahead of itself—not risen because we  
are what moves,  
what spins and circles  
around the sun's bright fusion.

What is light?  
Its own departure,  
time saying to matter: I come  
and I go.  
The felt loss of breath  
going out  
and never coming back.  
It is unbearable. It illuminates. It blinds.  
We evolved to turn our heads to it—sun, wildfire,  
Sirius, the tiny reflection of a cat's  
silver-backed retinas flashing in the dark.

What is light, that it can move like beads of water  
down a string, and also  
like ripples across a still pond,  
both/and,  
like a puzzle picture in a child's book—is it an old lady, or a princess?  
Two faces or a candle stick?  
Yes, yes, it is those things,  
and the space behind them.

What is light? Even a blind face turns up to feel  
the sun when it emerges after winter's darkness.  
It is coming, to touch every cell  
of our architecture  
and to memorize the texture of our hearts.



When it comes,  
it will flatten mountains and dry up oceans,  
but it will leave  
the fruit on the tree, the blossom on the rose.

What is light?

It is what makes matter, dumb earth,  
rise up and speak  
its first word, stammering in crocuses  
and bloodroot,  
later, daffodils, lilacs,  
all the other hues and shades of the universe  
watching itself in light's mirror.



The background features a large, solid red shape on the left side, which is partially obscured by a black and white dotted pattern. The right side of the image is solid black, with a white dotted pattern at the bottom. The text is positioned on the black background.

## S A R A H   A N N   W I N N

Sarah Ann Winn's writing has appeared in *Five Points*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *Passages North*, among others. Her chapbooks include *Field Guide to Alma Avenue and Frew Drive* from Essay Press; *Haunting the Last House on Holland Island*, *Fallen into the Bay* from Porkbelly Press; and *Portage* from Sundress Publications. Visit her at <http://bluebirdwords.com> or follow her @blueaisling.



**PICARD ADDRESSES THE REPLICATOR**

Synthesize harmony  
found in bone  
carved flute of planet  
I only dreamed

in capsule accuracy, anxious  
to return to my ship,  
trapped, instead, in acoustic  
sounds only slightly  
off, like a cup of Earl Grey

being stirred by some one  
who has never  
tasted it, sipped by a species  
we've not yet met.



#### BLUEBEARD'S GARDEN

*Whose job was it to warn you? Who told you not to go  
in the gardening shed? Who stroked your head with a fist  
full of grit, then opened his gnarled hand, grimy fingernails*

*in your periphery. You thought you might crack open,  
and then—what tips of green could finally come through?*  
From the road, long rows wave verdant shades in uniform,

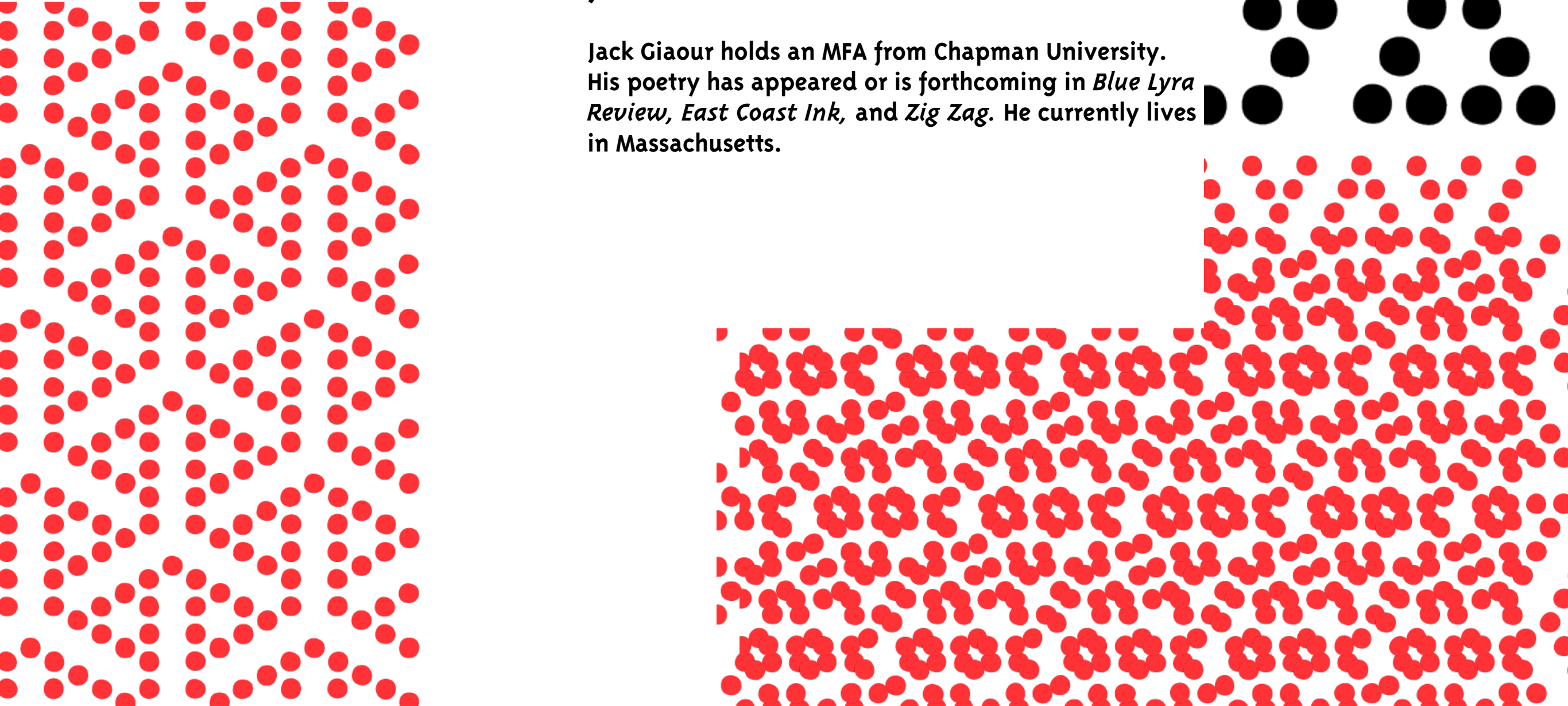
but all the plump cheeks dangling from a row of vines look like your sister's.  
You never heard of rhizomes, hope she got away before planting season.  
Dinner time is coming, when every monster sits down to feast.





J A C K   G I A O U R

Jack Giaour holds an MFA from Chapman University.  
His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Blue Lyra  
Review*, *East Coast Ink*, and *Zig Zag*. He currently lives  
in Massachusetts.





**MIRROR INSIDE COFFIN BY MAUREEN ALSOP  
PUBLISHED BY CHERRY GROVE COLLECTIONS, 2015**

Maureen Alsop's *Mirror Inside Coffin* is a winter thicket of emotion, at once deadly and beautiful, lyric and experimental, icy cold and burning with passion. This is a collection that creates its own emotional landscape, encouraging the reader to open all senses to the experience of language.

The first of the book's three sections is titled "Mere One." From the very first poem in the collection, "Approbation," Alsop demonstrates her ability to create metaphor on multiple levels, engaging the reader's emotions with every available poetic resource. The poems in this section rely mostly on natural imagery, but of a kind that is tense, fresh, and sometimes shockingly poignant. This section introduces motifs that recur throughout the collection, including motifs of light, divination, and birds.

"A Blurred Photograph of the Sunlight that Murdered your Father's Happiness, or How Light Takes Leave of the Body," the second poem in the collection, is full of these delightfully thorny images. It begins, "How odd the assembled horses seemed in the distance, standing / under the sparkle ball, crisp / in nutmeg silhouette." While images like "sparkle ball" and "nutmeg silhouette" are powerful, even more conventional images like "assembled horses" have a gorgeous and deliberate sonic quality that en-gages the ear as well as the imaginative eye. This poem begins with sharp, specific images, but it ends in a dreamscape—"His voice streams in the boundaries / of waking which cannot be dreamed"—that calls attention not only to voice and language, but to the multiple worlds a human being exists in at any one time (real, emotional, imagined, dreamed, etc.).

The second section of the book, titled "Wherein Shall Dwell," does not change from the first in style so much as in tone. Alsop is a masterfully subtle poet, and, without changing style or voice, she links the poems of this section by the darkness of their tone. The section begins with the poem "Dominion" and its first line, "The wild governments of death did not crowd us," and the emotional stakes do not lessen from there. The next poem, "Augury Miscellany," is also about death, but it nods as well to the theme of divination from the first section, which remains a constant throughout the collection. The poem begins "The long winter sun chokes / the throat of a pigeon/that stoops in the monastery courtyard." There are only natural players here, sun and pigeon, with the human world (the monastery) a backdrop. Throughout the poem, birds are associated with tragedy and death, acting out the internal emotional drama of human beings who are nameless, referred to as "she." The next poem, titled "Turifumy," is named for a kind of divination based on reading the future in plumes of smoke and begins, "She wanders long lanes of night oak, looks up from the portrait, west, / into the lowering lids of buttercup." Time becomes the landscape here, and the "she" character, who may be the same woman throughout or an entirely new character, is wandering through it, attempting to make meaning of time as it affects the emotions in the same way that divination (of any kind) is intended to do. However, this attempt is a dangerous one, and, though the poem begins with the natural world as a place of freedom, it ends with nature as an agent of corruption, with the lines "Millipedes nested in the chest's cave among hawk / swollen circles of flame."



“Enter Over the Hundred Skies” unfolds from the hazy wilderness of “Turifumy” into the tamer natural setting of a garden. The location (and the contrast) is immediately established: “Her eyes, drowning *yeses*, bells / idled in a cemented garden.” The garden is “cemented,” whereas the previous poem brought the reader down “long lanes.” This “she” is drowning, while the previous “she” was free to wander. This “she” wrestles with another of the collection’s motifs—loneliness—and concludes with “Places gone to us unless we go alone.”

The final section, “Sun Sheaves,” brings the reader and the speaker out of the metaphorical darkness of the previous section, ending the collection with a cluster of poems focused on light, something that was sought throughout the collection and is finally found at the end. This section also does the most work to blur the natural and the man-made, making prairies out of hospital rooms, tracking the flight of birds through the kitchen, and finding stars in the headlights.

This collection divulges a deep understanding of the non-linear nature of human emotion. Maureen Alsop explores that wilderness with delicate and deliberate use of poetic language, expert use of line (especially the long line), and imagery rooted in all five of the senses. This is poetry for readers who have no borders on their souls, who are willing to open their minds, like flowers in the morning, to life and death, beauty and tragedy, sheaves of sun and long lanes of night oak.