

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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## **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 Journal* continue to experiment and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

This year's print issue is driven by inclusive design and low-vision principles. We aim to produce an equitable and engaging experience with diverse sight abilities. In 1840, William Moon developed an embossed reading system for the blind that was less complex than learning Braille. It was centered in Britain and later shared by missionaries in India, China, Egypt, Australia, and West Africa. The Moon system was particularly useful for people who had lost their sight later in life because the Roman alphabet had already been deeply rooted in their cognitive recognition and recall and, therefore, proved easier to learn than the abstract system of Braille. Moon's system could be taught and learned in only a few days. It now appears in *Tab Journal's* 2020 print issue.

Both the color blocking of the print issue and of the the title pages of the online issues echo the approach that Oliver Byrne applied to *The Elements of Euclid* in

1847. Byrne translated all seven books of the *Elements* into a visually dominating presentation of diagrams and color to help categorize and highlight information. Byrne published mathematical and engineering works in the more text-based tradition, but with *The Elements of Euclid*, he made it clear by his subtitle, "...in which coloured diagrams and symbols are used instead of letters for the greater ease of learners," that he intended the publication to be more accessible.

Electronic issues are published on [www.tabjournal.org](http://www.tabjournal.org) and follow the theme of the annual print issue. Using these differing formats—print and online—allows experimentation with design and materiality in a time when print and electronic dissemination coexist. *Tab Journal* does not force either format to adapt to the other. The reading experience in virtual spaces is different than that of a printed journal. While the electronic files can be printed, electronic issues are formatted for reading on the screen and for assistive technology. Decisions about page size, typography, and composition are driven by the online reading experience, accessibility, and low-vision standards. *Tab Journal* also makes use of the audio possibilities of digital distribution.

To order copies of the current or previous print issues, 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, California 92866. *Tab Journal* is available at the AWP Conference and Bookfair each year.

## Nathaniel Dolton-Thornton

Nathaniel Dolton-Thornton's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Tin House*, *Prelude*, *Sycamore Review*, *The*

*Account*, *Raritan*, and other publications. He studies at the University of Oxford, where he is a Marshall Scholar.

## Hacienda Fire

scraps of paper or metal  
stick like satellite antennae  
out of the ground

workers stop, point to  
their hands transistors  
trying to hear

the water pipe  
stays silent  
but eucalyptus shadows

like wasp nests rise  
to a hum, then drone  
drowning out the signal

## **Cinder**

did you see how the lightning overleapt its sparks?  
how it cleared the whole desert for a stage to act on?

barehanded, it broke the microphones  
from their boxes in the clouds' attic

it doesn't need them  
its voice, a small planet  
exerts its own gravitational pull

we, the supporting cast, can't keep up  
we don't know the lines  
and its shouts drown out our voices

we're patient actors, we say  
we'll wait until next year

but the show's one night only  
in the final act it brings down the house  
and scatters it over the sand



## Vandana Khanna

Vandana Khanna is the author of two collections of poetry, *Train to Agra* and *Afternoon Masala*, and the chapbook *The Goddess Monologues*. Her work has won the *Crab Orchard Review* First

Book Prize, The Miller Williams Poetry Prize, and the Diode Editions Chapbook Competition. She is a poetry editor at the *Los Angeles Review*. See more at [www.vankhanna.com](http://www.vankhanna.com).

## Nocturne

The suitors keep me up at night—  
my melancholy spread like a feast,  
each bone picked clean, and me  
practicing their names like poisoned  
flowers I was taught to stay away from—  
sweet in the ear and bitter in the mouth.

When in doubt, pick the one with a mind  
as thick as planks, who offers you a blue  
lotus as crude blessing and warns, *don't  
try this at home*. Forget the captain  
with the cruel eyes and chapped lips  
or the flunkey with bad luck strapped  
to his belt.

But the one with the poor sight dulled  
by staring at some far-off horizon  
for too many years—the one with  
ordinary ambition—will let you get away  
with anything. Will let you slip  
from his bed unnoticed, bare feet

and unbound hair, and wander the night  
that's grown ugly with neglect.

## Nancy Kuhl

Nancy Kuhl's recent books include *Pine to Sound* from Shearsman Books and *The Birds of the Year* from Grenfell Press. She is Curator of Poetry for the

Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. See more at [www.phylumpress.com/kuhl](http://www.phylumpress.com/kuhl).

## **Landline**

Season of howl and  
hiss, season of

my stubborn falter.  
I attend midnight

piners keening, alive  
with some haunting,

with eyes, with wings.  
I circle back. Daily

I wake almost  
without having slept;

daily you call, you  
invent listening again.

## January Pearson

January Pearson's work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Notre Dame Review*, *Rust + Moth*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rayleigh Review*, *Borderlands*,

*Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *The Cape Rock Review*, and other places.

## St Joseph's Hospital X-Ray Results

My father's hip bone is luminous  
on the shadowy film,  
edges blurred around the femur  
where fine white lines bloom  
into a grey clearing, even  
the round bone in the socket  
shattered to fragments,

          shards of     opal pebbles  
flecks of     white sea glass  
          broken       sand dollars  
                  chipped           porcelain teacup  
elephant   tusk   slivers  
          icicles   flaked     and crushed  
                  threads of bright     dust     trailing a     comet

## Lois Roma-Deeley

Lois Roma-Deeley's fourth poetry collection, *The Short List of Certainties*, won the Jacopone da Todi Book Prize. Her previous collections are *Rules of Hunger*, *northSight*, and *High Notes*, and

her poems are featured in anthologies and journals. Roma-Deeley is the Associate Editor of the international poetry journal *Presence*. See more at [www.loisroma-deeley.com](http://www.loisroma-deeley.com).



## Like a Stranger at Your Door

I'm across town now.

My nightgown's torn. The bottom hem  
catches on the bindweed which pushes up  
and through the crushed gravel beneath this window  
of a small room on the first floor of Mercy Hospital.  
My hands frame my eyes as I press them against the cold glass.  
Is this what they mean by *lucid dreaming*?

You're lying in bed  
like a caterpillar caught in its own silk.  
Nurses come and go  
talking of yesterday's television show.  
You recognize no one

not even your own daughter  
who leans over and whispers *hello*.  
Faces without names turn over in your mind  
like rocks carried by a fast moving river,  
the force of nature  
wearing edges smooth and round.  
The years unwind. It must be someone's fault.

The nurse tells your daughter it's time to leave.  
You turn your face to the wall.

Tomorrow, your first born will drive to work, step into the parking lot.  
Her high heel will disappear into the newly laid asphalt  
and it will be then that she'll remember the lesson of dark matter—  
how a dying star leaves behind a black hole,  
an invisible wound in the heart of deep space,  
the place from which light can never escape.

## Cecilia Woloch

Cecilia Woloch has published six collections of poems and a novel. She is an NEA Fellow, a Fulbright Scholar, and the recipient of a Pushcart Prize. Her work has been published in translation

in French, German, Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian. She travels the world as a teacher and writer. See more at [www.ceciliawoloch.squarespace.com](http://www.ceciliawoloch.squarespace.com).

## Lament

Pearl, did you mean to leave us like this—  
motherless, strung-out, poor, depressed,  
the littlest crooked-toothed, playing with sticks,  
the rest of us drinking or sobbing or both  
or boarding up windows, changing the locks  
or falling down, broken, right there in the road,  
slapped and kicked, fighting back, giving up,  
throwing our money away on the law?  
Pearl, you were the only law we had—  
*Don't be afraid to eat. Go to bed.*  
*Clean up the mess you made. Don't fall apart.*  
—singing and sweeping and, Pearl, as you died  
we made a circle around you and sang  
the same songs you'd sung to us, giving you back  
to the light in your body from which we'd come,  
who don't know how to live, now you're gone, what to love.

## Tryphena Yeboah

Tryphena Yeboah earned a BA in Journalism and an MA in Communication Studies from the Ghana Institute of Journalism. She is currently a Fellow in

Chapman University's MFA in Creative Writing program. Her fiction appears in *Narrative* magazine, and she blogs at [tryphenayeboah.wordpress.com](http://tryphenayeboah.wordpress.com).

## Book review

*The Carrying* by Ada Limón  
Milkweed Editions, 2018

The miraculous human capacity to carry the weight of life and all it has to offer echoes deeply in Ada Limón's fifth book of poems *The Carrying*, published by Milkweed Editions four years after her acclaimed collection *Bright Dead Things*, which examines the chaotic journey of life and one's pursuit of finding a disorderly beauty through the wreckage. One can imagine her questioning the world around her, with no exception to the most personal, revealing, and even painful details. The front flap of *The Carrying* holds within itself a deep welcome, for both the writer and reader, towards stepping into a reality that is not only well known but also pulls us back in remembrance of what we have, what we've lost, and what we can build from scratch, even while knowing that it may not survive. With an unflinching vulnerability, Limón comes to terms with issues of fertility, death, and the afflictions of one's existence, while still portraying a heightened sense of gratitude. It is largely a crafted series of poems that walks in the line of fear while still holding the readers' hands, urging them towards life in the middle of a world falling apart.

As a writer, Limón carves in her work a place for questions more than answers, channeling the narrative to explore further possibilities and more complex realities than one is often used to. Limón demonstrates the different forms of wrestling with the body, moments of harrowing loss and almost, in full detail, lays it side by side

with the elegant pleasures of nature. The collection is divided in three parts, the first carefully represents a slow journeying into life, from the origin of life through to growth and a general devotion to protect and preserve one's life regardless of the terrible things happening in the world. In its second part, attention is given to themes of love, loss, and the desperate desire to revive what is dead in "the world of pain that circles in us." As the work progresses into its last section, Limón digs deep to reveal the tension within the struggles of infertility, the invisible nature of pain, and how she masters, rather gracefully, living with it, sitting in the same room with the agony and not being overcome by it.

Limón adopts an almost complete reliance on nature, drawing life and building scenes on plants, birds, horses, and dogs, among others. This culminates into the imagery of nature and mankind as more alike in the weights they bear and in other ways and seems a gateway where the writer processes her grief through capturing and witnessing elements of nature in its grieving. In "American Pharaoh," the speaker pours out her weariness, perhaps from the chaos of her life, and says, "*Remember when I used to think everything / was getting better and better? Now I think / it's just getting worse and worse.*" By leaning largely on a dominant theme of seeking beauty, she observes a horse racing by himself and suddenly has a change of mind—"I take it all back"—thus, finding solace in the seemingly ordinary aspect of nature.

In a time of misguided strength, when we are praised for hiding the true measure of the crosses we bear, Limón progresses by evoking in the reader a rare courage to admit that yes, of course there's pain, but so is there healing, if we look for it.

She carries in the collection an experience which is most truthful to her and raises an empty wine glass to herself—a toast to the emptiness and to times of fullness. In her own words during an interview in 2018, “I am overwhelmed by gratitude, even in the dark moments.” At the core of Ada Limón’s work is an unfenced vulnerability that dares us to see for ourselves the tangible and intangible burdens we carry with and inside of us, the need to grow tender hands in touching our thorns, and the gracefulness in remembering to smell the roses while we can.