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Design Statement
The annual, distinctive print issue of *Tab: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics* engages the reader with poetry as a material object and asks the reader to negotiate between image and text. The design does not assume a traditional role of unobtrusively framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience and experiments with the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

The 2024 print issue plays with concepts of collaboration. For the first time in *Tab Journal*’s twelve years, the Creative Director has paired with another designer, Jessica Oddi, to create the visual language of this print issue. The bold visual backgrounds demonstrate a painterly process of two artists in the same space mark-making on one canvas together.

These visual elements become front and back partners of each poster–sheet–page. The conversations between this design and the poems themselves (text and voice) amplify the definition that this printed issue is at once a singular object and two interdependent parts, like a door hinge or a pair of pliers. One component cannot operate without the other. Pairs are categorized as twos or duos of parts, people, or ideas, but pairing carries the complexity of layers. The pairing of wine and cheese embodies two objects with their own distinct processes, standards for
quality, time for aging, textures, and experience of taste. In medicine, *theragnostic* refers to the pairing of diagnostic biomarkers with therapeutic agents to provide treatment matched to an individual. In a kinematic pair, each of two physical objects imposes constraints on the movement of the other. Pairing risks the mismatch, invites the unintended connection, and suggests what is left out by quantitative limits. The goal for this issue is partnership, conversation, celebration of the depth and complications of useful pairings.

To request one or more copies of the print issue, please use the Contact form on the *Tab Journal* website [TabJournal.org](http://TabJournal.org).
**Chen Du** (she/her) is a voting member of the American Translators Association and an expert member of the Translators Association of China with a Master’s Degree in Biophysics from Roswell Park Cancer Institute, SUNY–Buffalo and another from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

A prominent poet in contemporary China, **Yan An** (he/him) is the author of fourteen poetry books, including *Rock Arrangement. A Naturalist's Manor*, translated by Chen Du and Xisheng Chen and published by Chax Press, was shortlisted for the 2022 Lucien Stryk Asian Translation Prize, administered by the American Literary Translators Association.

**Xisheng Chen** (he/him), a Chinese American, is an ESL grammarian, lexicologist, linguist, translator, and educator. He has taught at the departments of English and Social Sciences of Trine University (formerly Tri-State University). He has been a translator for over three decades.
Situations of a Bird and Two People
translated by Chen Du and Xisheng Chen

To the north of the North    spacious and remote
Passing through legends about rare birds exterminated by hunters
A crow is blown thither by a gale in a skew-askew manner
From the endless blank of the celestial dome

Abandoned to the bowels of the earth like a speck of seed
I have matured gradually
And acquired some kind of countenance as of a beast
Which I wish could abruptly hearten
A dejected tree from its dispiritedness
And could continuously divulge heaven’s secrets
To some extent

Propelled by a gale        a child astray in the city
Remains reticent          like a kind of long extinct animal
Loves to walk alone in the shadows
Or clamber up the telegraph edifice in the city hall square
Under the cover of a dead night with everything quiet
To shout and yell for a while
And then return to his sound slumber on a subway passage
Like an unkempt elf
一只鸟和两个人的境况  by Yan An

北方之北 空旷辽远
越过传说 名贵之鸟被猎人们斩尽杀绝
从风中歪歪斜斜吹来的一只乌鸦
来自天空无限的空白

被遗弃在大地深处 像一颗种子
当我渐渐成熟起来
拥有了某种类似野兽的表情
我愿那是可以让一棵颓败的树
在颓败中突然振作起来
和某种程度上
可以继续泄露天机的表情

被风推动着 一个误入城中的孩子
他持续沉默着 像某种绝迹已久的动物
喜欢一个人在阴影里行走
也喜欢乘着夜深人静 独自一人
攀上市政广场的电报大楼大喊大叫一番
之后 像一个不修边幅的小精灵
再一次回到地铁过道上的熟睡中
Denise Duhamel’s (she/her) most recent books of poetry are *Second Story* from University of Pittsburgh Press and *Scald*. *Blowout* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is a distinguished university professor in the MFA program at Florida International University in Miami.
Poem in Which I Contemplate Loneliness Through a Peephole  
by Denise Duhamel

Through my door’s magic eye I see a couple 
fighting in miniature. Am I wrong to enjoy this scene through 
my one-way lens, gloating I am not either one of them? They yell, framed by a circle, 
like the end of an old Looney Tunes cartoon. Then the ping of the 
elevator—That’s all folks!—and they disappear.
Poem in Which I Contemplate Imposter Syndrome
by Denise Duhamel

Each fall I have the same dream.
I’m writing on the board, my students
raising their hands, ready to answer
my questions when there’s a knock
on the classroom door. *You don’t teach
here anymore*, two men in suits (deans?)
tell me. *You never graduated high school—
you still have one more intermediate
math class to take. Therefore your college
degrees are also revoked. Hand over the chalk.*
I’m escorted out of Academic One,
my students laughing cruelly or maybe
nervously, feeling stung. If this could
happen to me, what about them?
Reuben Gelley Newman (he/him) is the author of the chapbook *Feedback Harmonies* from Seven Kitchens Press. He is a writer, musician, and librarian-in-training based in New York City and co-edits *Couplet Poetry*. Recent poems have appeared in *Ninth Letter*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *Tyger Quarterly*, and *Afternoon Visitor*. See more at www.reubengelleynewman.com.
Two toads devolved in a cello brood,  
And worry eye-mold knot shovel broth  
And ghee spawn gravel ore, throng I stewed  
And brooked lawn, dun asphalt as I blued  
To bare bit rent in the sundered tooth;  

Then pluck the mother, agitate where,  
And braving stirrups of wetter game,  
Peruse it fuzz, gassy and planted brayer,  
Bow, defer rat, amassing share  
Plaid warm gum dilly a doubt unclaim,  

And growth hat-forming equinely gay  
In sheaves no pep had sodden lack.  
Oh, I wept the worst for another play!
Yet blowing sow neigh feeds manta ray,
I plotted glyph I pooled lever thrum thwack.

I crawl respelling grist with a lie
Impaired phages and phages askance:
Two toads devolved in a cello brood, and I—
I spooked the sun dress-deviled sigh,
And that grasp grayed all the effulgence.
[Two nodes divulged in a mellow mood] by Reuben Gelley Newman

after Robert Frost

Two nodes divulged in a mellow mood,
And glory I told thought ravel truth
And begone leveler, song I rued
And hooked sound sun as star as I glued
To air split lent in the wonder oath;

Then look! the ether, aspen clasp hair,
And shaving chirrups of feathered aim,
Pecans with lush glaze and vaunted pears;
Flow asphodel the splashing prayer
Glad horn hum silly redoubt the name;

And truth fat burning squirrely play
In eaves go! pep rad sudden crack.
Oh, I leapt the burst for another ray!
Yet showing bough clay seeds onto clay,
I spouted riff I spooled silver hum tack.

I fall free swelling kiss lisp up high
Unaware pages and pages dance:
Two nodes divulged in a mellow mood, and I—
I spooked the sun dress-deviled sigh,
And that grasp grayed all the effulgence.
Cyn Kitchen (she/her) chairs the English department at Knox College. She is the author of the story collection *Ten Tongues*, and her essays and poems appear in *American Writers Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Poetry South*, *Cutleaf*, and others. She makes her home in Forgottonia, a downstate region on the Illinois prairie.
When Leaving, Again by Cyn Kitchen

taillights grow smaller,
brighten momentarily on braking
then slow for the curve that leads
west toward the mountains
rising at prairie’s edge.

this fractured existence, living
where I love, loving what is no
longer here. this separation
of prairie & mountain tethered
by highways strung like lights
across the Plains.
	his, our reduction, our expansion
no less wrenching
than those pangs of birth
that brought you here. this,
the push & pull of wanting you
here, insisting you go, bereft, left
as you disappear from sight.
Self Portrait by Cyn Kitchen

bleached against the brown
bare forest stands the tall
gray birch, towering among
unadorned huddled revenants. who
on this prairie put you here, from
whose beak did you fall, take root.
there are no accidents though
you were given no choice. still
look at you now, being seen
as if for the first time.
Jerry Lieblich (they/them) plays in the borderlands of theater, poetry, and music. Their plays include *Mahinerator; D Deb Debbie Deborah*, a Critic’s Pick at the *New York Times; Ghost Stories;* and *Everything for Dawn*. Their poetry has appeared in *Foglifter, Grist, Cold Mountain Review,* and others. They have held residencies at MacDowell, MassMoCA, Millay Arts, Yiddishkayt, and others. See more at www.thirdear.nyc.
in and of by Jerry Lieblich

after Barbara Guest

a breaking thing, whose failure indicates

erasure as a form

of a limitless

ness —

*  
a contingent (,)

(compositional) milieu,

the self participates

*with caution*

absent (,) a view

from nowhere

it’s beginning to snow

it’s snowing

windowsill

(particular (,) quanta)

an experience of legibility

in and of,
self as
milieu as
condensation
*

beware the view
from here
(a sign)

COMPREHENSIBLE

mountain edge
in chalk
( aspiration's
  solitary (,) cohesion )

  the sidewalk (,)
  ends

Oceanic

  squall
how, not what by Jerry Lieblich

a feather (hawk), useless but for evidence (synecdochic) of

pattern (stripes),
tended

by thumb and finger (index)
pad, [name

for hooks on feather strands]
broken, [name

for feather strands] snapped
off, for [a sense] (participants’) of

the hawk
feather, useless
but for seeing
through, [lines]

evidence (synecdochic)
composition (patterned, damaged), still

(hollow) [slows
air] lifts
for wind today a wind by Jerry Lieblich

what is the wind chimes leaves flies moving air in

a direction any direction is no thing is and or or

a wave the trees the way trees sound or wind for wind what is

nouns or names or disconnects

what is is if wind is still

is is and mind or is in mind on mind

or any other or between who cares and who cares for

or without ends
Raymond Luczak (he/him) is the author and editor of over thirty books, including the poetry collections Far from Atlantis and Chlorophyll. His next two titles appearing in 2024 include the anthology Yooper Poetry: On Experiencing Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Animals Out-There W-i-l-d: A Bestiary in English and ASL Gloss. See more at www.raymondluczak.com.
My Ghost Boy by Raymond Luczak

In the deepest of twilights  
among the shipwrecks  
still gardening the frozen Eden  
in the pits of Lake Superior,  
there swims a ghost who used  
to be me, a boy who was afraid  
of drowning. His eyes are  
full of fish-gray. The shreds  
of his Popeye t-shirt still twirl  
around his chest. His skin  
has turned into scales  
that would have caught the hook  
of sunshine had he come up  
for a last breath of air.  
Some nights I dive down there  
without a wetsuit or a tank
when I am feeling lonely.
Am I that fatherless?
I want to feel the ice-blood
of the drowned shoot up
in my veins. I want to hypo-
thermia the sadness out
of my veins. When I think
I will at last die, the ghost boy
turtles underneath me,
his body magnetizing mine
as he paddles me upward
through the gauze of cold
in yet another undrowning
until I breathe in clarity.
First A-S-L Sign Me-Learn What | My First ASL Sign by Raymond Luczak

_in American Sign Language (ASL) gloss and English_

me very young realize hearing people strange behavior why

{point-to-mouth bah-bah-bah} for-for
{body hearing aids} earmolds

hear-hear hearing people laugh odd eat-eat time
not-want learn speak-speak but me lonely

want hearing people around-me happy
them look-down-on-me {look up}

{shaking sad face with a flat hand on chest}
then happen me stay foster family

Back then I’d already grasped the language of strangeness among hearing people who used their mouths and sounds to communicate. My twin hearing aids strapped onto my chest amplified their mysterious laughter at the dinner table. I didn’t want to speak but I was a lonely boy felt driven to please and appease all those hearing adults who looked down on me and shook their heads out of pity. Then I had to stay with a foster family
two-hour drive stay week Sunday Friday
two hours away from home during the week
so I could participate a special program

enter deaf oral program

us deaf kids gather-together learn-learn speech
designed to make deaf children learn
how to speak. Sign language was forbidden.
signing forbidden

program t-a-p-i-o-l-a school
Beyond the road that circled Tapiola School
road {circle-around} short-distance there trees
was a small cluster of evergreens

us deaf kids r-e-c-e-s-s gather-together
where we deaf kids congregated in recess,
gesture-gesture point-point-each-other
gesturing and pointing at each other.

back-then not-know sign
We didn’t know Sign back then,
but hands know inside finish
but our hands were already fighting to say

voice turn-off must sign something
something meaningful beyond our voices.
then one day s-e-p-t deaf girl d-a-r-l-e-n-e
Then came along a deaf girl named Darlene

pop-up herself student classroom next-door
on a cold September day. She was a student
older deaf students there
in the classroom for older deaf students
us young deaf them older deaf mingle r-a-r-e-l-y interact r-e-c-e-s-s that-all

Probably seven years older than I was, she sat next to me on the school bus for a field trip waiting to go somewhere—I forget where—

Probably seven years older than I was, she sat next to me on the school bus for a field trip waiting to go somewhere—I forget where—

but anyway teachers not there but our teachers weren’t with us

for a few minutes. She looked into my eyes with her solid cat-eyes and signed something

I didn’t understand. Then she mouthed the word as her V-hand slid down the short tunnel

of her other hand: “both.” I looked up at her smirking face. She’d broken the law!

Forevermore I would become that accomplice itching to break into the vault of Sign.

learn-learn secret sign-sign escape hearing people

Finish me want stay-with-her
Sandra Marchetti (she/her) is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *Aisle 228* from Stephen F. Austin State University Press and *Confluence* from Sundress Publications, as well as four chapbooks of poetry and essays. She earned her MFA from George Mason University and serves as the Assistant Manager of Academic Support at Harper College.
Friday, 1:20 by Sandra Marchetti

If you shut
your eyes

you’ll forget
where you are

and hear
the nature

of real things.
From your seat

the long, low
call of the hot
dog vendor is
a mourning dove
singing to
those he loves.
Andrew Mauzey (he/him) lives in Anaheim, CA, and teaches writing and literature at Biola University, where he serves as the associate director of the English Writing Program. He has most recently published poetry in *The Orchards Poetry Journal, Arboreal Literary Magazine, Young Ravens Literary Review, Pioneertown, Unbroken, Inscape*, and *Ekstasis*.
The Moon Enjoys a Performance by Andrew Mauzey

There is a production to night—
the thin breeze, the harsh light
that must drop away, the way
day rolls in on itself. Some
nights, my impulses beg
to stand center stage, my eyes
cannot ignore the spotlight
from the window when close
enough to see through glass.

These nights, I try to lose
myself, to give in to the compulsion
of a whim and sing into an air
that swings like Sinatra until
the wind cracks into a hat
dance, until the spirited notes

of evening crawl under my skin
to shake my belly dry of sleep,
until it runs full force into a kind

of hysteria, something like books
without pages and days without
minutes. People like radio, theater,
television. The sky, too, enjoys
a performance, and, so, I become
the king of my own late night.
Kimberly Ann Priest (she/her) is the author of *Slaughter the One Bird* and three chapbooks, with books forthcoming from Texas Review Press and Unsolicited Press. An assistant professor at Michigan State University, her work has appeared in *Beloit, Copper Nickel, and Birmingham Poetry Review*. She lives in Maine. See more at [www.kimberlyannpriest.com](http://www.kimberlyannpriest.com).
in memorium by Kimberly Ann Priest

i.

after the strokes, my mother answers the question what is something I may not know about our family? in a journal for her grandchildren

I was window and just stars outside at snowflake coming down. I seasons & beautiful scenery. I rain of hard or I was love standing in the puddle. I love thunderstorms I was use to hide under roof & trees & until daddy except I was young was stand front porch hear pitter patter on raindrops: will it in night was scare at moon & stars milkyway at the window. I was small bedroom a girl we fix my room. I had snowflake and snow in the window. I curl up on my bed to see windows.

Love

was hide
will scare

had snow
after her death, my mother answers the question \textit{what is something my mother may not know about our family?} in a poem

[a contrapuntal]

just stars
coming down,
scenery standing in storms
under Daddy,

[God]

was
standing in a puddle,

roof & trees
& I

was young—\textit{pitter patter}—
a girl

except

we fix
my curl

at the window

I was small;
had snowflake & snow
on my bed

to see
Susan Rich (she/her) is the author of seven books, including *Blue Atlas*, forthcoming from Red Hen Press, and *Gallery of Postcards and Maps: New and Selected Poems*. She is co-editor of *Demystifying the Manuscript: Essays and Interviews on Creating a Book of Poems* and director of Poets on the Coast. See more at [www.poetsusanrich.com](http://www.poetsusanrich.com).
Heartscape/Cityscape by Susan Rich

Down the alley of blackberry tunnel,  
down the steps of disappointment,  

across the solitary traffic island—  

We sing to the stripped branches  
of beach rose, listen to the kingfisher  

still as a life on hold.  

Days take-on the weight of mortgages  
which sway over the water’s edge on stilts—  

like women avalanched by time.  

Mt. Rainier rises as a cloud window,  
as an unused wedding cake.
And when the Olympics appear in snowdrifts of lace—

my heart map switches on.
Not metaphors for love or loss,

but the sirens of this life.

This coastline built from clash, and from calm,
like the kingfisher that hunts each night

in refracted, tidal light.
T. W. Sia (he/him) is a queer immigrant from Myanmar. He holds a BA from Swarthmore College and is pursuing an MD from Stanford University.
In the clearest sketches after memory by T.W. Sia

Longing is the cigarette

that I smoke behind the complex,
and a canyon can grow out like a cactus flower.

I am making out with my loss,

huffing breaths between sobs,
my open mouth can fit more desert sand,

one more grain one more grain

*

I am never making enough
memories to keep, never buttoning my shirts or my nights
down the middle, I am afraid this is all I will come to be.
If I think hard enough, I think

I am the one who should have died.
Each night I fight in my sleep.

*

I went to the convenience store and
they shoved the lighter I bought for you

in a plastic bag. On the way home I mouthed
no please no please, there is a dream I have

where I am The Girl From Ipanema (in D-flat)
and the lighter is skinny dipping in the plastic ocean.
We are two girls humming and skipping down the highway.
We are walking each other home gently.

*

In this life, I am the one who is, I am

cutting my hands to give water to my mouth.
I am drawing sketches from the blood.
Emily Velasquez (she/her) is a writer in Santa Ana, CA, and a Dual MA/MFA student at Chapman University. Her reviews appear at *Tab Journal* and *Soapberry Review*.
When one thinks of a dedication, it usually involves someone or something you have come to believe as a pillar or immeasurable influence in your life. Jose Olivarez, a poet, educator, and performer from Chicago is the author of *Promises of Gold / Promesas de Oro*, a book of poetry that was recently long listed for the 2023 National Book Award. Olivarez has crafted a collection with eleven sections that read as dedication poems confronting questions about family, community, machismo, brothers, and friendships through his navigation of what a promise of love means. Olivarez births a collection that duels with not only language, but also the duality of trying to love while existing in a culture where the immigrant’s eyes blink towards an unattainable American dream.

In this collection with three sections titled “Glory” and two titled “Ojalá, Ojalá, Ojalá,” Olivarez reveals that you might find glory and gold through promises, but you will also find the promises that sounds like *Ojalá*, or a wish or a desire for something to happen. For Olivarez, promises are not linear, and these poems explore how promises can get misconstrued, especially in the Latinx culture where one is raised with these preconceived ideas that masculinity is about power,
control, and a certain kind of manliness. In the poem “Regret or My Dad Says Love,” Olivarez captures the hostility of not knowing if what his father is expressing is love or regret, In the last lines of this poem, he writes:

to be a dad is to be bossed
at work & bossed at home.
it’s easy to daydream about love
when it is a chorus of kisses.
what about when love is a dirty diaper
& a snot nose?
my dad rarely said love,
but he always left the bar.

The way Olivarez speaks of the burden that this kind of masculinity places on Mexican men and how that affects the narrator’s perspective on their father’s love or what looks like love is captivating.

Throughout the trajectory of this collection, the poems place the reader in the pit of how the use of Ojalá until it becomes the repeated language that bleeds through each poem. Its task becomes to reframe what it means to deal with
dysfunctional aspects of love. In the line “what about when love is a dirty diaper / & a snot nose,” Olivarez creates the image of the unpleasurable, the uncomfortable reality of what love is when it doesn’t feel or seem like love.

Jose Olivarez offers us this book of poetry with a generous dedication, staying intact with his community and personal experiences. This work represents Mexican or Latinx writers who, like Olivarez, are part of a lineage where tragedies are, in many ways, what help deconstruct love and the promise of it. *Promises of Gold / Promesas de Oro* is an exceptional collection that rearranges and restructures how to write about love without promising the future for which one is tempted to wish.