

# JuJubes

PoetsArtists Supplemental Poetry Edition, Issue 1, December 2014

Edited by Luke Brekke



T.S. Harris  
*Beach Frolic*  
oil on canvas  
48x60

## Sampler Issue

**Featured Artist**

T.S. Harris



## T.S. Harris

In her paintings, Tracey Sylvester Harris presents a dazzling iconic vision of the female form that merges the past with the present. Inspired by found black and white snapshots from the mid-century, her paintings are colorful yet bittersweet, depicting fleeting moments captured almost a lifetime ago. Suspended in time, Harris' stylish and elegant cropped figures put on scarlet lipstick, dream by the pool or sit in contemplation. With the context of their actions removed, the women become mysterious; they are alluring not for their bodies, but for the secrets they hold. Raised by two professional artists, Harris's art career began at an early age. Initially showing in her family's gallery and then branching out into other venues, her work has since shown in museums and galleries nationwide and been featured in the movie, *The Face of Love*. Harris lives in San Luis Obispo.

[www.tsylvesterharris.com](http://www.tsylvesterharris.com)

T.S. Harris  
*The Swimmer*  
oil on canvas  
48x24

## A FORM THAT Binds & Unbinds

In this first issue of *Jujubes*, we have the good fortune of one rather imposing looking canzone. Close cousin to the sestina, the canzone is a fixed form composed of five twelve-line stanzas and a five-line envoi. Like the sestina, the canzone relies on the repetition of end words to create what Ezra Pound once described as “a form like a thin sheet of flame, folding and infolding upon itself.” The editors of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* call the sestina “the most complicated of the verse forms initiated by the troubadours,” but compared to the canzone, the sestina looks almost restrained. Pound’s description seems about right: the recurrent, fixed pattern of end words in a canzone produces a circular, almost claustrophobic effect. In many instances, the repetitions pressurize the poem, generating an intensity—the heat that Pound’s description alludes to. It takes a writer of a certain ilk, one with a particular formal panache to even attempt a canzone. The form is absurd. Its sheer number of repetitions seems doomed, either to exhaust a writer’s capacities or a reader’s sympathies. In a canzone, the writer almost dares the form to try to stop her, to try to make her expression predictable; she forces herself to use fewer materials more often,

to say more with less. One of the pleasures we take, then, from a poem like this that does succeed is witnessing its ingenuity. Lindsay Ahl’s “Wild Dogs in Istanbul” is that sort of poem. In her hands, the canzone doesn’t feel egregious; it feels like the only form capacious enough for a poem of this appetite.

Poems written in received forms only really succeed when that form becomes an inextricable element of their meaning, when *what* a poem says depends on how it says. Ahl’s “Wild Dogs . . .” achieves this sort of productive dependency. As its speaker leads us through the streets of Istanbul “beneath pistachio trees” to the “columned library and graveyard,” onto “rooftops” and “two smoking buses,” she simultaneously takes us through a relationship that, as the poet says, “binds and unbinds.” That description echoes Pound’s “folding and infolding” flame of the canzone. Each time the form circles back on itself, the speaker attempts, once and for all, a final word on a sprawling and inconstant relationship.

One of the astonishing features of Ahl’s poem is that despite its frequent repetitions, it never seems to hold still. A prominent challenge of the canzone form is finding a way to generate a sense of development within the repetitions. The poet must find a way to ensure that her repetitions evolve. If, for instance, “queen” is to appear at the end of thirteen of the poem’s sixty-five lines, the poet must make each of those occurrences seem necessary. Ahl does. In

the first stanza, "queen" appears twice, in quick succession: "you whisper, my queen, / anything you want, my queen." Here, early in the poem, the word is used as a term of endearment, one lover to another. Fourteen lines later, in its next occurrence, a rift has been established between the lovers: the eyes of one wander and the two "don't recognize each other." At this point, "queen" occurs in much the same manner as it did earlier, echoing that earlier accord: "Still, I'm your queen / of the city, gypsy queen of rug sellers . . . Anything you want, my queen." By now, though, we know better than to believe that the speaker is anyone's queen, and by the end of the third stanza, when "queen" appears again, we register the speaker's thorough disillusionment more strongly with each utterance of the word.

*There is no going back, queen  
of Istanbul, queen of your heart, queen of  
mine. I could be your queen*

*for one day, but there are all the other days,  
so many, and so few, queen  
or not, it might not be enough. . . .*

The word has been hollowed out. It no longer means what it once did.

That drop in register accelerates throughout the fourth stanza. At this point in the poem, it is not just the speaker's patience that is being tested, the reader's is also. The patterned repetitions, not only of "queen," but also of "wild dogs," "Istanbul," "midnight," and "dawn" have gone through

three full cycles. The word "midnight" has occurred twelve times. This much repetition creates tension, it accumulates a pressure that is characteristic of the canzone. The poet's task is to figure out what to do with that pressure.

*I'll settle for the other side of love:  
notes pressed onto a grand piano, queen  
of instruments, or a glimpse (only a  
glimpse) of a tiger through trees, queen  
of all cats . . .  
For smaller things, a paper cup  
passed over the counter, Queen  
of Cups, a coffee, or the clumps of a  
pistachio tree warming in the sun, queen  
of nuts.*

The descent into these "smaller things," a cup of coffee, the queen of nuts, the humor that is compounded by the simple, Dr. Suess-like rhyme (cups/nuts) all come as a welcomed relief after the near-hysterical surge of the opening three stanzas. With these lines, Ahl acknowledges the speaker's newly limited expectations, as well as the limitations of the canzone form. It's absurd. It's excessive. It feels compulsive. And it may be a fitting embodiment of love. By the end of the fourth stanza, every instance of the word "queen" reverberates with more, not less, intensity.

Another challenge in a poem with this many repetitions is finding a means of maintaining surprise. Ahl achieves this through varied techniques, but most often by altering word function and syntax. In the

second stanza, for instance, “dawn” is the terminal word in six lines. In one instance, it functions as an adjective (“dawn / water”). Every other time, it functions as a noun. In these cases, it is sometimes modified: once by a prepositional phrase (“Dawn / on the Bosphorus”); and twice by adjectives (“late-night dawn,” and “star-filled dawn”), so that “dawn” is not a single, static experience, but rather a class of experience with several distinct species. Ahl is also careful to vary what her syntax is doing at the end of her lines. Only twice in the second stanza does a line ending coincide with a sentence ending. Three other line endings are marked by commas, instances where the line is turned at a natural break in the syntax. The remaining seven lines are all enjambed to varying degrees. The cumulative effect of these choices at the level of sentence and line is that even as we begin to sense the poem’s pattern of repetition, we cannot anticipate how the poem will move through that pattern. Every “dawn” feels new, surprising.

Of course, much of what is pleasurable about this poem has nothing (or seems to have nothing) to do with the fact that it is a canzone. It is a poem that constantly threatens to overwhelm us in seductive imagery. It is a poem that is just as likely to take us “to the agora to buy cinnamon at midnight,” as it is toward “The Sacred Way.” Throughout its entirety, it makes skillful use of opposition, wanting one moment to be the “only star at midnight” and the next, “the only cold drink in your hand.” Like the

water that is pulled first one way and then the other, we are led through an exotic environment, pulled by strong forces.

In Lindsay Ahl’s “Wild Dogs in Istanbul,” the canzone’s formal restraints serve only to liberate and intensify her imaginative force. This is a poem with an appetite. Not just for the “Ouzo” and “olives,” which the speaker names, but for something more, which she cannot. The poem succeeds, at least in part, because it honors its desire for vastness. It succeeds, at least in part, because it distrusts that desire. Formalists will argue that any received form—canzone, limerick, pantoum or otherwise—communicates a particular “meaning” through its form. In his chapter examining the sonnet, for instance, Paul Fussell points out that “the poet who understands the sonnet form is the one who has developed an instinct for exploiting the principle of imbalance,” and claims that “the fact that [the sonnet] has meaning as a form alone” can be “demonstrated”. Perhaps. If so, what the canzone form, with its excessive repetitions and cyclic development, tells us is this: once is never enough. There is no dawn, only dawns. Go back. Look again.

1. Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter & Poetic Form: Revised Edition* (New York: Random House, 1979), 115,126.

2. J.G. Fucilla and C. Kleinhenz, “Canzone,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 190-191.

## Wild Dogs in Istanbul

Every morning from a moving truck mosque music blasts like wild dogs from loud speakers. We listen beneath pistachio trees, the sound all over Istanbul. As we drink Ayran and eat cucumbers for breakfast, wild dogs run up and down the alleyways that our porch overlooks, wild dogs in packs, return finally to the streets, and you whisper, my queen, anything you want, my queen. But later the wild dogs of your words stray and bite and lay low and the wild dogs of your eyes wander as we drink Ouzo and eat olives after midnight. We cross rooftops and talk about Ephesus—midnight plays, ancient coins, the columned library and graveyards wild dogs retreat to. Your body breaks into a sweat, sudden grace, sun fall to dawn over the Bosphorus. Forget our hangover, boats swaying, the river of dawn

pulls the water one-way, dusk pulls the river the other. Dawn on the Bosphorus connects The Black Sea and its wild dogs to The Sea of Marmara. We ride smoke-filled busses and at dawn we rise, Ephesus calling. And there, on hot rooftops after late-night dawns, we don't recognize each other. I wouldn't know your face in Istanbul, wouldn't know you from Scythian horsemen roaming the Black Sea border at dawn. You're an undersea river, boats floating high above me, pulling dawn water one way, pushing dusk water the other. Still, I'm your queen of the city, gypsy queen of rug sellers, tea tasters. Anything you want, my queen. And so I want the impossible: undying love, the star-filled dawn and Juliet dusk of all love. I want to be your only star at midnight, the only cold drink in your hand. Which part of my midnight

constellation did you forget? Later, sickness, we're passed out midnight after midnight, unconscious, the sheets cool and heavy, dawn after dawn, still unconscious. The Sacred Way in my dreams, a midnight walk to the Library of Celsus, to the agora to buy cinnamon at midnight, to the Gate of Augustus, and you are not my dream, and the wild dogs follow me, strategizing their attack, just as you strategize your midnight descent to whatever is outside the garden, outside the library of midnight virtues, golden bridges, wisdom pyramids. Back in the great Istanbul, two smoking busses later, beside children, angels of god, we travel Istanbul

streets that zigzag like veins across our aging, though then, we were midnight young, and then, I believed all things. There is no going back, queen of Istanbul, queen of your heart, queen of mine. I could be your queen

for one day, but there are all the other days, so many, and so few, queen or not, it might not be enough. It's true, I'm hard to please. Or not. Come midnight I'll settle for the other side of love: notes pressed onto a grand piano, queen of instruments, or a glimpse (only a glimpse) of a tiger through trees, queen of all cats, or myself alone, barefoot on the sea between the Aegean dawn and Marmara night. For smaller things, a paper cup passed over the counter, Queen of Cups, a coffee, or the clumps of a pistachio tree warming in the sun, queen of nuts. In the City of the World's Desire, your eyes mouth arms like wild dogs coming alive. In the City of the World's Desire, we eat with wild dogs while others talk about Scythian horsemen and you say, What do you want, my queen? So here it is, I'll try again: I want everything and nothing. I want the lights of Istanbul to shine like the constellation of our gaze and the wandering wild dogs of Istanbul

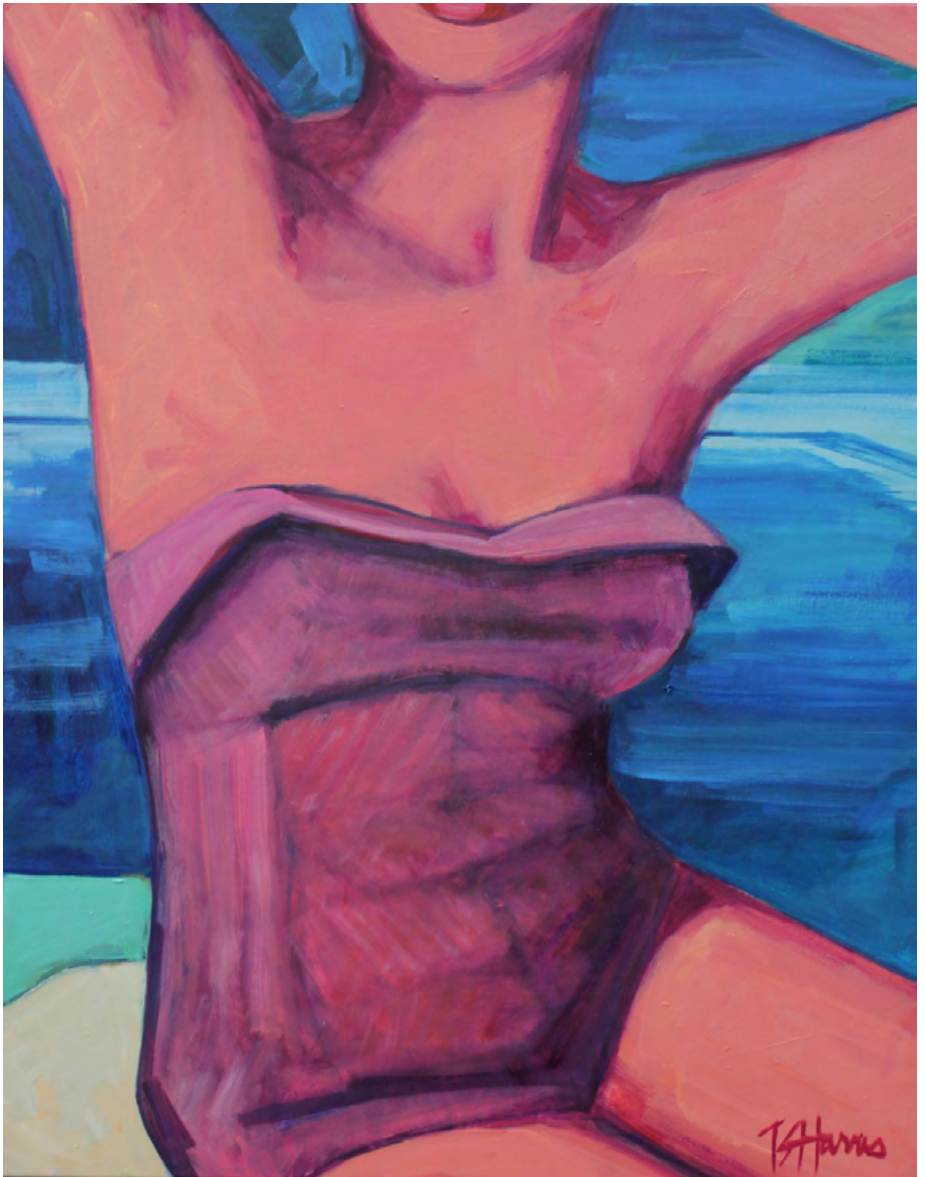
to find The Sacred Way. And if we never return, if this is our only chance at Istanbul, I want to remember the knowing wildness in the faces on the Bosphorus, Queen of all rivers, and remember our children who are beyond beauty and named Istanbul. It was there, maybe, that we were most together, even though in Istanbul, we were most apart. Remember the rooftops? Oranges at midnight? Let's call love what it is, a knot that binds and unbinds, like traffic in Istanbul on a stormy afternoon, an Ouzo descent. Like wild dogs in Istanbul, you said, your long arms, flowering body, unflowering at dawn, petals falling from rooftops, sleeping all afternoon. The bridge at dawn? Will you meet me? Was I ever asleep or awake? Did we ever leave Istanbul? Your eyes your mouth your arms legs yelps hands hair like wild dogs coming alive. Is time motion or is time no motion? When we wandered like wild dogs

the streets of Istanbul I thought we would live forever. You with your wild dog hair. Do our bodies embody the unconditional? What about our dawn sheets, our morning newspaper trek, the magnetized bombs they attach to queen cars, anything to blow up the undersea river. I'm the undersea river at midnight; I'm the sudden grace on the bridge at dawn; I'm the wild dog you left in Istanbul.

## Wild Rose

My mother cultivated a bramble of wild rose  
She could view as she washed dishes or made sausage rolls  
In the kitchen. It was the bane of the neighbor's dachshund  
Who would yelp, stung by its thorns. If misborn,  
A sparrow might even die there. Not even bathwater  
Could kill the wild rose. Bea and Ray would daub  
Poison on its leaves, and our cat, with grey grizzling  
Fur, would eat rabbits inside its tea-leaf  
Shade. It was thought, by me, to be home of a spook  
Who smelled of garlic and whistled like a Hebrides  
Dolphin in the moon-lit fog and over the garish  
Cemeteries of our neighborhood back yards. Dog smell  
Permeated the wild rose's perimeter, and a small fish pond  
Of cement and marbles gleamed and bubbled like Alka Seltzer.  
How my mother loved that bramble of wild rose.





T.S. Harris  
*The Blue Pool*  
oil on canvas  
20x16

## notes

**Lindsay Ahl's** chapbook, *The Abyssians*, was a finalist for the 2013 National Poetry Chapbook Award. Her poetry has appeared in *Barrow Street*, *RHINO*, *Vellum*, *Drunken Boat*, *New Delta Review*, and many others. Her fiction includes a novel, *Desire*, out with Coffee House Press, and stories in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Fiction magazine*, and others. She publishes *Shadowgraph* ([www.shadowgraf.com](http://www.shadowgraf.com)), an arts & culture journal.

**Nin Andrews** is the author of five full-length collections of poetry and six chapbooks. Her next book, *Why God Is a Woman*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions.

**Luke Brekke** received his MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers and has poems published or forthcoming in *MiPOesias* and *The New England Review*. He has taught in the public schools and now resides in Southwestern Wisconsin where he works as a coffee roaster.

**Geoffrey Gatza** is an award winning editor, publisher and poet. He was named by the Huffington Post as one of the The Top 200 Advocates for American Poetry (2013). He is the author many books of poetry, including *Apollo* (BlazeVOX 2014), *Secrets of my Prison House* (BlazeVOX 2010) *Kenmore: Poem Unlimited* (GOSS183) and *HouseCat Kung Fu: Strange Poems for Wild Children* (Meritage Press 2008). Geoffrey Gatza is the editor and Publisher of the small press *BlazeVOX*. The fundamental mission of *BlazeVOX* is to disseminate poetry, through print and digital media, both within academic spheres and to society at large. He lives in Kenmore, NY with his girlfriend and two beloved cats.

**Rustin Larson's** poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Iowa Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry East*, and *The American Entomologist Poet's Guide to the Orders of Insects*. He is the author of *The Wine-Dark House* (Blue Light Press, 2009) and *Crazy Star* (selected for the Loess Hills Book's Poetry Series in 2005) and *Bum Cantos*, *Winter Jazz*, & *The Collected Discography of Morning*, winner of the 2013 Blue Light Book Award (Blue Light Press, San Francisco).

**Peter Richards** is British born, now resident in Norway where he is a self-employed carpenter: [hyllernemine.blogspot.no](http://hyllernemine.blogspot.no) His poetry has been published around the net, in *MiPOesias*, *New Formalist*, *Snakeskin*, *Angle*, a few other places and now here.

**Laura Sheahen's** poems have been published in *Stirring*, *Four Way Review*, *Orbis*, *In Posse Review*, and other journals. She lives in Rome and works in humanitarian aid. She blogs at [onegoodpoem.blogspot.com](http://onegoodpoem.blogspot.com).

**William Stobb** is the author of five poetry collections, including the National Poetry Series selection, *Nervous Systems* (2007), and *Absentia* (2011), both from Penguin Books. Stobb works as Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, as Associate Editor for *Conduit*, and as Chair of the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission.

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