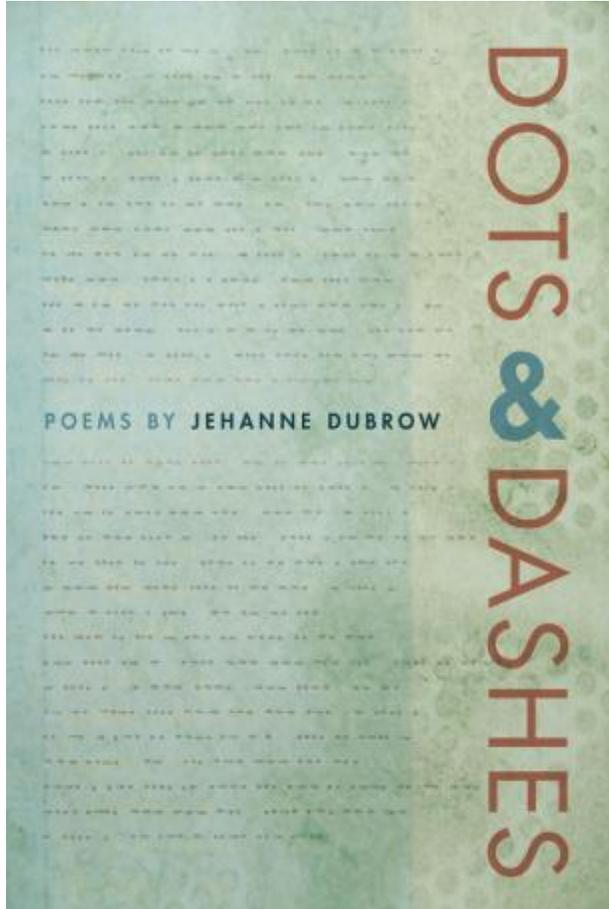


DOTS & DASHES

Winner of the 2016 Crab Orchard Review Series Open Competition Award



Moving between the languages of love and war, Jehanne Dubrow's latest book offers valuable testimony to the experiences of military wives. Frequently employing rhyme, meter, and traditional forms, these poems examine what it means to be both a military spouse and an academic, straddling two communities that speak in very different and often conflicting terms.

As in the poet's earlier collection, *Stateside*, the poems in *Dots & Dashes* are explicitly feminist, exploring the experiences of women whose husbands are deployed. But, while *Stateside* looked to masculine stories of war, *Dots & Dashes* incorporates the views and voices of female poets who have written about combat. Looking to Sappho and Emily Dickinson, the poet considers how the act of writing allows her autonomy and agency rarely granted to military spouses, even in the twenty-first century. Dubrow catalogs the domestic life of a military spouse, illustrating what it is like to live in a tightly constructed world of rules and regulations, ceremony and tradition, where "every sacrifice already / knows its place."

Navigating the rough seas of marriage alongside questions about how civilians and those in the military can learn to communicate with one another, Dubrow argues for compassion and empathy on both sides. In this timely collection, Dubrow offers the hope that if we can break apart our preconceptions, we can find what connects all of us.

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Homeport

Even on weekends the cruiser
would shudder, flicker spaces
with a redorange blink,

then a gasket crack or a valve stick shut
as if by weather or malicious hands,
the engine room home

of all catastrophe.

I would stretch and reach
across the bed to find furrowed sheets
where my husband had slept until 3 a.m.,

when he answered the captain calling,
whose perpetual fury machine
was the only system that never broke,

and my husband would yessir to him
who was steamingmad on the ship,
before slipping into the chill of coveralls,

the blueback uniform of service,
which in a certain light
had the confining fit of love.



Jehanne Dubrow is the author of six poetry collections, including most recently *The Arranged Marriage* and *Red Army Red* and is the co-editor of *Still Life with Poem* and *The Book of Scented Things*. Her poetry, creative nonfiction, and book reviews have appeared in *Southern Review*, *The New England Review*, *Pleiades*, and *Copper Nickel*. She is an Associate Professor of creative writing at the University of North Texas.



Jehanne Dubrow
Foreword by Ted Kooser

Against War Movies

I see my husband shooting in *Platoon*,
and there he is again in *M*A*S*H* (how weird
to hear him talk like Hawkeye Pierce), and soon
I spot him everywhere, his body smeared
with mud, his face bloodied. He's now the star
every ship blockade and battle scene,
The Fighting 69th, *A Bridge Too Far*,
Three Kings, *Das Boot*, and *Stalag 17*.
in *Stalingrad* he's killed, and then
He's killed in *Midway* and *A Few Good Men*.
He's burned or gassed or shot between the eyes,
or shoots himself when he comes home again.
Each movie is a training exercise,
a scenario for how my husband dies.

From *Stateside*
(Northwestern UP, 2010)

Although the poems in *Stateside* are concerned with a military husband's deployment, Jehanne Dubrow's riveting collection is driven more by intellectual curiosity and emotional exploration than by any overt political agenda. The speaker in these poems attempts to understand her own life through the long history of military wives left to wait and wonder, invoking Penelope's plight in *The Odyssey* as a model but also as a source of mystery. These poems are dazzling in their use of form, their sensual imagery, and their learnedness, possessing a level of subtlety and control rarely found in the work of a young poet. Dubrow is fearless in her contemplation of the far-reaching effects of war but even more so in her excavation of a marriage under duress.

"These well-crafted poems by Jehanne Dubrow are, at least for this one reader, like those beautiful and altogether necessary sweaters. They have been patiently, thoughtfully, and artfully knitted by a sometimes anguished, sometimes resigned and always hopeful young woman, well acquainted with the perils of the sea, the perils of war, the perils of loneliness, seeing her husband's ship just a spot on the horizon, sailing away."

—Ted Kooser, from his preface to *Stateside*