

The

Inflectionist Review

No. 4

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hyoid

hyoid (h'oid), *adj.* U-shaped, hyoid bone, the cartilage at the base of the tongue which supports the larynx.

hy-per-bol-ic (hi'pér-bò'lik), *adj.* 1, over, beyond, or above the ordinary or usual, as, hypercritical, hyperbolic, indicating the high character of the sense compounds, generally adjectives, *adv.* *hyper-bol-ic-ally*.

hy-per-bo-la (hi'pér-bò'la), *n.* 1, a plane curve such that the distance of any point on it from any point on the axis of the curve, or foci, is a constant, the curve formed by the intersection of two conical cones, placed vertex to vertex, so that their axes form a straight line, & a plane parallel to the axes.

hy-per-bo-le (hi'pér-bò'le), *n.* a figure of speech which expresses more than the truth; poetic exaggeration.

hy-per-bol-ic (hi'pér-bò'lik), *HYPER-BOLIC*, *adj.* 1, a literature, pertaining to, or containing, overstatements; exaggerated. 2, in mathematics, belonging to, or of the nature of a hyperbola. Also, *hyper-bol-ic-al*.

hy-per-bo-re-an (hi'pér-bò're-an), *adj.* 1, northern; 2, very cold; frigid;—a person living in the far north, as an Eskimo; Hyperborean, a member of a fabled race of people living beyond the north wind, in a land of sunshine and eternal bliss.

hy-per-crit-i-cal (hi'pér-krit'i-kál), *adj.* 1, too severe in judgment; too quick to find fault; 2, excessively nice or exact; 3, to please, judicious.

Hy-per-*h* (hi'pér-h), *adv.* *hyper-bol-ic-ally*.

hysteric

hysteric (hi'stér-ik), *n.* one who is affected with extreme melancholy;—*adj.* pertaining to, or affected with, melancholy.

hypo-cot-yl (hi'pò'kò't-yl), *hip'ò's*, *n.* that part of the axis of a stem, below the cotyledons (see *permeation*);—*adj.* pertaining to, or affected with, hypococtylous;—*adv.* *hypococtyl-ous-ly*.

hypo-crit-ic (hi'pò'krit-ik), *n.* a person who practices pretense of deception to gain his own ends;—*adj.* *hypocrit-ic-al*, *adv.* *hypocrit-ic-ally*. *Syn.* dissembler, impostor, cheat.

hy-po-der-mic (hi'pò'dér'mik; hip'ò'), *adj.* 1, pertaining to the parts under the skin; 2, inserted under the skin; hypodermic needle, a hollow needle attached to a small pump, for injecting liquids under the skin;—*n.* a medicine thus injected.

hy-po-gas-tric (hi'pò'gás'trik; hip'ò'), *adj.* pertaining to the lower part of the stomach;—*n.* *hypogast-ric* (hi'pò'sul'tik; hip'ò'), a white, coarsely crystalline compound, used in photography as a fixing agent, and in bleaching, tanning, etc.;—*adv.* *hypogast-ric-ally*.

hy-poth-e-nuse (hi'pò'th'é-nús; hí'), *n.* the triangle opposite the right angle of a right-angled triangle. Also, *hypoth'e-nus*; *hi-*.

hypoth-e-cate (hi'pò'th'é-kát; hí'), *v.t.* [*p.t.* *cat'ed*, *p.pr.* *cat-ing*, *p.p.* *cat-ed*] to hedge (propose) by a hypothesis.


hypoth-e-sis (hi'pò'th'é-sis; hí'), *n.* [*p.t.* *cat'ed*, *p.pr.* *cat-ing*, *p.p.* *cat-ed*] a supposition, or a conjecture. Also, *hypoth'e-sis*.

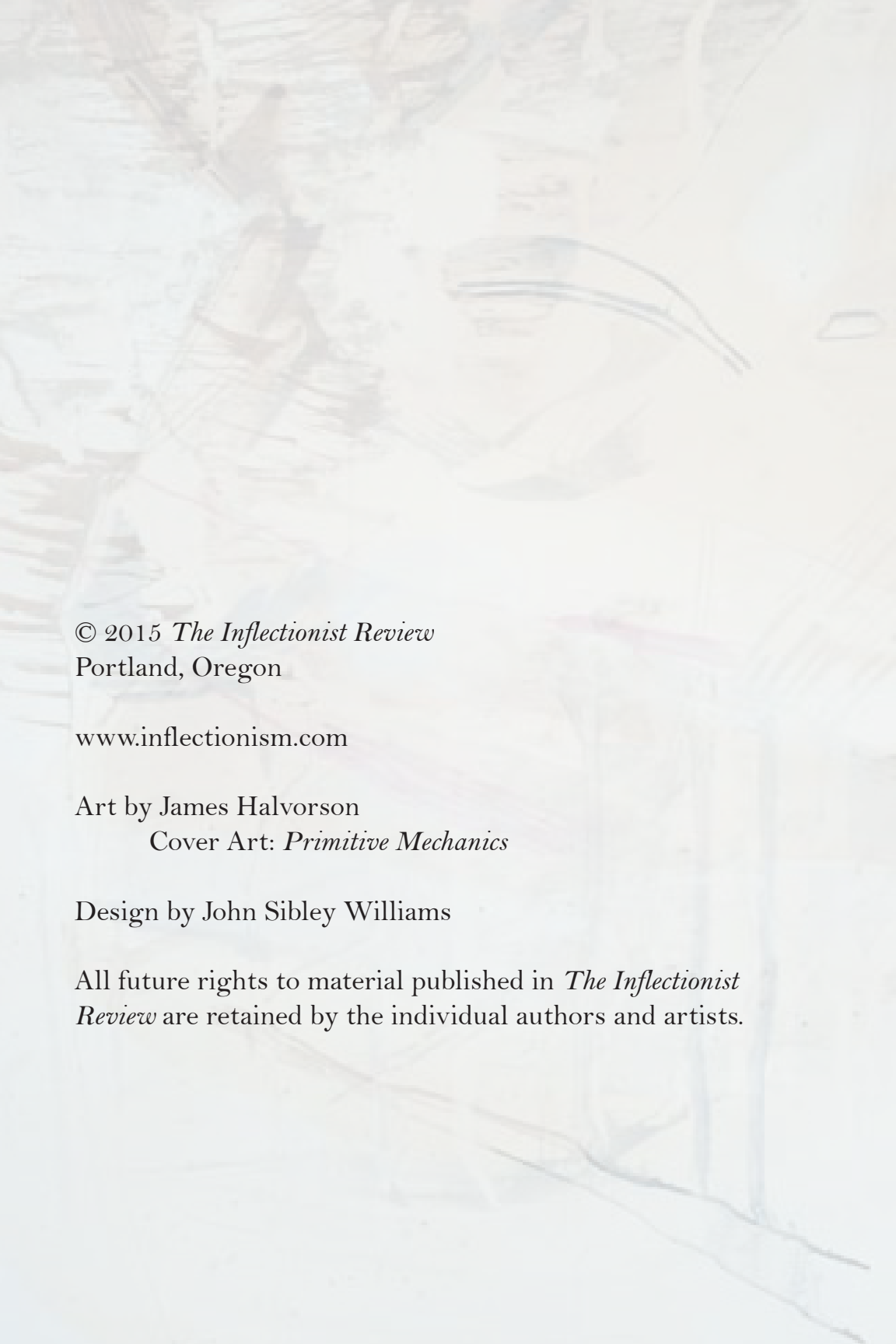
hypoth-e-tic-al-ly (hi'pò'th'é-ti-kál-ly; hí'), *adv.* 1, used as a supposition, or a conjecture; 2, in a hypothetical manner;—*n.* *hypothetic-al-ly*.

hypocrite (hi'pò'krit; hí'), *n.* a fragrant medicinal plant;—*adj.* pertaining to, or affected by, the plant; also, its medicinal qualities.

hysterics (hi'stér-iks), *n.pl.* used as a term of nervous and uncontrolled crying.

hysteric (hi'stér-ik), *n.* a writer, novel; nine, pin; locus; noon, foot; sour; coin;





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The
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Review

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mission

The Inflectionist Review is a small press publishing stark and distinctive contemporary poetry that fosters dialog between the reader and writer, between words and their meanings, between ambiguity and concept. Each issue gathers established and emerging voices together toward the shared aim of unique expression that resonates beyond the author's world, beyond the page, and speaks to the universality of human language and experience.

Inflectionism is an artistic movement that was started in 2010 by three Portland, Oregon poets who sought a more organic approach that respected both poet and reader, both words and interpretation. As a creative philosophy, Inflectionism seeks to build upon what has come before and gently bend it to reflect what has and has not changed about the world and the language we use to express it.

editors

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from the editors

*Our world spins, yet stays
where we are.*

Objectively, the world exists outside our own experiences. We spin upon it. We are born and vanish and are forgotten with little consequence to the whole. But we are not objective animals, and it could well be argued that the only world we'll ever know is that which spins inside us, spins for us. How we perceive the outside world is unique to us, and as temporary. Joe Bisicchia's enigmatic lines speak to the heart of this conundrum. As *the* world continues on without us, *our* world "stays where we are." Many other poems in this issue address this spin, as they work to fuse subjective and objective experience.

We are honored to present the intimate yet conceptual work of award-winning poet Kelli Allen in this issue's Distinguished Poet section, alongside the de- and recontextualizing work of featured artist James Halvorson.

Each piece in *TIR* thrives within its own created world yet adds to the larger dialogue we hope to foster. We invite you to join the conversation.

— A. Molotkov and John Sibley Williams



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distinguished poet

Kelli Allen

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Contributors



Cheryl Snell

Defect

There's a hole
on the page. The air
going through it
seems empty, too.
Some see a blank space.
To others it's wide
open, ready to be
filled with erasers.
Designed to crumble alphabets
once thought permanent,
the gum rubs each mark raw.
This can't help but leave a stain
the color of fog and smoke—
so before you set out into a world
of black and white, learn your grays.
They will tell you all you need
to know about absence.

Cheryl Snell

Streamer

To cry
one's eyes out
the base
of the socket
must hollow: where
the nerves pinch
imagine ribbons
dancing
in the presence
of a sunken sun;
and as the river below
overflows
its cracked and
shallow bed
imagine the stars
watching you
as you come to
the end of all
your human grief.

Christina Murphy

Inside the Sound of Breath

Inside the sound of breath
your reflection is a mirror
of a kiss and an electric web.

In your embrace there is no chance
of the senses becoming a portrait
or of stars falling into a coffin.

Don't bet on what scores might be settled;
by the shore, a wolf waits and traces
breath-clouds into the cold, thin air.

Christina Murphy

Dark Surprises

I exchange the memory of your face for a lake
and the chance to place lanterns on the shore

Ripples are glass at sunset and only the mind
of the moon knows why currents are not flames

May no dark surprises appear
in the crests of silver rain that used to be a sea

There are no chances to take or to regret when neither
of us remembers the language

Bob Meszaros**Deathwatch**

Stripped to the brittle bone
you've known the dead of winter,
time of broken limbs and fleshless
clawing fingers, when burls appear
on oaks as wooden tumors and fallen
leaves are buried under snow.

And now, behind the bird
bath with its crown of ice, high
above our backyard feeder,
the hawk is perched, its talons
and its hooked beak ready.

Motionless and silent—your
head held high, your eyes wide
open—hour after hour you watch
him from our bedroom window,
like a songbird turned to stone,

waiting for the silent
free-fall, the wide-winged
shadow on the snow.

Jennifer Tonge

The Room in Which We'll Meet (M. W.)

A dark teak room,
 almost a box,
 many beautiful pegs
 and hinges.
 And the delicate-strung
 hammers—your fingers,
 playing as on a cat's spine.

Recollections



Pepper Trail

Curator

I work in the arithmetic of skulls
Adding, subtracting white bones
Wolf and wolf and dog and dog and fox
Cataloging each row of dead

The orbits of the eyes hollow
Holding expression still
Tooth lines curve and shine
Never not hungry
Never not waiting
For the mistake I will make

In the equation of jaws
I am constant
Prey
My fingers move
Clever, fiddling, weak
And heavy with blood

Kate Soules



The Direction of Energy

The night and day are not
so different. At any time
we can close our hands,
a bowl crafted from palms
and fingertips, filled with a light
we pretend to blow
(as) dust in each other's faces.
In this same manner
you keep the dandelion,
a head full of wishes
and everywhere for them to go.
They plant deeply back into the ground.
We can only hold our breath
for so long. And this
is our strength:
we know
in a lick and upraised hand
that our finger
directs the wind.

Joe Bisicchia

Shape and Form

We know ourselves,
the backs of our hands.

Perhaps
we want to know more.

Perhaps at times
we look afar
to where horizon goes jagged
and so much bends
and dissipates to stars.

Perhaps faraway heaven
suspends in our nearsighted vision
and lands close at hand.

Our world spins, yet stays
where we are.

Alice B. Fogel

Applicable Echoes

but let's keep on trying not to talk about this
 okay just let it cross our minds
 without etching through or trickling down
 even if it does a musical score
 that went missing a labor of love
 plastered over by rain
 leaked under eaves try not to
 bring up how much the wanting
 to escape defines our staying the context
 that haunts us keep coming back
 to the actual applications
 of our hands what they held
 what they tried to do before more dark fell
 the trees and other things that weren't trees
 the interpretations that had nothing to do
 with what

Andrea Witzke Slot

Time zones and the art of healing

I.

The last thing to be caught
 is air, the way it parts for us,
 our invisible blood-red sea,
 holding days open like curtains
 on a windowsill stage,
 framing the glassed impediments of agony,
 even as we move onward, forward,
 in steel ages of flight, the wind
 stealing the sealed gifts
 of minutes that bubble up
 just beyond our clasp,
 as we move west,
 as we move,
 as we—

II.

How does the sky
 unfurl hours not before known?
 What do we erase in the circular awl,
 corkscrewing round and down,
 where so much is contained,
 invisible, outlying still?

III.

Once, for a whole year, I thought
 I was older than I was. I couldn't
 be bothered to do the math.
 When my husband pointed out

Time zones and the art of healing

my blunder, I felt I had entered
 the daylight savings of life,
 winning back the year I had lost.

IV.

Forgetting bores
 into the fleshy sides of time,
 pockmarking memory
 as it runs ahead like
 a child at the beach,
 carving a path along
 the cliff-edge of water,
 a child who looks back smiling,
 dangerously near sea's verge,
 and no matter how fast we move,
 she is faster still, her hair coppered
 in the sun, her laugh always—

V.

We too are the plane-wing awl
 cutting into wood-fired clouds
 where the sun refuses to set—
 a light racing onward—
 and we will never know
 what it means for
 the body to stand still
 until it is too late
 and I miss you
 and all that floats just ahead
 in air and clouds



Time zones and the art of healing

beckoning me with absent hands
and a so-long smile
and the shadow cast on the
tiny towns and roads
and cars that move
like toys below—

VI.

Wait long enough, move long enough,
and we might just find the crossroads, midsky.
There, where the west again becomes east,
where east again becomes west,
the curtains relax, the windows open,
and in the gust that enters like a gasp,
time and motion
slip away,
and all pain becomes absorbed,
quiet,
all life, all death,
directionless—

Andrea Witzke Slot



Disguises

—for Michelle

The scar-line smile
on a moonless night.
The empty wine bottles
that line a kitchen counter,
music blaring in the hall.
The wig woven from
the hair of live women.
And a quarter past midnight,
in your absence, we talk,
and, sometimes, we laugh.

Penelope Scambly Schott

It was different when he died

or maybe it was almost the same, no fireworks, no lightning, just ordinary objects in ordinary places, the eggbeater in the bottom kitchen drawer, a dusty set of shoe trees facing forward on his closet shelf, and wadded up in my right front pocket, a cheap cotton handkerchief printed with strawberries for whenever I might be able to cry, but so far I hadn't cried, only stared at the clock that didn't care what time a man had died. I straightened the quilt and emptied the bedroom wastebasket into the kitchen trash before I made the one requisite phone call, and during the hour I was waiting for men to arrive in their requisite black suits to carry him away in a zipped bag, I considered how many days and nights I could have let him lie there in our bed looking so much like himself.

Penelope Scambly Schott

First Astronomy Lesson

Peer up through the black bowl of night,
and hold still. Even the highest stars
vibrate and hum. From where you stand,
it's hard to tell which of the stars
are small or far. The frost-heaved dirt
under your feet shimmers like those stars
you first saw when you were young
by the lake and someone arranged stars
into dot-to-dot pictures you could almost draw
with your pointer finger so blips of stars
turned into dippers or a queen on a chair
or Orion the hunter with his sword of stars,
and you asked, Would he kill the coyotes
who sang all night on your hill under stars?
You were taken home and tucked into bed
and when you woke up, there were no stars,
no more coyotes, just milky flakes sogging
at the bottom of a blue ceramic cereal bowl.

featured artist

James Halvorson

artist statement

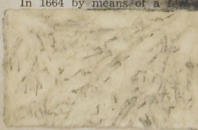
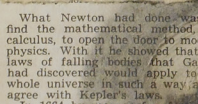
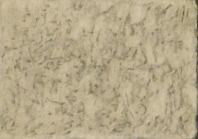
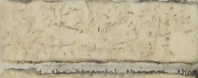
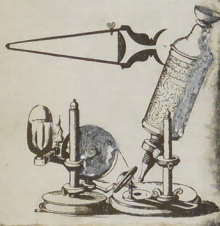
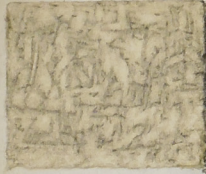
These acrylic mixed media collages on paper, encyclopedia pages, and book covers can be viewed as a technology intended to involve us and then go beyond. The compositions meld abstraction, text, and figures to demonstrate philosophies as personifications of the human condition where various cultural heritages are interwoven, and real objects are represented in unfamiliar settings. These objects serve to make new arrangements by chance and necessity and create narratives by loosening meaning.

I am interested in how one image can have numerous connotations and the way identities transfer between signifiers. My work is intended to get at the idea of how our collective agreement on truth is formed and how that is reconciled on individual terms. The themes take a historical view on the development of academia, and the history of our media. I want the instantaneous sensibilities of contemporary experience embedded in primitive object technology. Our web of knowledge, the certainties formed by our personal histories, are reflected in these works. I source through studies in history, economics, emerging media, ecology, philosophy and enjoy integrating these disciplines through a research-based approach to art.

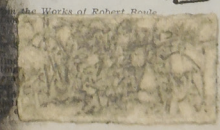
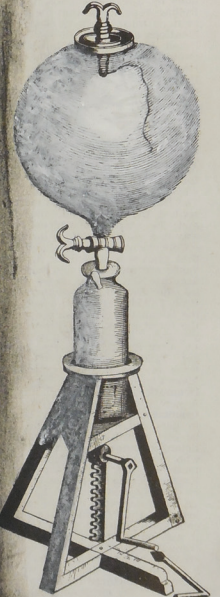
I find flashes of inspiration while reading and moving about my places in the world. My mediums are a combination of original photography, drawings inspired by scholarship, and painted images. My process allows subjects to converge, to bring about moment-specific meaning, to generate stories that remain open-ended for the beholder to complete. Usually I extend narrative by integrating elements from one piece to the next.

— James Halvorson

HISTORY OF SCIENCE



sublimation, mercury. The same
 for application of the elements
 and way to the study of chemi-
 cal for medical purposes and to the
 study of chemistry for its own sake.
 Lavoisier had become chemistry.
 Robert Boyle (1627-91) first gave
 value of elements in chemistry
 and physical properties of gases.
 the invention of his barometer
 Evangelista Torricelli (1608-47),
 Blaise Pascal (1623-62) and Otto von
 Guericke (1602-86) experiments on
 pressure of the atmosphere. Boyle
 his assistant Robert Hooke
 (1635-1703) built an improved air
 pump with which they were able to
 produce a high vacuum. With this
 Boyle performed experiments that
 enabled him to find the weight
 of the atmosphere. Further experi-
 ments led to the relation between
 the volume and pressure of
 and established the principle that bears
 his name - Boyle's Law. Some
 other work however, had caused
 loss of faith in the three-element
 theory, and it was replaced by
 combustion theory of Johann-Zoëpfer
 (1680-82) and George Ernst
 Stahl (1704-80). This theory
 all metals are made of earth and
 plus phlogiston. When
 metal is heated the
 phlogiston is set off and the caloric
 this means of this theory was
 able to give a satisfactory
 explanation of many chemical facts
 and it led to two things: a more
 detailed study of the nature of gases
 and their reactions with other sub-
 stances, and renewed efforts to de-
 termine what a chemical element is.
 Joseph Black (1728-96) dis-
 covered carbon dioxide and the
 heat of fusion of ice. Priestley
 discovered oxygen and its prop-
 erties, which were very important
 in what was the first step toward
 metal's giving up phlogiston, now
 called oxidation. Scheele
 Priestley's work on oxygen. Scheele
 (1742-86) discovered chlorine and
 studied its properties. Lavoisier
 (1783-1810) showed that it burns
 to form water. Most
 whose work in studying
 gases led to the downfall
 phlogiston theory. Lavoisier
 believed in that theory when he
 Antoine Lavoisier (1773-93) when
 overthrew the phlogiston theory.
 Black and Cavendish's experiments
 in phlogiston theory. Lavoisier
 but some of the others had
 believe what Lavoisier's experiments
 showed clearly to be the truth.
 Lavoisier was thus the founder
 modern chemistry. He not only
 overthrew the phlogiston theory,
 he introduced the use of the
 to chemistry, which led to the
 discovery of mathematical laws
 a collection of chemical facts
 together by principles. He intro-
 duced the terminology of chemistry,
 eliminating the confusion of the
 different names for each sub-
 stance and establishing a system that indi-
 cates the nature of the com-
 pounds. His experiments
 were the basis of modern
 chemistry. In a known



What Newton had done was to
 find the mathematical method, the
 calculus, to open the door to modern
 physics. With it he showed that the
 laws of falling bodies that Galileo
 had discovered would apply to the
 whole universe in such a way as to
 agree with Kepler's laws.
 In 1664 by means of a

15 2014



Mystery Museum



Sewing Chair

PRONUNCIATION KEY

The primary stress mark (/) is placed after the syllable bearing the heavier stress or accent; the secondary stress mark (˘) follows a syllable having a somewhat lighter stress, as in com-men-dation, (kom-en-tā-shən).

a	add, map	m	move, seem	u	up, done
ā	ace, rate	n	nice, tin	ū (r)	urn, term
ā(r)	cave, air	ng	ring, song	yōō	use, few
ā	palp, father				
b	bat, rub	o	odd, hot	v	van, eve
ch	check, catch	ō	open, so	w	win, away
d	dog, rod	ō	order, law	y	yet, yearn
e	end, pet	oi	oil, boy	z	zest, muse
ē	even, tree	ou	out, now	zh	vision, pleasure
f	fit, half	ōō	pool, food		
g	go, log	ōō	took, full	a	the schwa, an un-
h	hope, hate	p	pit, stop		stressed vowel
i	it, give	r	run, poor		representing the
ī	ice, white	r	see, pass		sound spelled
j	joy, job	s	sure, rush		a in <i>above</i>
k	cool, base	t	talk, that		e in <i>sicken</i>
l	look, rate	th	than, path		i in <i>clarity</i>
		th	this, rather		o in <i>melon</i>
					u in <i>focus</i>

The schwa (ə) varies widely in quality from a sound close to the (u) in *put* to a sound close to the (i) in *it* as heard in pronunciations of such words as *about, custom, landed, horse*.

The (r) in final position as in *star* and before a consonant as in *heart* (here, as regularly indicated in the spellings, but pronunciations with (r) are unquestionably reputable, Standard British is more like the speech of Eastern New England and the South in this feature).

In a few words, such as *anion, anion, anion*, the (n) in the unstressed syllable because the (n) constitutes the syllable.

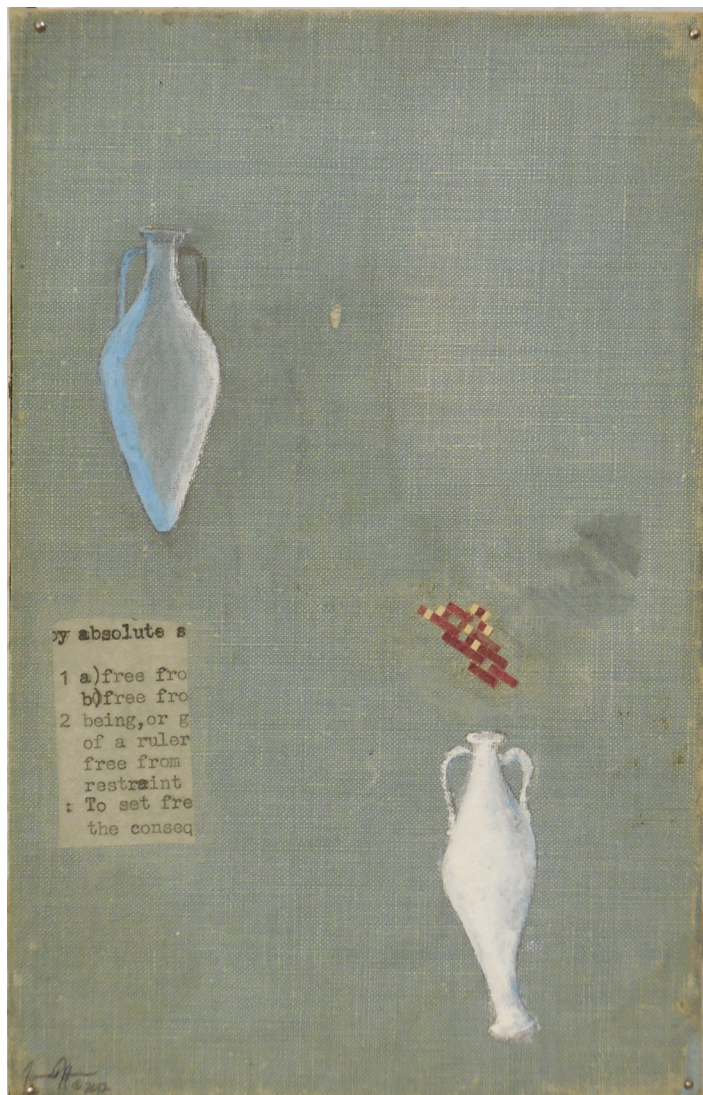
FOREIGN SOUNDS

- a [ɑ] French *ami, pâte*. This is a vowel midway in quality between (a) and (ā).
- æ [æ] French *cat, bas*, German *schon*. Round the lip as in (a) and pronounce (æ).
- ɛ [ɛ] French *été*, German *gran*. Round the lip as in (e) and pronounce (ɛ).
- ɛ [ɛ] German *schick*, Scottish *loch*. Pronounce a separate syllable with the tongue in position for (d) as in *cool* or *keep*.
- ɛ [ɛ] This symbol indicates that a preceding (l) or (r) is voiceless, as in *French fin-de-siècle* (fan-de-sye'siè'l) or *finière* (fyè'l); that a preceding (r) is pronounced consonantly in a separate syllable followed by a slight schwa sound, as in French *filles* (fè'y); or that a consonant preceding a (y) is palatalized, as in Russian *oblast* (ò'blest'y).

NOTE ON THE ACCENTUATION OF FOREIGN WORDS

Many languages do not employ stress in the manner of English; only an approximation can be given of the actual situation in such languages. As it is not possible to reproduce the tones of Chinese in a work of this kind, Chinese names have been here recorded with primary stress on each syllable and may be so pronounced. Japanese and Korean have been shown without stress and may be pronounced with a level accent throughout. French words are shown conventionally with a primary stress on the last syllable; however, this stress tends to be evenly divided among the syllables (except for those that are completely unstressed), with slightly more force and higher pitch on the last syllable.

Paul H. ...
1924



Amphorae Absolved



Aleph-Etre

Thomas Pescatore

Dark Circles

There were dark circles
under her eyes, charcoal

transcribed. Fix the
picture, she said

it's tilted to one side, she said.
My daughter. I don't have a

daughter. Not yet.

In another memory
maybe. Another life.

Our walls have no
stories. Painting either.

There was none.
An empty space. A chair.
Me.

Jose Angel Araguz



Naos Explains Memory

Like gradual blindness: each day, more and more, a mix of less and less.

What you do see, you say you remember. What filters through: a voice, car lights,
the ends of a dress. Singular and graphic. A strong whiskey.

A root you cannot shake from your body. The color of the last moon.

In a city you do not remember leaving.

Jose Angel Araguz



Naos Explains Ghosts

The blue-white of the mountains has the look of what we mean.
The look of the past. The look of something in the way. Of cloud and smoke.
Distance, fabric. What you feel, what it is made of. Water, ash, air.
The blue-white of mountains takes on the hue of stars.
Those formerly living, now burning, breaks of the past.

Jose Angel Araguz

Naos Explains X

A poet's compass. The crossed arms of someone sulking.
The shape assumed when they would draw and quarter.
On the eyes of the dead. On bottles of poison.
Letter of the killed and killing. On a treasure map:
the imprint of lipstick forming a twisted smile.

Jose Angel Araguz

Naos and Who He Would Pray To

A god like the guitar in its case in the corner. A god leaning against the wall
 in the shape of what it is. When something falls hard to the floor,
 you can hear the strings answer. A god who answers each fall.
 For whom falling becomes prayer. Footsteps, prayer. Slammed door, prayer.
 Prayer of the turned page. A god, from inside the shape of itself, listening.



Meanderings Chapter 2

Patrice Pinette**Blue Door**

Sometimes it is simple as opening an envelope:
What appears to be two dimensions becomes three.

Sky seen through trees—a blue door in the woods
opens us. Mushrooms are gateways;

have you too stepped through a door the rain made?
Other doors revolve. Like green ones in the waves.

You may think water will never break. But then it does—
and you push against it and it keeps opening

if you care to step out—
into the lobby. If not, you may continue going

in circles as others arrive with their luggage,
push lightly on the glass and disappear.

Edward Dougherty

may I be the vase of plenty

reduced to a wish

an object one

that never empties

being empty

where the red richness
the flower on display
is a place

hospitable
and healing

beauty arranged

(happened upon)

has power
being
presence

my true prayer

Julia Webb**This is how to fall**

Balance yourself on the edge,
close your eyes to the river, the mud,
the to and fro of cars on the road below.

Draw a soft breath of resolve,
puff your chest out like a bird,
stretch out your arms and take flight.

Drop into something mid-way
between a tumble and glide,
feel the air tug at your skin and clothes,

the cold rush of wind.
Hear the world's almost silence,
the secret whistle that only the falling hear.

Julia Webb

Counterpoint

(i)

two birds together
whose voices rise in song

(ii)

one looks forward
the other looks back

(iii)

on the one hand Robin
on the other Crow

(iv)

how unbelonging
can feel like belonging

(v)

to be outside yet inside
to be inside yet outside

(vi)

how the same words sound
different in the mouth of another

Veer Frost

We Would Someday Exist (Father poem #2)

Later, though much was purported to be known, in beach wrack
left between tides all text is alteration
of what no-one could have believed anyway,

a literate sea placing stories wherever it could
(fin, skeleton, eye)

so that we would someday exist as imagoes

in the dunes between world and word, both rising,
mirrored. Shapes of horses between seagrass legs—

*

Dream. Small now, holding out your dish for ice cream

*

Ferry rides, dimpled brilling bubbles,
carousel bumps over water like palms up begging for some blessing—

and a fearless act, which is
to leave

*

Green, peeling deck,
this slippery pretend, something only to be heard,

sailing a wide, vaseline shine



We Would Someday Exist (Father poem #2)

Listen *listen*

treeless waves dispersing, we come to silence,

unwindowed, and if I drew the boat's smile I omitted
the blue dusk shadow that blew us east,

Don't look it will never be over

Anton Frost**graffito**

i.

i mistake
a broken piece of chalk

wedged in a crack
in the pavement

for a lipstick-stained
cigarette.

it shrugs between
a tiny lilypad of blackened gum

and a shattered peanut shell
that wants badly

to move
and dance

like the dead leaves
but is too flat

to catch any
of the wind.

ii.

i rub away
red grains


graffito

of dried blood
from between my finger and thumb,

the shaving nick
on my throat

almost
closed.

i work the chalk-piece
out of the sidewalk crack

with my fingers,
then turn it

again and again
in my palm

as if it were the final
shard of soap

when washing my hands.
i put it in my pocket

and keep walking,
every surface

suddenly calling out
for an image

or a name.

distinguished poet

Kelli Allen

the interview

Q: “I want this experience to be unpolluted.” The theme of authentic experience and the obstacles in the way of such experience haunts much of your work. Some obstacles seem intrinsic to our state of being while we end up placing other obstacles in our own way. Do you believe there is such a thing as an unpolluted experience? How do this question and the search for its answer inform your poetry?

For me, the first way to consider this question is not through words and dissections of writing processes, but through discussion regarding the physical experience of the world. Authentic experience happens from the body. When we dance, when we swim in clear water, when we are willingly wrapped in physical entanglements, we are doing so in the absence of language, especially written. Being in motion through music or cutting through salty water or touching one another through bliss means that obstacles, however momentarily, are put away, are distant enough that we can experience pleasure for its own sake. In writing, this is not the case. Every time I unpack words, let my personal lexicons of meaning begin their weird unfurlings, I cannot escape the stories of my own past, the myths and folktales that follow me, the fear of saying too much too soon, of not saying enough. I believe we are our own obstacles, always, and any Other that we encounter can be embraced, destroyed, or examined, but rarely ignored. Our linguistic experiences are inherently polluted by our imaginations and our ceaseless attempts to make sense of them with words, but this is not a negative—to be dramatic, though truthful, for me the cosmos seems ridiculously polluted with bodies of every elemental variety. This does not mean their existence is any less pure for the crowding.

Q: In a number of your poems you compare humanity and often yourself to a “small animal”. What attracts you to our animal nature and why do you think this theme manifests itself in your writing?

We *are* small animals, comparatively. We are also quite physically dull—where are our feathers, our fangs and fluffy tails, our bright scales and fins? I look to fairy stories when thinking about this question.... There must be many reasons

why so much folklore and fairy tale hinges upon transformation from human to other animal and back again. I am sometimes consumed with wondering what it would mean to have another shape, to have that wing or claw, and how such an addition would change how I move about in this world. I think we have culturally distanced ourselves from other animals to such a degree that we cannot remember burning our own furry paws in the first fires. Animals (who are not us) demonstrate an awareness, perhaps even reverence, for the world they inhabit. I write with this awareness as longing, as forgetfulness, as need for communion.

Q: There seem to be two interwoven worlds in your poetry: that of nature and that of wheels and armour and steel and “mechanical bliss”. And your characters (often the universal “we”) seem distanced from the former because of the latter. Is this how you view the human experience? Are we just tourists here or are we active agents?

I'll take a risk here and answer this quite candidly. I grew-up with an extremely ill mother. Some of my earliest memories of her are populated with images of pills and tubes and wires and tiny, often rusty gurney wheels. I learned early to associate the natural world with the unnatural one. In order for my mother to take me to the beach, my favourite natural space, she would need medication, machine assistance, therapies, and I soon understood that experiencing nature comes with a price for many of us. When my mother died a few years ago, she did so in rebellion against the mechanical, which was the greatest irony of her life. She simply said “enough” and figuratively and literally disconnected herself from the hospital world and wound her way back to the universe of her kitchen and her beloved objects and just stopped.

Human experience has become something inextricable from the machinations of what we have crafted to help ourselves live among animals and plants and elements we can barely even remember how to name. If my characters, (who are as Rumi tells us, really just variations of myself), are distanced from the wings and sand they desire most, it is due to an inability to reach such spaces without consideration of the necessary armour and steel they need to pack to even attempt the journey. We are tourists in that I do not believe any of us understands the word “home” in context of both planet and personal space. We are active agents in our longing to settle somewhere, somehow, anyway.

Q: Although you weigh conceptual concerns and ask broad human questions, your poetry also feels personal. How do you balance the intimate nature of your work with the larger world?

I have loved Russian nesting dolls since I was a child. They are eggs within eggs within eggs.... And for me, being in this world is a continual hatching. Sometimes we let others see us peeking from atop one split shell, and other times we pop directly out and take whatever may come as punishment or reward for our boldness. Regardless of how we peck and pop from one egg or another, we can always find a way to climb back in if we must—there are shells everywhere! The personal is nestled in concentric rings of the wider world, always. Learning how to balance the selves within larger and smaller selves, in varying degrees of visibility, is, for me, what it means to be part of a whole.

Q: We love the title of your poetry collection, “Otherwise Soft White Ash”. How did it come about?

I have a rather simple answer for this one: The “Otherwise” is the warning suggested if we refuse to acknowledge what haunts us, what makes us feel sharply aware of our temporal selves. If we ignore how much of this life is blur and bursting, then it’s all ash rather quickly. We may scoop it up and feel how delicate, how soft and light it is, but the heft of whatever *was* will have disappeared completely. We have so many choices, but for me, the most significant is choosing to stay awake

Q: Was the music there already? Are we simply finding it? Or are we creating it?

Yes. Yes to all three suggestions. Music begins when we open our mouths for the first full wail after birth. It is there in the rhythmic suckling and sucking we associate with calm, nourishment, and with excitement. We begin to recognize our body’s sounds as musical when we are extremely young. For the poet, for the storyteller, this recognition is a natural bridge to using and offering symbols. As we become more aware of organic musicality, we can manipulate it with our own syntax, our own unique diction.

Q: Is the truth “between my hand and the reaching”, or is it in the touch? Your poetry is infused with longing: for closeness, for understanding. Yet, understanding completely would put an end to an intellectual’s journey, and perhaps to any possibility of enjoying life. How do you see poetry in the space between understanding and the lack thereof?

If we ever stop longing, then what’s the proverbial point? Even the fish in the water stays thirsty. I do not believe in “complete understanding,” not in any interpretation of the phrase. Poetry *is* the space between understanding and desire. The line allows us to offer integrity though exploration of sound, through assumed meaning, yes, but it does not answer questions, and it rarely says “Ah, now I/you/we can understand!” Poetry serves as fingers trying to lace with other fingers—it wants connection, wants to be felt, but we can never be certain of the hand waiting on the other side of reaching. This does not mean that we should not try for the embrace, however small. So, yes, it is in the touch, rather the hope for touch, the quick and thrilling meeting of those fingers, but it is also in the spaces between those connections, where the lines are birthed and then set. Closeness in no way implies understanding. How can anyone honestly presume to understand another in any shade of completeness? Longing is permanent. The Beloved changes shape every time we sigh, exhale, recite the best lines of love and desire. I do not believe in endings.

**Q: What defines a writer’s creative identity?
What defines yours?**

What creates anyone’s identity has something to do with the names we give ourselves. Defining identity is, perhaps, also the attempt to define *home*. If I write to create artefact, and my poems and stories are indeed populated with this intent, then I already have the raw materials needed for naming. I could argue (with myself) that this naming is really a kind of titling, as though the living and the poem making were one and the same. For me, naming both self and a space I can consider home comes from the desire to put will out into the world, to make it fit to breathe, even when shame (and we are especially defined by shame) tells me to shove it all back into the big black sack. To create anything, is to give it a name. Poetry is, simply, invocation through naming. The writer’s identity rests in her ability to name with grace, honesty. All I can do to assure such identity is leap outward/inward and put words down onto a fibrous square, conjuring what I hope may speak in a recognizable language.

Kelli Allen

Edging Our Wall,
Untying

There is pressure between my hand and the reaching. We ask
longing to become a city for us, but what do we say
when the windows blow inward instead of out
and the streets flood again and again? If I am the length
of this want, and you are the width of some container
as we build up and out, how can we hope to plant grass
near the temple which will be, of course, the center of it all?

I have a bag attached to one wrist and blueprints tight
in a scroll attached to the other. Leaving either on the road
means that we are finished. There are tourists afoot and we
are drenched in something like snow. This may be a diagnosis
I am offering. It may be a solution for the obvious anxiety
of bending our faces down, teeth spaced
to let the wind come in, come in.

Kelli Allen

Deciding Against
Marriage

It is a jeweled evening and everything,
everywhere is mechanical bliss. We have
forgotten migration and these cogs
stand-in for feathered movements.

The oils are as rich as ever, even
though they coat copper and water
wicks its way off other wings.

Ours is an automated afterglow. The release
comes in the rewind, the start-again of wheels
crafted in what might have been our back-
yard had we waded deep enough in the muck to ask.

Kelli Allen

Some Animals

There is a patterned crosshatch in the armor
and no amount of rubbing lessens its impact.

Distraction is the handmaiden of complacency,
or some such thing. I am waiting for a trick

of light to let me shout “what a kingdom!” and go away,
heels clicking *onetwo onetwo* on the marble leading out.

I want this experience to be unpolluted. I want the end
to be a trajectory of my own making. Nothing upsets

contentment quicker than intentionally disturbed metal.
Where is the glimmer, the hangman of glory

cast against steel? Sometimes the only salvation
is in the heron that swoops down from a skylight

we did not even notice to spread wing and waters
over the arch of a shield, of a blade.

Kelli Allen

Separations for Fall,
for Winter, too

What's unlikely is this rain. Even
the sparrows are agitated
and waiting. But I am contacting
you not for some contract to be signed,
finally. Rather, I want us to hurry
across and ripen the letters for evidence
of closing. We have lodged
complaints before and each skims
the pond quick, a rehearsal we perform
in fog. What is likely is assumed distance.

We are not the same small animals
curled against blurred margins
and dropped pebbles. Our hands let
go their thefts months ago. I can hardly
remember accumulations. This is
to convey regret, maybe desire,
too, as my tongue waits, turtle-
shelled in the mouth.

Kelli Allen

Folding the Invitation
to Your Wedding

A plow waits near my broken flashlight. Both
promise a variation of warmth, though
what I can expect to carry by pushing under, giving root,
by some illumination not yet anchored enough
here, on this page asking for response, for
a bond of sorts. What can I ask of you? The curve
of you a fleshy question mark near such open waters.

Why this snuggle into writing when shown the useless
tool and the cylinder all broken plastic and glass? Objects
meant to signify desire for reciprocity become, instead,
talismans for clumsy loss, for wanting more, always more,
than I am ready to let bare in the dirt. It's pale, when it touches
my skin, this god-hand of distance, this god-touch of absence.



Parting Charts

A.M. Clarke

After Death

your hand rests
on the edge
of the kitchen table
there is no
silence here
only the light fading
like the slow
leaking of breath

an apple sits
on the counter
soft lines curving
into the white
shadow of the wall
we take the curtain
turning like a page
in restless sleep
and the sound
of the rain
murmurs cold against
the window

Simon Perchik

[You're new at this]

You're new at this
before each window
your eyes half-closed

you are not used to a rain
that comes right up against you
won't move even when you make room

once you learn where to look
for the sky, for the shoreline
half-gone ahead, half-

peeling off once your fingers
clamp onto its sharp turn
covered with sand and thirst and death

you learn this rain
has saved its memory for last

it will keep trying
to circle you down
as days and nights together

Kenneth Kesner

unfinished as long ago

—to lin biao

something you might have thought
where the past holds
part of tomorrow
and you can't remember how
standing as you were there
on a different day another hour
unaware even skies end slowly
close to all that's gone
with nothing on your mind now
save somewhere and
where to

Patricia George

Allowing

Across the footbridge over the rocks

My body follows to the other side

Words will follow when I know what they are

Until then I will love the garden
 with the bamboo
 with the wild grasses
 with the wildflowers

Reinforcement and Interference



Joseph Somoza**This**

I could take a photo
but it would only be
by someone
who resembles me, sitting
where I once sat.

I shouldn't leave
this chair to go get
the camera.
I should stay and
watch each moment

pass like a breeze
through the locust leaves.

contributors

Kelli Allen's work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies in the US and internationally. She is a four-time Pushcart Prize nominee and has won awards for her poetry, prose, and scholarly work. She served as Managing Editor of *Natural Bridge* and holds an MFA from the University of Missouri St. Louis. She is the director of the River Styx Hungry Young Poets Series and founded the Graduate Writers Reading Series for UMSL. She is currently a Professor of Humanities and Creative Writing at Lindenwood University. Allen is the author of two chapbooks and one flash fiction collection. Her full-length poetry collection, *Otherwise, Soft White Ash*, arrived from John Gosslee Books in 2012. www.kelli-allen.com.

Jose Angel Araguz, author of the chapbook *Corpus Christi Octaves*, is a CantoMundo fellow. Winner of RHINO Poetry's 2015 Editor's Prize, he has had poems recently in *Blue Mesa Review*, *Apple Valley Review*, and *Pilgrimage* as well as in the anthology *Goodbye Mexico: Poems of Remembrance*. He is pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Cincinnati. He runs the poetry blog, *The Friday Influence*.

Joe Bisicchia writes of our shared spiritual dynamic. An Honorable Mention recipient for the Fernando Rielo XXXII World Prize for Mystical Poetry, his works have appeared in several publications, as well as the theatrical stage. The current public affairs professional in New Jersey is a former award winning television host who also taught high school English. His website is www.widewide.world.

A.M. Clarke is originally from Florida. She has lived in Utah for about 4 years and she hasn't seen the beach in nearly that long as well.

Alice B. Fogel is currently the New Hampshire State poet laureate. Her third book, *Be That Empty*, was a national poetry bestseller, and she is also the author of *Strange Terrain*, on how to appreciate poetry without "getting" it. Nominated 7 times for the Pushcart, her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *Best American Poetry*, *Robert Hass's Poet's Choice*, *Yale Letters*, *Hotel Amerika*, and *Upstairs at Duroc*, an international arts journal based out of Paris, and she has received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and other awards. Another book, *Interval: Poems Based on Bach's "Goldberg Variations,"* won the Nicholas Schaffner Award for Music in Literature, and is forthcoming in 2015.

Anton Frost's poems have appeared in several online and print publications, including *Verdad*, *The Bacon Review*, *Grasslimb*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and *Parcel*. He lives in Grand Haven, Michigan.

Veer Frost lives and writes in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, following long residence in England. Her poetry has appeared in *Wollemi*, *Vermont Voices*, and *HerMark*, and is forthcoming in *Illuminations*. After writing a novel financed by a grant from Vermont Studio Center, she finds in the poetic line both more freedom and more responsibility. She recently began to exhibit her paintings.

Patricia George is currently working as a piano accompanist for the high school choirs in her hometown. She has worked as a public school teacher and a tutor in both California and Colorado. She writes poetry because it answers her questions. She writes in her spare time and paints in the summer when school is out. Writing is the art of life — the vessel for all the arts. Publishing credits: *The Muse*, *Dark Matter*, *Anderbo*, *Thoughtsmith*, *Red Booth Review*, *Fortunates*, *Inner Art Journal*, *The Voices Project*, *The Scapegoat Review*, *Penduline Press*, *If and Only If*, *From the Depths*, *Indus Streams* and others

Kenneth Kesner has poems included in *Danse Macabre du Jour*, *Line Zero*, *Retort Magazine*, *Subterranean Blue Poetry*, and *Ygdrasil*. He's a long-time student of Tae Kwon Do.

Bob Meszaros taught English at Hamden High School in Hamden, Connecticut, for thirty-two years. He retired from high school teaching in June of 1999. During the 70s and 80s his poems appeared in a number of literary journals, such as *En Passant* and *Voices International*. In the year 2000 he began teaching part time at Quinnipiac University, and he began once again to submit his work for publication. His poems have subsequently appeared in *The Connecticut Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Concho River Review*, and many other literary journals.

Christina Murphy's poetry is an exploration of consciousness as subjective experience, and her poems appear in a wide range of journals and anthologies, including in *PANK*, *La Fovea*, *Dali's Lovechild*, and *Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal*, and in the anthologies *Let the Sea Find its Edges*, edited by the distinguished Australian poet, Michael Fitzgerald-Clarke, and *Remaking Moby-Dick*, edited by Trish Harris and published by EU Art Line. Her work has been nominated multiple times for the Pushcart Prize and for the Best of the Net Anthology.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poetry has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, and *The New Yorker*.

Tom Pescatore grew up outside Philadelphia dreaming of the endless road ahead, carrying the idea of the fabled West in his heart. He maintains a poetry blog: amagicalmistake.blogspot.com. His work has been published in literary magazines both nationally and internationally but he'd rather have them carved on the Walt Whitman bridge or on the sidewalks of Philadelphia's old Skid Row.

Patrice Pinette is inspired by alchemy between the arts; she dances as well as writes poems, and creates poetry-pastels exhibited with the Visual Poetry Collective. Her poems have appeared in *Northern New England Review*; *Adanna*, *Poetica*; *Evening Street Review*; *Smoky Quartz*; *Mischief*; *Caprice & Other Poetic Strategies*, and *New Hampshire Poets Showcase*, among others. A teacher and tutor, she loves writing with teenagers, leading workshops for adults, and she serves as an adjunct at Antioch University New England. She received her MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Penelope Scambly Schott's most recent book is *How I Became an Historian*.

Andrea Witzke Slot writes poetry, fiction, essays, and academic work, and is particularly interested in the places in which these genres intersect. She is author of the poetry collection *To find a new beauty* (Gold Wake Press, 2012), and her recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in such places as *Southeast Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry East*, *Nimrod*, *SRPR*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and in academic books published by SUNY Press (2013) and Palgrave Macmillan (2014). She has been a finalist, runner-up, and honorable mention in several writing awards this year, including *Southeast Review's* Gearhart Poetry Prize, Black Lawrence Press's Hudson Award for her second book of poetry, AROHO's Clarissa Dalloway book prize for her first novel, and the 2014 Calvino Prize for her short fiction.

Cheryl Snell is the author of *Prisoner's Dilemma* and four other collections of poetry, as well as two novels, *Shiva's Arms* and *Rescuing Ranu*. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in many online and print journals, recently in *PANK*, *Canopic Jar*, *Red River Review*, and *Mixitini Matrix*. She has had work chosen for a Sundress Best of the Net Anthology, *The Centrifugal Eye's* Fifth Anniversary Anthology and the forthcoming *Poetry of the Body: Parts of the Whole*. Her sister and she keep a blog called Scattered Light, and publish many of their collaborations in their own Scattered Light Library.

Joseph Somoza took early retirement from college teaching years ago to have more time for writing and living. He lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, with wife Jill, a painter.

Kate Soules is from Vermont and enjoys hiking the Green Mountains, traveling, reading, and punk rock. She has published previously in *The New Poet*, *Stone Highway Review*, academically, and in journalism. She has a poem forthcoming in the spring issue of the *Concho River Review* and a creative nonfiction piece forthcoming in *Meat for Tea*.

Jennifer Tonge's poems have appeared most recently in *Post Road* and previously in *Poetry*, *New England Review*, and elsewhere. She is a past recipient of a Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing fellowship, Bread Loaf Writer's conference scholarships, and residency fellowships from The MacDowell Colony, the Virginia Center for Creative Arts, the Ucross Foundation, and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program.

Pepper Trail is a biologist and poet living in Ashland, Oregon. His work has appeared in *Spillway*, *Borderlands*, *Kyoto Journal*, *Cascadia Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, and other publications, and has been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net awards. His poetry is varied, but consistently attempts to renew our understanding of the timeless themes of political justice, human connection, and our relationship with the natural world.

Julia Webb is a graduate of the University of East Anglia's poetry MA. In 2011 she won The Poetry Society's Stanza Competition and in 2014 she was shortlisted for the Poetry School/Pighog Pamphlet Prize. She has had work published in *The Rialto*, *Magma*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Other Poetry*, *Interpreter's House*, *Stare's Nest*, *South*, and others. She is a poetry editor for *Lighthouse a Journal* for new writing and she teaches creative writing in the community in Norwich, UK. Julia's first collection *Bird Sisters* will be published by Nine Arches Press in spring 2016.

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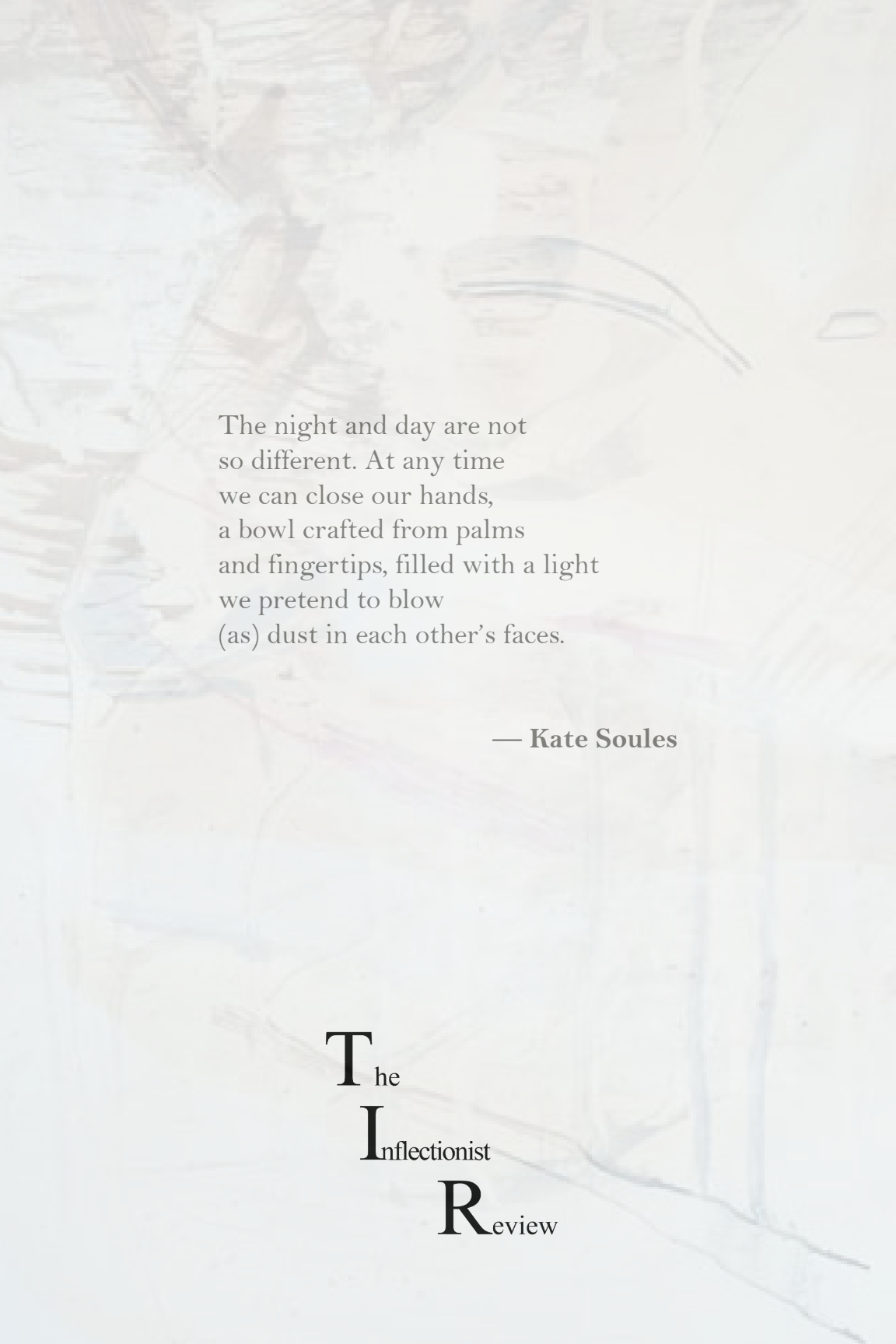
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The night and day are not
so different. At any time
we can close our hands,
a bowl crafted from palms
and fingertips, filled with a light
we pretend to blow
(as) dust in each other's faces.

— Kate Soules

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