



The
Inflectionist
Review

No. 6



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T he
I nflexionist
R eview

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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

A. Molotkov
John Sibley Williams

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from the editors

the smallest object

*is the space between
fact &
truth*

Perhaps never more relevant than in our current cultural and political climate, where facts can be “altered” and truth is whatever you wish it to be, these evocative lines were composed as a kind of conversation between Vancouver, BC poets Linda King and Daniela Elza. Later in the poem, they call these objects, these cherished spaces, *perishable blessings*. Indeed. Though most things decay and vanish in time, fact and truth have long been considered permanent, unyielding fixtures of a right and just society. Many dystopic novels have prophesized the polluting of history, of objective reality itself, by those who seek to wield invented truths as weapons against the people. But how can we tell the difference between the invented and unbiased? How can we reclaim what has been lost in willful mistranslation? These and so many more questions arise from these four short lines. And all the poems in this issue navigate equally complex questions in their own ways. Only your experience of them can provoke answers.

We are honored to present the evocative, nature-infused work of Kristin Berger in this issue’s Distinguished Poet section, alongside the unique ecological landscapes and human figures of Featured Artist Anne John.

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, The Editors

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Kelly Terwilliger
Under My Pillow

A ribbon, a cough, a whale's tooth. The book
I meant to open. A nest
 of turtle's eggs
 buried in the sand
waiting for the sun to call them
down the long
beach of my bed to the sea in the dark
beyond me.

 Galaxy, machine, mind
twinkle, breathe, like night spread over
the harbor that once harbored me.

 Fog makes white blossoms
 out of anything bright
 and covers your face like a veil.

 Boats rock their loose
 ropes, and winches jangle in voices
 talking themselves to sleep

 under my pillow
the sea sighs
unrolls, pulls back again. My father folds
the clothes he wasn't buried in.

 My grandmother rustles, a bird
 in the kitchen that would be yellow
if any light were lit. She waits for the coffeepot to mutter.

Who knows what she thinks when she is alone
in the rooms of my mind.
The door is open.
The lost things come and go as they please.

Kelli Allen

Svalinn: learning the names for shield when we strip the arrows

Eventually, ruin will stencil itself letter-by-letter into upholstery already ripped, gaping cotton bellies from the backseat of the car you won't let me enter, lean against, starched dress excluded. Later, I might tremble under

whichever palm you slide over my hip. *Wreckage* is just another word for gardening. I had to make up a tangible kingdom once hypnosis lifted, flattened as taffeta smoothed over, blister free and marking the other side of this spine, those failed woods.

We spill and collect, sometimes so close, rivering into storm doors you painted shut. I expect a cliff ringed swirling with hammerheads below and ships reflected above, where sky might have been through fog, gray wolves cloud-running instead, holy, fettered prayers.



Rebecca Macijeski

On Gray Days, What We Become

My mind is another tchotchke on a shelf
gathering dust blown up from passing stories
until a break in the rain and we remember
we are the truths we tell each other
of how a thought starts as an artifact
buried in the mind
until a slant of light shows it clean,
a gloss just there on its corner,
and we pull it slowly from its deep earth
and think it over and over in our hands
—first a box, then a chest, then a burial,
then a place we put things hoping we'll remember,
hoping when we next open the tidy thought house
we'll recognize the part of us we stashed inside.



Timothy Kercher

Salt & Bones

The mammalian bone
is not art, whatever
stage of decomposition.
The neck bone is not
connected to the head
bone. By principle, any
visible bone is to some
extent disembodied. And
what use, the one hundred ear
bones without an ear? Marrow
at the core is still
edible, but to what? A bone
does not long for life. Purpose?
To frame existence, support
the ideal that life
is both resilient under
pressure and precious. Oh,
agony of bone
no longer responsible
to keep a shape. What
difference from
Lot's wife, if
the flesh has
dropped away?



Joel Showalter
Watershed

It happens without warning:
one night you're driving a car

up a street that you know,
and all at once you find yourself

in another place, as surely
as if you have crossed a line

on a map. Nothing is different, really,
not the car, its opened window,

the easy rain—just that the wedge
of light from the street lamp

hangs at an unfamiliar angle,
that the wet pavement shimmers

in a thrilling new way,
that the night has become audible,

tuned like a string, singing,
like the space now open within you,

slight, imperceptible, except for
the wind it lets in, softly whistling.



Cheryl Snell

Disturbance

I should name it, this detonation,
this bursting. I should enter it,
wrap it around me,
mold its shape to mine,
since anything could
fit in there now:
a tongue the color of a bruise,
the flat of a slapping hand
fat with veins that run
the body, its narrow channels,
filled with singing blood
that echoes in the ear
convinced it heard a message there,
a warning it would recognize
if it ever heard it again.



Cheryl Snell

Afterimage

as if it is
what it was and not
the figure in the driveway
satchel in hand
edged out of the picture
looking for a strategy
against loss
when it's too dark
to see
that light is non-essential
to an image
lost and recovered
so many times
it burns through
to the gleam.



Peter Grandbois

No matter /how/ we move / alone

You live
in two worlds
but still can't
hear me
becoming.

You love
like a word
game where
every minute
lasts an hour
and every voice
speaks until
no story
remains.

You ask
if I can
hold you
from the inside,
if you can
ride the music
of my skin,
as if you
could begin.



Peter Grandbois

As if somewhere a fire

Winter sneaks in while I sleep.

The chainsaw whines through wood
as if it knows the trick of suffering.

Deep in the dream,
I bundle myself in layer upon layer,

as if I can carry you with me.

Nearer the surface,
the murmuring of bees
my desire,

like broken sky
over the softening snow,

like every thing, we pray.

I am a sleepwalker, slipping
through your house.

I turn the corner and
there you are,

as if somewhere a fire.



Peter Grandbois

The forest between

being and not is slipping the same way
night flies from my head the moment I wake

and I'm left trying to recall the feel
of your hand in mine as you sat beside
me while I slept or thought I did between
what trees say and what they fail to say it's
not enough to stroll straight through a spare dream
or across a grave with an empty hand
not nearly enough to scatter flowers
over a white field or to collect clouds
from a mountain top between the pages
of this book and those of the next between

what we see outside ourselves and what we

see inside settles a fog that forms the
perfect shroud if you could only lie down

if you could only sift through wet grass deep
within that forest where if I could I would
offer you leaves and if you could you
would point to the wet curls in your hair and
smile then fade like rain



Winter Solstice 2

Jill McCabe Johnson

Love's Blind Contour

When you said your face
formed a map of China,
I saw burlled roots,

the tender of bark
folded on flexed arms, how
the musculature of madrone limbs

flutters wet leaves
in storm and thrall.
Each hand a braille

on the reef side of morning,
each coast an eden
after the squall.



Stephanie Roberts
Pistol Whip

granite heart—
even so
i
would come
to
for one vein.
i
would yes
to a single
fissure
of desire
only my jealous
name
fuses—ache
of allow
a tender violent is
its restraint—
the refusal to
overpower.
what you fear
trembles.
drink i
a fountain of youth
cool elixir for
suffer. no
i deny
your forever
when you—are
waited for.
you—
stark upender
of
worlds.

Amy Ash & Callista Buchen

Machine as Renga

[apparatus, instrument, engine, device
unity, gathering, turn, honor]

The days rust, wilt, crunch,
what falls to the ground, corrodes
where we sit, the shine.

Chill comes in spins, blades against
wheat, apples pressed and bled, gone.

On cold, curved metal,
the moon's reflection, wilted—
a blossom, a tongue.

What bolts, what shocks, what releases,
a spark and the kick of stars.


Gray wants to be soft,
like dawn, the light beckoning
almost, almost--warm.

The sun, copper-faced mallet.
Malleable clouds--flattened, spread.

Press, stitch, spin, vend, turn.
The desire to make, to change.
Gears slip. Clasp, release.

Here, we are progress, what goes.
The horizon out of reach.

Our hands, extended
fingers, the sound, burning, we
want to touch. Such cold.



Our limbs, stretched. Our joints unhinged.
We will clatter and break.

Reverberation,
 breath. The echo we exhale,
 sound we cannot hold.

Amy Ash & Callista Buchen
Cloud as Chaos

mist, fog, haze, veil
madness, confusion, disorder, turmoil

We wave our fingers through the air as energy hangs

in sheets, how the static seems to tumble
like a lock. The green, unsettled evening
unfolding before us,

this field of blackened lungs, this labored breathing.
We want something to happen, to watch

the spark, the calls of light between ashes. What smolders
behind this screen, imprecise outline of ex-ray,

above us. For what diagnosis can we wish
in this unwrapping, in the turning out of air. We

are caught, transfixed, night coming
and the gasp

that lifts the trees from their roots,

shatters them in the raw sky. Breathe
and the branches split, the doors unhinge,

the sound slams against the ground, riven
like muscle from bone, like an infant

from its mother's clawing arms. We listen
to the confusion, our hands raised
and spread, grasping at what

the wind rips from us, at clouds we cannot hold.



Amy Ash & Callista Buchen
Terrain as Disguise

landscape, topography, territory, ground
cover, camouflage, front, cloak

Cracked in drought, earth split, without blood
to fill these veins. Smooth, shuffle, erase. Scrape away
what could heal, the sticky rivers of sap and sweet
clay, and what we find as we claw at the ground,
as we dig for mountains, for a promise to follow. Go
without direction, until you no longer recognize
your feet, your shoes, until you dissolve into mass,
into rock, into fragments that might shape a cliff, carve
a stream, or burrow into the ground and sleep. Here,
the pulse of a map. Here, the blueprint for body.
Paper, crumpled and decayed. We try to read the lines
and are lost in the tangle and turn, the swerve and divide.

Amy Ash & Callista Buchen

Garden as List

plot, lawn, common, green
tilt, slope, grade, catalog

what we grow as portraiture, framed, edges invisible / pale geranium as paper doll / stop
-motion animation as the turn of daisies, as puppets / lily bulb, swollen and darkened, as
decayed tooth / the pile of refuse as record keeping and recycled history / overgrown root
system as roadmap / close-clipped hedge as terror, as dread / hanging vine as your
daughter's hair / cluster of grapes as lung / crop field as notebook, cursive slowly
growing over the lines / calligraphy as seed packets and last year's leftovers / rock,
drought as the way we hunch, squatting / dusk or code as the way our footprints mark
the mud / straw hats and baskets of gloves as beanstalks and crunch / shovel as tongue



Jennifer Dorner

Virga

I watch the tremble of shrubs
and sage, the frayed, parched

shards of wheat, the single stalk
of bear grass so dry against

the held-back black of sky.
The cairn stones stacked

to the side of the road shake;
each strike of light revealing

patches of rock moss.
The distant half-rain

feels unnatural, the dense air
combustible, and I want

to hold something then.
I touch your hand to ask

what lies before us the way
a word can dissipate

but crack like thunder.



featured artist



Anne John

artist statement

My work is a representation of ideas drawn from my fellow human beings, where philosophies and religion often clash. I interpret through the eyes of a feminist, because I am, after all, a female. I paint directly from the human figure, sometimes allegorically, sometimes in a modern setting with a sense of psychic ground beneath everyday reactions. I am deeply rooted in the Pacific Northwest, where my palette swings with a moody climate. As I paint, I acknowledge both the fragility and the strength of life. I see the tug and pull between men and women. I recognize, unequivocally, that life is to be celebrated.



<http://www.annejohn.com>



Tree Keeper



Beyond Expectations



Deja Vu



Surrogate



Pieces-of-Me (Self-Portrait)



Highwaters

José Angel Araguz
from 'Octaves'

*

Snow falls with the same sound as her words
across the sky and field. A whistling
sound, a white, to the horizon,
a new blank page set before me,

page I cannot read, I try, each time
white overlaps with white. When I add
the words I know, her words take off,
a whistling sound, across my sky.

*

April was a different color
before her eyes appeared in the rain:
falling, parting eyes, eyes set to pass.
That color came around, clung to

the grass, filled pools on my walk home,
my clothes became heavy with her eyes.
When I undressed to change, my skin felt
cool, charged, as if lingered upon.

*

I learn the Chinese word for world
is a compound, heaven and earth,
and think how you can see them both:
see clouds and sky, see rocks and dirt.

The hell I know collects in thoughts
of flame and what I should not want,
but goes unseen. Unchained like this,
my hell compounds to words, to worlds.



Jon Boisvert

Going Blind

First, constellations fall out of the sky.
Then mannequins flinch, & all the birds fold
out into bats. I don't tell anyone. One day
steps approach, crunching as if in snow. A
voice invites me to that clearing in the
woods I used to love. No! I say. That's a
horrible place now. All those tall deer
swaing like trees.



Jon Boisvert

Countdown

A woman has climbed to the top of the water tower, which is painted to look like a strawberry. She's taken off her clothes, & with her megaphone, is counting down from one hundred. I am on the ground below, watching in fear & awe. You are next to me, doing the same. I want to tell you I love you before it's too late.



Jon Boisvert

Mood Pond

We swim naked one night. We keep our distance. Your water is green, & my water is orange. Then the moon comes up, & all the water turns pearly & white. It makes the tadpoles green, the deeper secrets darker green. We move closer in our opal bowl. Our legs graze like nervous eels, & a circle of blue leaks from us. We are, for a moment, the eye. But these changes—none of them stays.

Penelope Scambly Schott
Hedge Story

This pussy willow in my pocket
is the whole year I was twelve

I crouched by the back hedge
keeping count of each breath

Shadows fell on my rounded arms
Even my ankles felt poignant

If I could have been an antelope
I'd never have stopped running



Home Base



Patty Paine

Woven

I.

Imagine a child's hair-ribbon,
scrap of an old dress. Last winter
we read how to tame children,
but Phoebe went on building her nest
in a dying cherry tree.
I found twelve others, deserted
for unknown cause. Most broken,
one entirely empty, another contained
egg shells. Gone the songs
of birds. All that's left is a loud,
harsh scream after nightfall.

II.

Yesterday, Phoebe startled the workmen
with a series of hisses; wicked
as the most poisonous serpent.
She burst out of the bramble
an unwinking glare fixed
on any who came near.
Every now and then she uttered
a rasping cry, which blended
with the insect chorus and yet
could be heard a long distance.
The sun set, and a glow spread
over the west. Clouds passed slowly
overhead. Into the deepening
shadows, she disappeared.

III.

This morning I found a dead
Hawk chick. It succumbed
to a fall, though its body
showed no bruising. In the shadow
of a felled tree, I spied where Phoebe
had stayed all night,
a kind of bed tamped down
in debris.

IV.

Still, I look for Phoebe.
Backyards, city dumps, the dismantled
factory that once cleaned hair
for plasterers' use. I walk clear
around the swamp through sweet-gale,
leather-leaf, and other shrubs that dabble
their roots in ooze. A colony
of Wilson's Snipe have wintered here, ten years now,
probably much longer. I hear them
calling, sometimes until dawn.



Patty Paine
Talisman

Gone, the quick storm.
Evening's soft underside.

We're seventeen. The indecipherable
ground cold beneath our backs.

You, of elm, and each passing
leaf. For years, I'll circle

back to that dark bolt
of sky, back to storm,

then silence so complete
it was enclosure. It was

body. What I'll remember: glistening
trees, the overpowering

pine, hand running along
hem, wings opening. Such alchemy,

time, cruel how it turns
remembrance into mourning.



Jen Rouse
Hexagon

all of the words,
six-sided
cells
on my tongue
perfect
house
walls
of wax
bearing

egg-
perfect
weight-

always: if I
build the palace
will you come closer?
will you cocoon
your one true self
inside me?

Bee bread
room
tight
of bees

brood
honey holding
this economy



Andrea Moorhead

village without a name

the glass burned off the sun
sheltered smoldering roots
a staircase above the roof
haunting steps without feet
cellars exposed
doors precariously tilted
then fallen

moving together
as the murmuring grows closer and closer
lifting the dry sand
brushing against pulverized roofs
someone is hiding a dream-light
whispering in the hair of
sleeping children.

Julie Wenglinski

The Fall

Gems of leaves and cones,
yellow stars, pears, gold coins, hearts
flock against the fence,
a ransom of color.

And when the trees are bare,
all that's left is what we made,
cracked concrete,
patched asphalt,
power lines,
potholes,
gravel.



Urban Renewal



Isaac Pickell

rent

doorframes in the district that sinks
behind the river's low banked bow

were cut from the original
grey brick and have never been

refashioned; they are deep and static
to the season's swells, creating

a challenge in replacement. the tongue
prefers a heavy wooden door,

whose anchor sinks deep
into fibers. pried from the hill,

the warehouses, and finally
the sewer, the body

guided her to the district that
sinks,
hammering every door

from the hinges as promise
of good faith. they will hear

you better if you can't shut
your door. the tongue

cannot find comfort, cannot afford
masonry, cannot spend the carpenter's

time sowing in old brick.
no one asks her to speak.

Devon Balwit

In the Blue Forest

The forest shrinks to fence slats, wears to grain. It snags clouds in its jags, guts them for showers. I peer through to a cellular landscape, golden, busy. Stretching my arms, I spin. Distance catches me dizzy. The slats mumble like old men sagged into story, a saga of wind. A knot is a noose is an eye is a ring. Reaching, my cupped palms catch light while shadows gather deep in the grain. When the sun bruises, I take refuge between ridges, folding into dark like a blanket.

Claire Scott

The Past is What Keeps Us Alive

swimming around inside us
stirring up memories, mumbling
watery prayers of promise that
moisten our dry world

angelfish, ghostfish

speaking the language of tricycles &
Christmas trees, tea cakes & toboggans
dissolving our seared bodies in oceans
of moist kisses, aqueous sex

sailfish, silverfish

keeping us company during
deep nights of insomnia
a prosthetic for our parched souls
wandering without purpose

sunfish, starfish

longing to grow gills
longing for a staircase
to the sea



distinguished poet

.....

Kristin Berger



the interview

Q: Your long poem “Refugia” adopts a rather unique structure, almost a call-and-response in two unique voices. Can you tell us more about your intent and how you hope these voices will be interpreted?

The poems took on the structure of two distinct stanzas from the first impulse, with the offset lines being not a mirror of the main stanza, but more of an internal echo. I had been playing with prose-poems and haiku, and am drawn to the juxtaposed form of haibun and its grounded, leap-off energy. Jim Harrison’s *Song of Unreason* also influenced the pieces, taking as he described, a more “atavistic, primitive and totemistic” approach in the second stanza. I think of those two or three lines as being the undercurrent of the upper flow. The story behind the story.

Q: Although “Refugia” speaks to larger natural concerns, there is always a hint of flesh-and-blood human beings present. But the part these people play is left ambiguous. What roles do you feel people play in this poem? And is the ‘we’ voice communal or does it denote specific characters, perhaps from your life?

Refugia is an ongoing love story between those who keep at the daily work of love and hope, despite personal and communal despair. The idea came originally from a convergence of events: an article in *High Country News* about how picas in the Sierra Nevada range might survive the coming rising temperatures and the eventual loss of snow-pack due to their ability to find cold air pools and remnant ice under north-facing rocky slopes, places of refugium; a particularly snow and ice-rich winter here in Portland (2016-2017), and the loss I feel for winter in my home ground of Michigan, the extinction of experience for children; and changing relationships within my own life.

People in my poems are not separate from nature—we are nature, whether we’re driving around in traffic or stepping out on a trail. Our dramas are nature’s dramas, and I draw from the parallels, and differences, between them—though I think that the more-than-human world does it all much better, and is constantly pointing the way when we struggle.

Q: “Refugia” includes a number of references to pulling away from or toward the body. For example:

We make love by turning towards / all the body cannot turn away from.

You may never be touched again / quite like this

Everything is drawn to a body.

Can you talk us through the larger human metaphor behind these stunning lines?

We make a choice, every day, of how we will face the world, each other and ourselves. Or *if* we will. So much of the time, we turn away and numb ourselves because it's too intense, too painful, too difficult to navigate, etc. Loss is everywhere. But our bodies are weathervanes and direct us towards what we need and how to engage with the world. We make love in the sense of being wooed, that old-fashioned notion. When we turn and notice, there is so much more shining. We are drawn to each other, no matter how introverted; it's our helpless human state.

Q: In “Refugia” You say “we have been young too long”. We feel the call of literature at some point in our lives – then years pass. How old were you when you began writing? How does it feel, to be a poet amidst the growing ocean of voices?

Ha! I'm writing these answers with my earbuds in and trying hard to ignore my children running up and down the stairs, teasing each other. I live every hour in an ocean of voices!

As a working mother, I have had to be firm about my writing time and space, but not cruel. The writing will never be as important as my job as a mother, and so I've learned to let it go sometimes. I began in a high school creative writing class and earned a college degree in fiction and poetry, so I have had a long-standing practice and comfort level with it in my life. But it wasn't until my daughter was a toddler that my work began to get published, 12 years ago. Naptime makes good deadlines!

If you are asking how does it feel to be a poet in a community of voices, I would say I never feel drowned-out, only buoyed. Living and writing in Portland, I am blessed with what I'm pretty sure is the most supportive, down-to-earth, group of poets and writers on earth. No posturing here! I have never really experienced competition, but instead learn from other writers, friends and strangers, to push my own writing towards its natural evolution.

Q: Is the poem in some way a response to the world’s ongoing refugee crisis? If so, where are the refugia for refugees? How do we combat the mindset informed by indifference for the struggles of others?

The poem that appears in *The Inflectionist Review* is part of a larger series, exploring *refugium* through the seasons and elements, and so far, only Winter & Spring/ Snow & Water have been written. The human tragedies and stories of survival are all around, and while the poem isn’t expressly political, I do feel that daily news informs the writing—other rivers flowing into the main stem. Summer is coming with its threat of drought and wildfire. Species and elements, like wildflowers and snow, are refugees in an environmental crisis. People also become refugees and deportees, estranged from hope, displaced from their relationship with the land by shifting climate patterns, political systems and war. We are all wanting and needing a safe place to be welcomed in and sustained, to be known.

When we realize that we are connected first to the natural systems of the world—when bio-zones shift or pollinators vanish, making food production that more precarious, for instance—we realize we are all connected. Writing our love stories becomes a way, a bridge, between not-caring and caring; from one island and holdout, our personal refugium, to another.

Q: In “High Desert Negative”, you speak in a distinctly powerful voice, employing a barrage of negative statements that, when taken together, build into a rather positive, freeing assessment of our part in the world. Only when we refuse to revise, to forget, to find words for, to settle, can we discover who we really are. Was this your intent? In what way does the negative voice allow you to explore the positive?

“High Desert Negative” is an ekphrastic poem, based on a black and white photo I took of the juniper skyline of Summer Lake, Oregon. Each line was a sort of carving away, a creation of negative space, in a landscape that is already sparse of water and trees and people. I like that you describe it as a “barrage”—I feel that in this culture we are barraged with *shoulds* & affirmations, and the poem was an impulsive reaction against that. What if we allowed ourselves to not do something, on many fronts, to enter possibility from angles other than full-on? We might just arrive at a freeing, permission-granted, positive place anyway. It was a personally powerful poem to write, and I’ve written a few others like it since.

Q: Is the artist’s role to honor her inner voice and inner truths? To continue the paths of those who came before? To combat social injustice in the moment? In perpetuity? At dark times such as this, what’s required of the artist?

Yes, yes. Yes and yes. We each do it in his/her own way, add to the human story-lore, feed each other hope. It's all protest, even if we aren't expressly addressing a social injustice or a political crisis. The fact that we write during such times is an act of keeping the light burning.

This winter, after the election and during the first 100 days of the new presidency, feeling the destructive ripples of executive orders and appointments, I had a sort-of crisis of spirit. What was the point of writing about our small worries and problems, when the big shit was going down? Going off to residencies, lifting a book rather than scrolling through a news feed and writing to my senators? I had to be reminded that our human wells need replenishment, too, and that our lives need our attention, regardless of what's going on in the world. Our children need to be fed and sung to and reassured. We need that, too. Not at the expense of ignoring the world, but alongside it. We can all be baton-holders in this long-distance relay, but it's okay to put the burden down and rest—as long as we pick it back up and give that opportunity to someone else.

Q: What inspires you to write? What conditions are required for poetry to come through?

My children. Those I love. Reading. Being outside, preferably up a hill or in an open space where I can find some balance and perspective and quiet. Birds and clouds and their dramas. Running helps me enter that space. Poetry comes through accidentally, through paying attention—not to my own thoughts, but to the world around me, just sensing like an animal. And also to stories that cross my path, the small convergences that happen daily—a radio show, a conversation with a friend, something my children said. You have to be willing to pivot towards it. You never know what the right conditions are going to be—that's what's so great about the weather!

.....

Kristin Berger
Slack Tide

If it takes a day, a year, an epoch of solstices
stacked like tide-upon-tide's ship-shod pages

to come to the edge of this sumptuous home,
a zenith above and beneath, then I will swallow

this full wash of light and burrow into you, angle
of no repose, no shadow, only ebb, swamped

in answer and reply, our un-mappable shore,
wade into the ever-wanting lip-upon-lip

towards the sun stalled at its grace-point,
never succumbing to the ever-crested sea.





Kristin Berger

High Desert Negative

Don't go back. Don't revise. Don't re-dream or fill in the shadows with color. Don't rely on breath to tell you you are alive—the world is not your mirror. Don't start now. Don't turn out the lights, or hoard the extra blanket. Don't forget how bare skin never forgets. Don't pull away. Don't rely on yourself. Don't find words. Don't settle. Don't wait for a hard frost to carry your foot on the playa. Don't keep out of the wind. Don't walk back to the house until you can see sun on the panes. Don't wait for the moon to set, or a pair of cranes to carve morning away with their ambitious wings.

Kristin Berger
Refugia

refugium; *n, pl* -gia:

A biological refuge. The realm of the unintended, the hidden, the inadvertent pocket of protection, that species large and small often find their lives least disturbed.

- Barry Lopez, *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*



1

When winter runs out,
who will hold the night clock?
Will the heart know to slow?
Stop roaming and skipping beats.
The earth prefers part-time awakesness.
It tilts to jut our time capsules.
At sea-level, snow comes
to smother us into dreaming.

*In the warm November garden, remember?
We have been young
too long.*

Stunned at our windows,
the sky tantrums, pitching snow.
Junkyard wire razors a white music
beyond the auto crusher; wind
blindsides ditch-willows,
tries to knock the smallest bird
from her heartbeat.

*We sleep apart for seasons
hands tracing the bucking melt
of sweet dark loam.*

Trenches connected us then, four foot high
cross-cuts of the week's blizzard. Our fathers dug us out.
Wet and red-cheeked, stomping at each other's doors:
It was always evening in the whipped blue drifts.
Dead grass, clawed up, became our smoldering fires.
Icicles, snapped from gutters,
we licked into marshmallow spears.
It didn't have to end. Our mothers' voices
shouldn't have been able to reach us,
but they did; called us out, called us in.

*Meet me in the snow meadow
with the frozen pond skirting the woodlot,
the one between childhoods.*

We couple like a storm buckling,
seeds of dust, cloud to core.
We fall. Supersaturated lore.
You drift in. I avalanche to you.
Banks bury the ways
we have known each other.
On the north side of July's slope,
under a huckleberry wind,
patches of snow survive.
Refugia. Glacier lilies dividing
deep beneath the blanket.

*Apple blossoms
have yet to fall away.
Time is our coalbed.*

Living so long under a blue sky veined
by contrails, we begin to believe in retreat.
A silent phone. Highway cleared of rumble.
Diesel-loaded dreams plowed in the dead of winter.
Parking lot gulls swarm around the heaped black banks.
The atmospheric river has plans for us.
On the last morning of the storm,
the marriage bed is stripped, snow-blind.

*You dream of walleye in the sealed dark,
a notation of trapped air bubbles.
Black ice and its promise.*

Tell me about water.
Do you call it *creek* or *crik*,
stream or *brook*?
Pull the blinds up
when it storms
or turn from what comes?
Take the clothes off the line
or let ozone soak?
Will you repeat your own stories
about that night you tailgated rain,
frogs crossing the road so thickly
you had to slow to a swerve
while vernal pools filled with slide
and mount and lust and trill
and you filled, too, with calm,
like the thinnest rivulet
hydroplaning?

*Browse like deer
on green shoots.
Help my thaw along.*

7

We make love by turning towards
all the body cannot turn away from.
Our ever-climb and squint. Sun's salutation.
Willow leaf adjusting on its axis. Breath to word.
Palm to hip. Lip to jaw. The many night-expressions
of wind sliding over a roof. The river rushes
toward its future with slant and resolve
and uncertainty joins from hidden runnels—
we cannot help but widen.

*The meadow is my desert.
I roll the moon in my mouth
when I want water.*

Pools appear where water hasn't reached in years.
Cliffs shunt all they cannot hold, plait white
upon white against chartreuse stain.
It takes only sky remembering to let go.
You may never be touched again
quite like this spring loves the earth.
Pull off at the road's wide shoulder,
where the river swells to unmoor willows—
Wind blusters its storage of grit,
and the busy chips of warblers.
Everything is drawn to a body.

*You didn't know
you could flow so strong.
Keep the map of replenishment.*



Free Range



Darren C. Demaree

Nude Male with Echo #1

Inhabiting the slip
& wobble, the surge
to silence that is
the physical form
of a search, a parsing
male, I have paused
all of my momentum
to stand, before
anything else happens
to my layering
& to watch every rising
& watch again
what can happen
after that moment
has given in to the next.



Darren C. Demaree

Nude Male with Echo #2

All fear
& plush points,
I got naked
to loop the mirror
into my scavenging
& obligation.
On the bad days,
I walk into reflections.
That bounce
always readies me
for the caroms
of the day
I did not choose
& if I am stunned
enough, it passes
me quickly.



Darren C. Demaree

Warm #151

The soul
is an example

of an idea
that comes

from people
that have never

known
an ice age.



Daniela Elza
the heat & hiss

—*inspired by a soundscape called the heat & hiss by Jason Zumpano*

the windshield of the world is shattered.
we squint into the future's glinting shards

doubt ourselves until we too are reduced
to fragment and sharp edges.

in the heat & hiss
the shadow the day throws is not
the shade I seek.

the hit & miss of war
planes overhead.

the street lamp at your window flickers
and buzzes all night.
wants out.

the soul— an equation that does not
compute
eternity grown somewhere between
and this savage music.

Daniela Elza and Linda King
sometimes

the smallest object

is the space between
fact &
truth

a last sentence

an archive of memory

pause time

opening onto

your thick past

perishable blessings

old bone thumbprints
heart-battered punctuation marks

a language craving pulse in the woods
from which a girl steps out

singing

before a city silences her

all this miscalculation
makes your blood quicken

liquid strength decanted
smell of rust and iron

blood root
of the breath you take

the potbellied milk jug that fits perfectly
in your hand speaks

an ancient curve
the trees hum through your feet

call to the numbed
body wrapped around its grief

like a fist
like proof



CL Bledsoe

1

The hardest part of living is choosing not to die. Trains mumble in the distance and you can't remember the last time you truly felt enthusiastic enough about anything to want to run away from it. The rails will lull you with their movement, as though you weren't sitting still, just in a different place. Everything is dirty but would it be better if it were clean? But trains are nothing but moving crowds. When you were a boy, you used to dream you could run faster than air, all you had to do was push your legs against the ground harder. Afterward, all you could remember was the shame. Maybe the only thing wrong was that you woke up.

Casey Bush

Saint Lawrence Baptizing the Mermaids of Lake Erie

the blind astrologer
charts stars on the inside
of his eyelids, understands the black
shadows of X-RAY, heart without
pulse basking in the knowledge
that this incomplete world
is closely followed by another fragment
and then another slipping
through the portholes of death
into the arms of a chalk white sea.



Anton Frost

terra aquea

on the far side of the river
where it curves

the water
pushes farther onto the land

and turns
it to mud

I write your name into it
with my foot

limping in half steps
the way wounded animals move

feeling your name
harden in my throat

I gouge the shape of it
into the squelching earth

over and over
until your facelessness

coats
the riverbank

first with my heel
then with a broken stick

and finally on my knees
I draw each syllable

out
with my fingers,

touching them to my lips
every time

it's
finished.



Lifeboat



Annie Lighthart

While Reading a Russian Novel, Insects

Clearly the ants have traveled great distances, yet willingly ascend the couch and the book. They cling to a page as it turns, blend with the syllables of the characters' names, then fall. They land and recover, they separate into nicknames, disperse. The ant on my wrist confers with the ant previously on my thumb.

I sit, harming no one. I become an old city and age in patience.
New generations come, long black trains from the countryside bringing them in.
Student populations gather and disband. Mothers, fathers, sisters arrive.
They set up houses and shops, argue in the street, cart sugar and salt from my skin.

Change is coming.
It is a flurry, a small confusion; they sense it in the air.
Soon clouds will descend like curtains of darkness. Or darkness, like a curtain of clouds.



Heikki Huotari

Level

The bubble on the level centers
when compassion matches strategy,
magnetic north is true,
all ice confined to Greenland,
axes of rotation stable, bloodless,
not rotating end on end in air,
the glass of iridescent water on the counter
set to vibrate gently
when there is a message from
the secret infrastructure of the earth.

Babo Kamel

Below a sky that holds nothing

— after Hopper *House by the Railroad*, 1925

I

Beside the railway track
a house fades into its abandonment

The paint on the outside
once a deep shade of teal

remains only its thin suggestion

Each window blind
half- shades the weight of emptiness

cracking the sills

This was someone's childhood—
that long forgotten self

that waited for someone to enter

II

To enter you must first assume

that a door left open is the invitation
Honor it as you would a confidence

from a new friend who risks

a crack in the fence around her silence
Hold it close to your chest, as you would a fallen bird

III

Un-tell it. No house waits
by the railroad you on a train
houses fall back before
memory or before the first time
you realize that lives exist everywhere you are not
that the woman hanging sheets on the line
now a speck to you, has birthed and lost children
and that after you are gone she will
sort socks and remember a moment in girlhood
when the scent of lilacs filled her the way
a boy's kiss would, years later
before you were born.



Stella Vinitchi Radulescu
minus infinity

it's a bird jumping

to the sky:

let me be the eye & the sound

: or the sun

taste of the apple roundness melting

in my mouth—

there is nothing else

to say

the explosion is over

ineffable like death I am rising



Alterations

contributors

Kelli Allen's latest book is *Imagine Not Drowning* (C&R Press, 2017). Allen's work has appeared in numerous journals in the US and internationally. She served as Managing Editor of *Natural Bridge*, is the Poetry Editor for *The Lindenwood Review*, and directs *River Styx's* Hungry Young Poets Series. She is a Professor of Humanities/Creative Writing at Lindenwood University. Her chapbook, *Some Animals*, won the 2016 Etchings Press Prize. Her chapbook, *How We Disappear*, won the 2016 Damfino Press chapbook award. Her poetry collection, *Otherwise, Soft White Ash*, arrived from John Gosslee Books in 2012 and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

José Angel Araguz is a CantoMundo fellow and the author of six chapbooks as well as the collections *Everything We Think We Hear* (Floricante Press) and *Small Fires* (FutureCycle Press). His poems, prose, and reviews have appeared in *RHINO Poetry*, *New South*, and *Queen Mob's Tea House*. He runs the poetry blog *The Friday Influence* and teaches English and creative writing at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon.

Amy Ash is the author of *The Open Mouth of the Vase*, 2013 winner of Cider Press Review Book Award. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Indiana State University.

Devon Balwit is a teacher/poet from Portland, OR. She has two chapbooks: *how the blessed travel* (Maverick Duck Press) & *Forms Most Marvelous* (forthcoming with dancing girl press). Her work has found many homes on-line and in print, some of which are: *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Stillwater Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Timberline Review*, and *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*.

Kristin Berger is the author of the poetry collection *How Light Reaches Us* (Aldrich Press, 2016), and a poetry chapbook, *For the Willing* (Finishing Line Press, 2008), and co-edited *VoiceCatcher 6: Portland/Vancouver Area Women Writers and Artists* (2011). Her long prose-poem, "Changing Woman & Changing Man: A High Desert Myth", was a finalist for the 2016 Newfound Prose Prize. Her work has been published in, or is forthcoming from, *Cirque*, *Contrary Magazine*, *Passages North*, *Terrain.org*, and *Wildness*. Kristin is the recipient of writer residencies from Playa at Summer Lake, Oregon, and from OSU's Spring Creek Project. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

CL Bledsoe is the assistant editor for *The Dead Mule* and the author of fourteen books, most recently the poetry collection *Trashcans in Love* and the flash fiction collection *Ray's Sea World*. He lives in northern Virginia with his daughter.

Jon Boisvert grew up in southeastern Wisconsin and now lives in Oregon. He's a graduate of the Independent Publishing Resources Center's certificate program, & of other programs, too. His work has been read in journals such as *jubilat*, *6x6*, and *Otis Nebula*, and has been described as "multi-generational, anatomically correct



mattyoshka dolls of mothers and daughters, fathers and sons: consumed, contained, birthed, eviscerated and recycled.” His first book, *BORN*, is forthcoming on Airlie Press. You can sometimes see his new poems & drawings & stuff at www.jonboisvert.com.

Callista Buchen is the author of the chapbooks *The Bloody Planet* (Black Lawrence Press) and *Double-Mouthed* (dancing girl press). She is an Assistant Professor of English at Franklin College. Collaborative poems by Amy Ash and Callista Buchen have appeared in various journals, including *BOAAT*, *Stone Highway Review*, *Spiral Orb*, and *Heron Tree*.

Casey Bush is the author of seven books of poetry, with a new collection this year (*Student of the Hippocampus*) from Last Word Press, Olympia, WA. He is also a senior editor of *The Bear Deluxe Magazine*, exploring environmental issues through the literary and graphic arts.

Darren C. Demaree's poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including the *South Dakota Review*, *Meridian*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and *Colorado Review*. He is the author of five poetry collections, most recently *The Nineteen Steps Between Us* (2016, After the Pause). Darren is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and *Ovenbird Poetry*.

Jennifer Dorner's work has been previously published in *The Timberline Review*, *Cloudbank*, *VoiceCatcher*, and she has two poems forthcoming in *Verseneavers*. She has also been a finalist for the Ruth Stone Poetry Prize in 2016. Jennifer studied at the Attic Institute, and she has taught classes there as well.

Daniela Elza is a free range poet, and a non-medicated scholar of the poetic consciousness, who is currently falling in love with trees all over again. She earned her doctorate in Philosophy of Education from Simon Fraser University. Her poetry collections are *the weight of dew* (2012), *the book of It* (2011), and *milk tooth bare bone* (2013). Her chapbook *slow erosions* (collaborated poems with poet Arlene Ang), and her latest manuscript *the ruined pages* are forthcoming. Daniela lives in Vancouver, BC.

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.

Peter Grandbois is the author of seven previous books, the most recent of which is, *The Girl on the Swing* (Wordcraft of Oregon, 2015). His poems, stories, and essays have appeared in over seventy journals, including, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, and have been shortlisted for both Best American Essays and the Pushcart Prize. His plays have been performed in St. Louis, Columbus, Los Angeles, and New York. He is a senior editor at Boulevard magazine and teaches at Denison University in Ohio.

Heikki Huotari is a retired professor of mathematics. In a past century, he attended a one-room country school and spent summers on a forest-fire lookout tower. His poems have appeared in several journals, including *Poetry Northwest* and *Crazyhorse*. A chapbook is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

Jill McCabe Johnson is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *Revolutions We'd Hoped We'd Outgrown* (Finishing Line, 2017) and *Diary of the One Swelling Sea* (MoonPath, 2013), winner of the Nautilus Silver Award in Poetry, plus the nonfiction chapbook *Borderlines* (Sweet Publications, 2016). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in publications such as *Brevity*, *The Southeast Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Pacific Lutheran University and a PhD in English from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Johnson is the founding director of Artsmith, a non-profit to support the arts.

Babo Kamel's poems have appeared in literary reviews in the US, Australia, and Canada, including *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Abyss & Apex*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Alligator Juniper*, The Grolier Poetry Prize, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Rust +Moth*, and *Mobius, a Journal of Social Change*, and *2River Review*. She was a winner of The Charlotte Newberger Poetry Prize, and is a Pushcart nominee. For the past year, she has been working on a series of poems focused on the paintings of Marc Chagall.

Timothy Kercher's poems, essays, and translations have appeared in many literary publications, including *Crazyhorse*, *Versal*, *Plume*, *upstreet*, *Music & Literature*, *The Minnesota Review* and others. He has been nominated for a number of prizes, including Best New Poets, AWP New Poet Award, and a Pushcart Prize.

Linda King is the author of three poetry collections - *Dream Street Details* (Shoe Music Press), *Reality Wayfarers* (Shoe Music Press), and *No Dimes For The Dancing Gypsies* (BlazeVOX Books). Her most recent collection - *Ongoing Repairs to Something Significant* is forthcoming from BlazeVOX. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals in Canada and internationally. King lives and writes on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia.

Annie Lighthart started writing poetry after her first visit to an Oregon old-growth forest. *Iron String*, her first poetry collection, was published in 2013 by Airlie Press and her second, *Lantern*, will be published by Wells College Press in October 2017. Her poetry has been read by Garrison Keillor on The Writer's Almanac and chosen by Naomi Shihab Nye to be placed in Ireland's Galway University Hospitals. Annie's poems have been published in journals such as *Cimarron Review* and *The Greensboro Review*, have been turned into choral music, used in projects in England and New Zealand, and have traveled farther than she has.

Rebecca Macijeski teaches at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, where she will earn her PhD in poetry in May 2017. In addition, she serves as an assistant editor in poetry for *Hunger Mountain* and *Prairie Schooner*. Some of her work has been featured as part of the Tupelo Press 30/30 Project, and she is a recipient of a 2012

Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Prize. She has attended artist residencies at The Ragdale Foundation and Art Farm Nebraska, and will be in residence this June at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center. Her poems have appeared in *Nimrod*, *Sycamore Review*, *Poet Lore*, and many others. Visit her online at www.rebeccamacijeski.com.

Andrea Moorhead is editor of *Osiris* and author of several collections of poems, including *From a Grove of Aspen* (University of Salzburg Press), *De Ioin*, and *Géocide* (Le Noroît). Recent translations of Francophone poetry include *Night Watch* by Abderrahmane Djelfaoui (Red Dragonfly Press) and *Dark Menagerie* by Élise Turcotte (Guernica Editions). Her work is featured in *Phoenix 23* (winter 2016 issue). In 2017, Red Dragonfly Press will publish her collection, *The Carver's Dream*.

Patty Paine is the author of *Grief & Other Animals* (Accents Publishing), *The Sounding Machine* (Accents Publishing), and three chapbooks, including *City of Small Fires*, forthcoming from Hermeneutic Chaos Press. Her poems, reviews, and interviews have appeared in *Blackbird*, *Gulf Stream*, *The Journal*, *The South Dakota Review*, and other publications. She is the founding editor of *the*, and Diode Editions, and is Director of the Liberal Arts & Sciences program at Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar.

Isaac Pickell is a two-time college dropout and current MFA candidate at Miami University, where he is poetry editor of *Oxford Magazine*. Isaac has work forthcoming in *The Missouri Review* and *Hermeneutic Chaos Journal*, and was recently published in *Rogue Agent Journal*. His poetry focuses on biracial identity and other liminal buzzwords, and he hopes someday to live outside of a college town.

Stella Vinitchi Radulescu, Ph.D. in French Language & Literature, is the author of several collections of poetry published in the United States, Romania and France. She writes poetry in English, French and Romanian and her poems have appeared in *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Pleiades*, *Louisville Review*, *Laurel Review*, *Rhino*, *Wallace Stevens Journal*, *Seneca Review* among others, as well as in a variety of literary magazines in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Romania. Her last collection of poetry *I scrape the window of nothingness - new & selected poems* was released in 2015 from Orison Books Press. At the present she lives in Chicago.

Stephanie Roberts' was featured in *The New Quarterly*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Blue Lyra Review*, *Breakwater Review*, and is forthcoming in *Causeway Lit*, *Room Magazine*, and *Shooter Literary Magazine* in the U.K.

Jen Rouse is the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, IA. Her poems have appeared in *Hot Tin Roof*, *Poetry*, *Poet Lore*, *MadHatLit*, *Pretty Owl*, *The Tishman Review*, and elsewhere. Her play, 'For the Care and Control of the Insane' was published by Masque & Spectacle and performed in the Underground New Play Festival at Theatre Cedar Rapids. Rouse was named a finalist in the Charlotte Mew Poetry Chapbook contest. Her chapbook, *Acid and Tender*, came out December 2016 by Headmistress Press.

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Healing Muse* and *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, among others. Her first book of poetry, *Waiting to be Called*, was published in 2015. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

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

Joel Showalter has work forthcoming in *Mud Season Review* from the Burlington Writers Workshop. His poetry has also appeared in *Caesura*, the undergraduate literary magazine at Indiana Wesleyan University, and in *Poet* magazine (now defunct). Currently, he works as a copy editor at a marketing agency.

Cheryl Snell is the author of a novel and six collections of poetry. She is well published online, and in print journals and anthologies. She has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net seven times, and often collaborates with her sister Janet Snell, an expressionist painter, on pieces that give two different meanings to the same image.

Kelly Terwilliger has poems published in journals including *Cider Press Review*, *Nimrod*, *Tor House*, *Poetry City*, *Comstock Review*, *Hubbub*, and others. Finishing Line Press published a chapbook of her poems, *A Glimpse of Oranges*, and she has a volume of poetry forthcoming with Airlie Press. She also works as a storyteller and teach English to Spanish-speaking adults.

submit to *The Inflectionist Review*

The Inflectionist Review has a strong preference for non-linear work that carefully constructs ambiguity so that the reader can play an active role in the poem. In general, we commend the experimental, the worldly and universal, and eschew the linear, trendy, and overly personal. Work that reveals multiple layers with further readings. Work that speaks to people across borders, across literary and cultural boundaries, across time periods, is more likely to fascinate us (and the reader). As most poetry practitioners in this day and age, we find rhymed poetry to be a thing of the past. We read only unrhymed poetry.



guidelines

- We read submissions year round, but please submit only once each quarter/issue.
- You may submit 3-7 poems at a time. Please include all poems in one document, uploadable via our submission manager.
- Do not include any personal information in the document, as submissions are read blindly.
- In the Comments section of the submission manager, please include a cover letter and a short biographical statement, including previous publications and a few words on your poetic approach or philosophy.
- Turn-around time is approximately 3 months.
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The door is open.
The lost things come and go as they
please.

— Kelly Terwilliger

The
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Revue