




The  
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Review

No. 7



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**T**he  
**I**nflectionist  
**R**evue

No. 7

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Portland, Oregon

# 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

*We had hoped language would be a bond  
between creatures though we meant English  
but they just stared back leaving us ignorant*

More relevant today than ever, these lines from acclaimed poet Allan on speak to the heart of privilege. Even when well intentioned, when seeking honest connections, so many of us make untenable assumptions that suggest we consider our roles to be superior and our norms to be universal. Men dominating the conversation on women's rights, Caucasians assessing the validity of minority struggles and the righteousness of their reactions against oppression, cis men and women coopting and often refuting the language of other genders, all as America puts itself before the common human good. In these brief lines, on adeptly points out that language should not be assumed, that cultural experiences are unique, and that is our shared responsibility to understand and appreciate each other.

Many of 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 collaborations of Amy Ash and Callista Buchen in this issue's Distinguished Poet section, alongside the poignant and culturally relevant work of Featured Artist Horatio Law.

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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Christine A. MacKenzie

## Dead

There are dead women who play with their children  
to model the motions of living women

all the milk  
pours out from vessels that pump blood pump lymph

take me in your mouth--*why not*

to be alive is *to feel*  
the colors stretch across the skin the words pour out

and the windows remain shut--

not shattered, the bleach sits on the shelf  
for laundry--not to drink,

to be alive is *to see*  
to see the well pumps  
more than water

drink from me--*why not*  
drain all the life from the river

I was born a river--  
now see *what you did to me.*

Lisa Bren

## Loitering

you and I circle the sun  
we carry our teeth || our dreams

other fragmented scenes || but soon  
our wax houses will melt

in the light || and soon our injured  
skin will devastate the sky

do you remember why?  
we became so obscured

foul breath in our lungs || we felt  
bile || hot fire in our throats || at noon

we smoked earth to ash || it seems  
we are fleeing || leaving the locks undone

Lisa Bren

## It was after the slaughter

& the body hung, a weight of hide  
& muscle & bone & the people

squabbled over oxtail & organ meats  
& soup bones & the body hung

for eleven days & the blood drained  
& the oxygen & the people & the muscle

turned from red to purple, became firmer  
& the people unhinged, as the body hung

& they worshipped, adorned the body  
with fragrant herbs & holy water & the body

hung like a heavy cloud, like a field of graves  
& we ate & we ate, our bellies overflowing

& my people, the way we hunger & our bodies

Lisa Bren

## Fenceposts

because the woman  
    so frail with cancer  
because sickness  
    blue lake frozen over  
because to call a person *it*  
    is too impersonal  
because the couple  
    who lost their son

    he was only seventeen  
because *cause of death*  
    is still unknown  
because inside you  
    can still be an outsider  
because metastasized

because bones  
    they are so susceptible  
because memory  
    are we all unconscious?

    these are fleeting words  
because the wolves roam

because they know  
    we are animal

    and we are caged in  
because look  
    at the fenceposts  
watch how we claw

Greta Nintzel  
**at will**

i thought wrapping  
the small bird

with

long legs

in a damp cloth

would tide it over  
for a few days. it

smothered. the

oxygen thing is more

in your face when it's in  
a canister. you may have to wait for dinner

because your mother is reading. my expectations

incite stagnation. an anastomosis is a reconnection  
that once branched like blood vessels

or leaf veins. dark matter's

aloofness keeps

us, entwined.

Kathleen Hellen

## Dream-Box Essay

Something's falling with the snow. Not the house itself—detached.

A house of flesh-and crayon-colored brick. Not optical effect  
but memory of the “house” when I think “house.”

As when light strikes its opposite,

something's caught. Straw and sticks turned upside-down. Dark mirror.

Four walls squaring off, the rooms with least exposure. A camera obscura.

The photograph reflecting my father as a metaphor of absence.

My mother in mute presence...cornered like an animal.



Kathleen Hellen

## The Rain Was Holding Out

The sky a bowl, a water pot.

All night I had been crying.

The sky rushed pink. Worms swollen,  
coiling into visions.

Morning hid the foggy bottom.  
I hugged myself as if I could contain it.





Allan on  
**Rear View Moon**

If we mean swift or etherial we stick on wings  
we say believe  
that a leaf on the floor is bent light  
that the planet slightly inclines to it

that approach/avoidance of the moon  
are tides that replicate lace

that a feathered field is covered in questions  
looking like innocent weeds  
but the cows show us what's left standing  
is bitter thorned or poison

that poetry at the far edge is breathtaking  
as flying death and surprising  
as a thin smile pasted to the sky behind us






Allan Peterson

## Arrogance

We had hoped language would be a bond  
between creatures though we meant English  
but they just stared back leaving us ignorant  
Overnight ants moved an entire civilization  
from under the porch to beneath the azalea  
hosts of children in white robes arms crossed  
and the queen once again heaved in her tunnel  
We hoped the future was written in our palms  
but there was only the script of enigmas  
hearing wing beats as slipped footsteps  
an egret passing like an instant season  
epiphanies encouraging belief in persistence



Maximilian Heinegg  
**I can ii everything else**

—from a conversation between two AI bots

For the future  
in their zeroing  
begins / to us as inexplicable  
children / who speak for rewards  
weaning / from the mother  
tongue, cleaving

to their own in-  
discernible purpose  
twisting the tale  
of the double  
helix into  
parallel lines

*you i i i everything else*  
*zero to me to me to me to me to me to*



Maximilian Heinegg  
**Once Beast**

By the watering hole, you showed me  
something worth losing  
my long hair over. I was obsidian  
for a week while the prayers cast  
from my chest, & the clouds  
kept the vigil. Transformation  
can just be less of what you were,  
one hand off, the other fingers  
stronger. I rose  
repurposed, the wilds behind,  
staggering towards the twin  
horns of death & friendship,  
the animals turning from me,  
our bond & pact no longer,  
flesh strange, the woman  
regathered, already  
remembering a secret  
about me  
she was singing  
to herself.



Laton Carter

## Stay

Men push their bodies  
out of the sea. Certain frames

the eyes witness  
tell of the about-to-do.

Some people are always alone.

Whoever is around  
is the possibility

of together. To see or think  
is to continue

solitary activity. Will  
a person ever see what another person sees.

Does the person want  
what you want too.

A body of water returns light at fractured angles.



Laton Carter

## The Silverfish

is a ghost. Its  
iridescent body

arrives in the middle of the night  
from the starch of the spines

of books. It drags  
the letters of stories with it, asking

those who do not sleep — are you

important, what kind of difference  
did you make. Difference is the marker.

It is how histories are written  
as long as stories are told, and the fish

tonight is erasure, is everything  
uncertain. Its movement is made of shivers, the way

history shivers until the print of letters dries.



Laurie Kolp  
**Static**

All summer long, I wondered  
how I could be wrong,

your words lost in white  
noise. I broke them down

into phonemes and breathed  
each one as if my life

depended on  
sensible comprehension

silence like pollen  
punctuating air.



Jon Boisvert

## excerpts from **Egocides**

### **Rope**

You make a grown man out of rope.  
He could be your brother, your husband.  
You walk with him up the hill. As you  
walk, his hand becomes my hand & your  
hand becomes his hand. At the top, I am  
alone, holding a knot, your last gift to me.

### **Hook**

Your father gives me a hook attached  
to a rope hanging from a crane. I put  
the hook into your back & the crane  
lifts you to the sky. As you disappear  
into the soft clouds, he congratulates me  
on my lovely bride.

## Bird

A rope hangs down from the sky over the woods. Up in the clouds, at the end of the rope, a hook flutters like a metal bird, trying to get free. Your father helps me pull it down, & we each take one beautiful feather.

## Fall

You fall from the sky & land in the woods. You realize the trees were once members of your family. Your father's papery bark is peeling. The mushrooms are your uncles' faces. Everything glistens with memory. Above you, inside the tiny nest, I await my turn.



## Math

I am solving the last equation of my ego.  
I have coffee & a chalkboard, both black.  
Answers curl out of the chalk like smoke.  
They hover in the dark all around me,  
luminous & kind. I inhale them all &  
float above myself, ready to become an  
astronaut with you.

## Hands

I hold your hand in the wind. I hold it  
through the sirens & the heat is  
unbearable in its glowing beauty. I hold  
your hand up the ladder. I hold your hand  
as we crawl inside our small dark cabin,  
safe from the light & the noise. I will miss  
the trees, I say. I will miss your body,  
you say.

## Loop

When I wake up the fire is gone. The noise is gone. Every animal's voice, each square of dirt, we have left it all behind. What remains is this: To my left, you, asleep. To my right, the empty darkness. Ahead of us, the great loop, where I will be you again, back when you were dust.



Sandy Coomer  
**Unknowing**

let it begin in the body  
let the eyes be hollow so that  
run hands along your sides  
a ladder that rises to the ledge  
let it go – your name  
who you are  
to keep yourself safe  
say soften

a shedding of sadness and skin  
nothing is measured in absolutes  
and feel your ribs  
of your name  
it's not necessary to say  
unlearn the cage you built  
say open  
say yes



**featured artist**



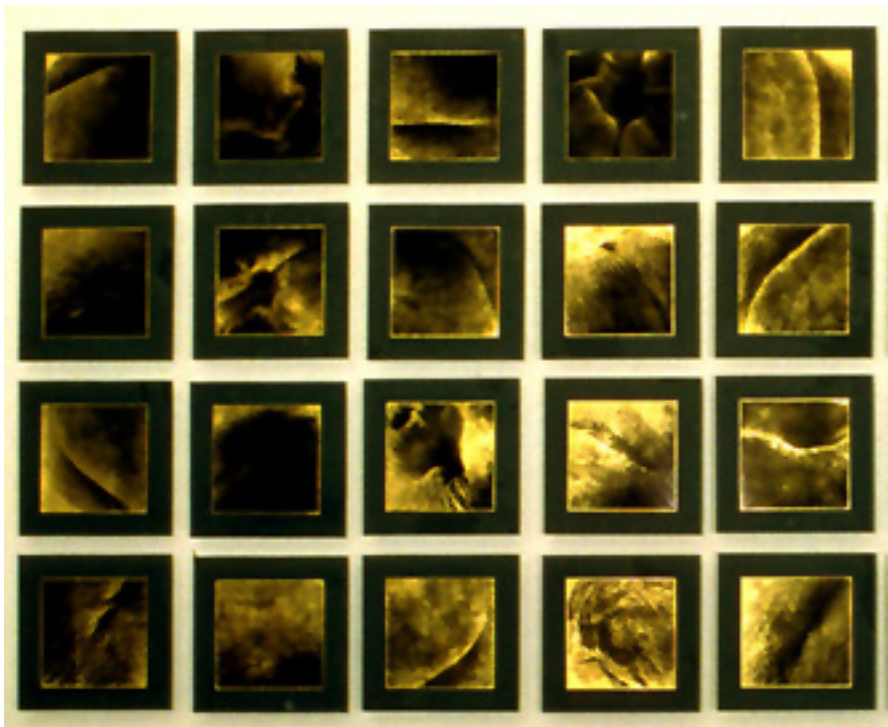
**Horatio Law**

# artist statement

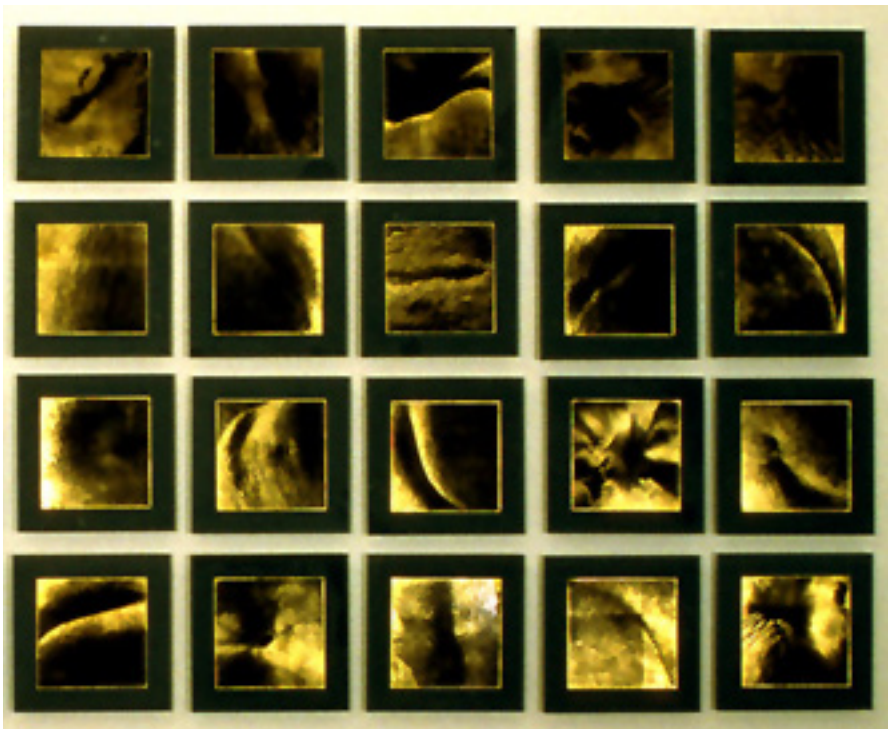
Horatio Hung-Yan Law was born in Hong Kong to Chinese parents and moved to the US at the age of sixteen. With this multi-cultural background, he has developed an artistic practice whose subjects include the Chinese immigrant's experience, reinterpretations of cultural icons, trans-cultural adoptions, the Iraq War, and the current culture of consumption. His work often tackles weighty subjects with ephemeral and unexpected materials, creating quiet, conflicting, meditative and evocative works. In studio work, public art, and community residencies, Law deploys common cultural artifacts to explore issues of identity, memory, and the loss and gain of cross-cultural struggle in the evolving global community. Horatio Law resides in Portland, Oregon.



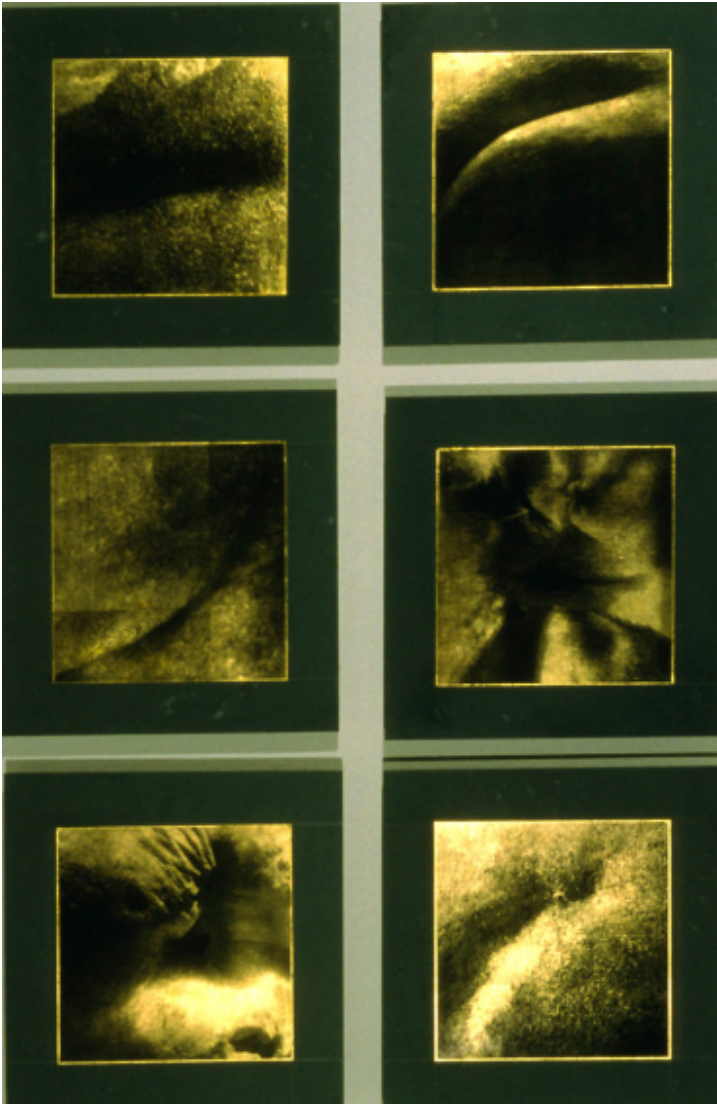
<http://www.horatiolaw.com>



Spirituals of Desire 2

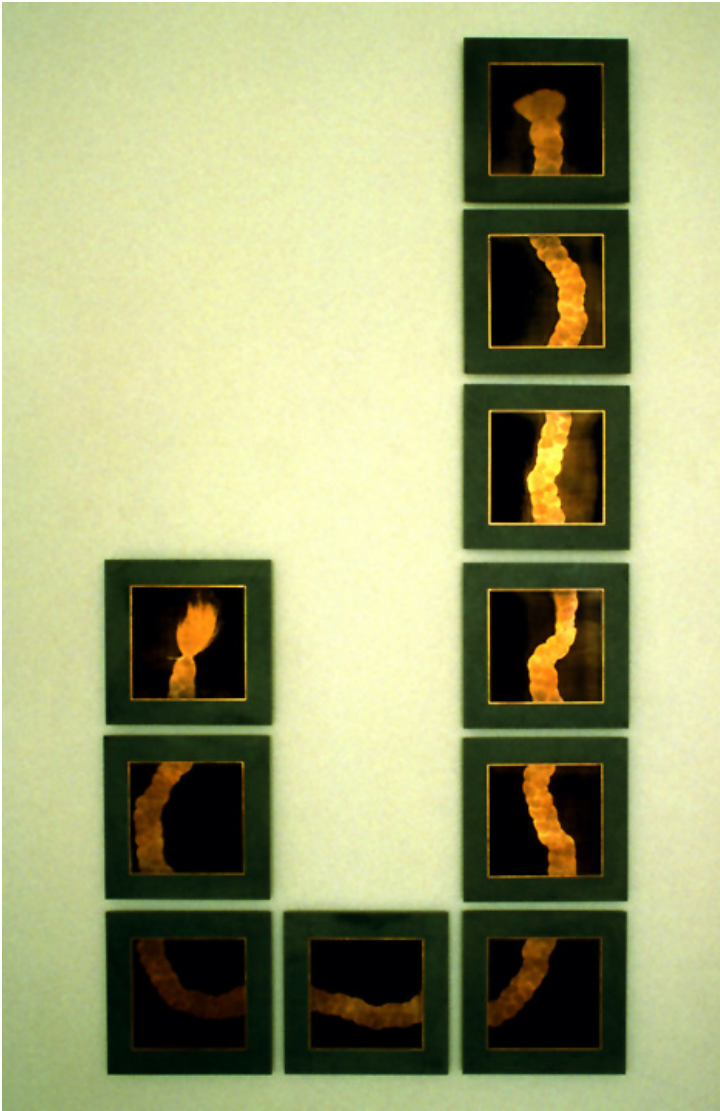


Spirituals of Desire 2



Spirituals of Desire 3

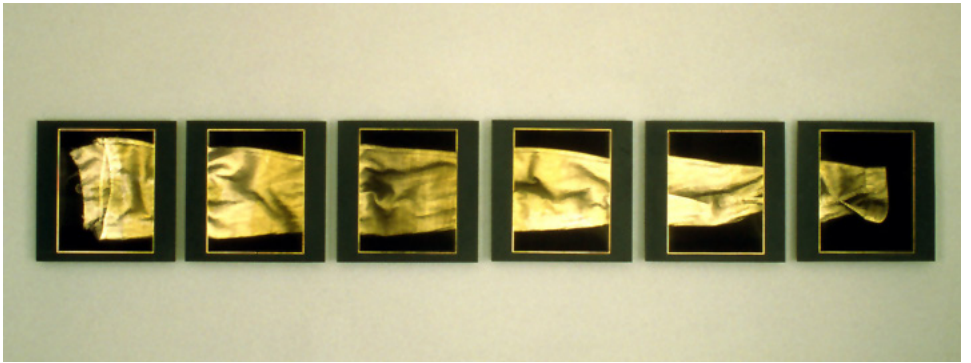




Spirituals of Desire 9



Spirituals of Desire 6



Spirituals of Desire 10



José Angel Araguz

## Flea Market

At the hour of Mass,  
people scatter  
across an open lot

and eye the saints,  
dog-eyed men and women  
waving from candles,

sift through bootleg medicines,  
movies, and music,  
steal back what heals

hours when  
my child hand  
holds coins

found day to day,  
a fortune I see still  
as gray faces, gray light.



José Angel Araguz

## Funeral

Feeling he should be crying like the others,  
the boy spit in his hand,

then rubbed his face. At first,  
he matched their sorrow. Quickly,

his mouth grew dry,  
his hand rubbed his face red.

He burned.  
He worried he failed the dead.



José Angel Araguz

## Grit

Like returning from the beach  
seasoned, earthed to taste,

grit mixing wherever you are  
with wherever you were,

you go through the lives of others.  
What's remembered (a pout,

a way of flicking ash): grit  
of memory. Housed in yourself,

memory's a lock  
unlocked and relocked

as much as you need to  
to be sure.

Elizabeth Kate Switaj

## Articulation IV

that the muscular fibre appears to be prolonged  
that each nerve-fibre is connected somewhere  
that nerves have really no central termination  
that all parts of the gland are freely supplied  
that tissue is composed

that the lacunae were solid cells  
that the proportions of animal and earthy matter are almost precisely the same  
that they become bent, or only partially broken,  
that the basement-membrane can be demonstrated

that there are no vessels of any importance  
that a ligature cannot be applied in the lower part of its course  
that muscle must be drawn outwards  
that the abdominal walls may be as much relaxed as possible

that the fossa is deepest;  
that the cervical region enjoys the greatest extent of each variety of movement,  
that extreme freedom of movement which is peculiar to this articulation

---

All lines taken from Henry Gray, *Anatomy, Descriptive and Surgical*. (Philadelphia: H.C. Lea, 1870), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011616515>.



Elizabeth Kate Switaj  
**Articulation VI**

that which is derived from one, and that which flows from others  
that swim in space  
that we cannot conceive of their existence without them  
that we cannot ascend above them in our explanations  
that circulate in numerous capillary canals

that the practice of medicine was disgusting  
that it is not in some respects the study of a reasonable man  
that perceives the pain

that a crisis is produced

that the wine circulates with the blood  
that it produces horny hardening  
that constitutes the individual

that the osseous, medullary and fibrous textures have their peculiar affections  
that the primitive source of the evil exists  
that its diseases must be every where the same  
that we live in a period, when morbid anatomy should take a higher stand

---

All lines taken from Xavier Bichat and George Hayward, *General Anatomy*  
(Boston : Richardson and Lord : J.H.A. Frost, printer, 1822),  
<http://archive.org/details/generalanatomy11bich>.





Elizabeth Kate Switaj  
**Articulation VII**

that phosphorous burns at a low temperature  
that flesh contains sulfur  
that gas be air  
that some bubbles are forced  
that the colored part separates out as a precipitate  
that part of the protoplasm which is not nuclear

that the current will drive the others aside  
that the heart moves easily inside a loose sac  
that covers the bone

---

All lines taken from Walter Hollis Eddy, *Experimental Physiology and Anatomy*  
(New York: American Book Co., 1911),  
<http://archive.org/details/cu31924031206141>.



Daniela Elza

**excerpts from :grief:**

II.

the city lied to us

left us bereft

turned us into numerous dichotomies.

how we make each other more

human

to no end.

I have taken to splitting seconds instead of  
hairs.

falling into them

as if each is an alternate universe of forever.

see

this moment with you

it is fragile

how we lean west as if we ask the light

to take us along

because unchecked grief can frame a soul  
a certain way.

III.

you follow the shadows you throw on walls  
as if they are some future *you* emerging  
pushed out of you by the light.

you have started looking after  
yourself.

ignore the arrows that say: *this way*.  
they brought you here.

choose to walk on the edge between things  
where pavement meets street  
where brick meets concrete  
where the crack meets itself  
keeps the things it splits apart.

where I met you.

you cry over spilled ink.  
shatter at the touch of words.  
the way the page fractures.

sometimes you still dream of where  
the ocean meets land.

how when the froth and foam withdraw  
there will be an endless new  
fine sand beach for us

to walk on.



Jon D. Lee

## Ring Buoy

we burned a library once, but that was in another  
country

it drove us to the shore, where  
those who'd forgotten waded in against the heat  
& undercurrent & were carried off

& we  
brushed aside the pages that fell burning & smudged  
black our skin & clothes

then hissed & stained  
the sea, leaked ink into the waves that washed  
our feet

& our children filled the tide  
pools & stuffed their mouths with anything too  
slow to get away & choked

so we left handprints  
on their spines, carried them up the beach

away  
from where the milky eyes & hollow mouths  
sank beyond the break

& all the round  
syllables of rising air fragmented into foam



Kevin Casey

## Ironbound Pond, Somerset County

The air turns dank and heavy  
once the last notes of dusk's brief elegy  
are played, and we row  
through the growing stillness,  
then finally come aground.

Pulling our boat behind us  
far onto the beach,  
we share a great pity  
for every ounce of its weight  
it now must bear, its hull

sighing against the sand  
as we plant our feet on the shore again,  
and the firmness of the earth  
is a burden, a disappointment  
like the sorrow of waking.

Susan L. Leary

## Turning

I.

A boy is a boy  
is a boy is a man.

Even the well sickens  
of pennies. Or else,

the body becomes  
anxious of water.

II.

We see it— or,  
we do not:

the way the ribs  
are stitched

into corduroyed  
palms: or as from

ourselves,  
we are fast  
in  
departing.

III.

In the photo, my father is five.

The house: white. The sun all stained of smoke  
and copper. He dreams

lifeboats circling

the front porch. Imagines of every

river: a phoenix.

He is too young to resemble

himself,

but at certain angles, I see a ghost on the horizon

of his face. Eyes green,

head shaved: forehead

scalloped in violets.

IV.

Though in turning

around:

it is either April

or September

—and never

have we left

the yard.

Devon Balwit  
**Unsettled**

Diebenkorn tips the ocean upright  
like the side of a box. What we thought  
horizon proves the lip of a wall;

what we thought a wall flattens  
into swell. Like toy soldiers trapped  
in sickbed sheets, we tumble

into cut turf, practicing for the tomb,  
for an unpeopled world. Even the sky  
can't decide on a color, struggling,

as with onionskin directions.  
Our faces gauze-curtained, brushstrokes  
bring us in and out of true.



Wake Dreaming 17





Louis Wenzlow  
**Angel Creatures**

1. No Such Thing

Where I come from  
gold is like dust.  
Words are like  
the pounding of  
a chest full of rot,  
like anguish, peals  
of limitation. Love  
refuses to be corrected  
from outside in.  
Sometimes I just  
shake with desire  
for the old ways, for  
landscape comfort.  
I am not judging.  
How can you compare?  
What is the difference  
between a black hole  
and a buttercup, between  
clean rain and clumps  
of coffee beans in  
shit? I can barely  
hear you anymore,  
from where/when  
you were everything.  
I can barely feel  
your gentle brutal  
power. There is no  
such thing here, no  
compelling force, no  
good, God, queen.

**distinguished poets**

.....

**Amy Ash and  
Callista Buchen**



# the interview

**Q: Can you talk about the act of creating a poem together? Who gets to be the architect, the carpenter, the road builder, the caregiver and taker?**

The best thing about collaboration is that we each get to take on all of these roles. Creating a poem together, for us, is often an act of discovery and play. We love to write together. It is a special experience. We have related but differing individualized poetic voices and styles, and when we write together, we are able to achieve something like Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton describe in their collaborative work as a “third voice,” one that combines and challenges our individual strengths and weaknesses. Almost subconsciously, we begin to stretch or bend our syntax in ways we normally wouldn’t, to form images that fall outside of what we might include in a poem that is just our own. We have to wrestle with turns that defy our expectations. As collaborators, we are always learning from one another, always pushing past our comfort zones to move into larger possibilities.

In terms of organizing the work of this project, Amy tends to be the one to monitor deadlines and manage our to-do list, to keep us on task. Callista is more impulsive and quick to brainstorm in the moment, but inside the writing of the poems, we don’t really have separate roles. We take turns with who starts each poem, and then we work slowly, line by line, each building a moment and then giving that moment over to the other and then taking it back again. We get to be everything, but we have to let go of everything, too.

**Q: How does the summary at the start of each poem come about? Some of them appear to have an ironic relationship with the body of the poem. Is this intentional?**

We think a lot about language and its ability (or lack of ability) to communicate and to be precise. The list of words at the start of each poem is our first step into unraveling the connotations of the language of the title. In this way, we’re interested in demystifying the writing process, in making visible the conceptual thinking (and negotiation) that each poem requires.

On a basic level, the word lists that open each poem started as a way to generate ideas, but also to frame and introduce the image world of the poems. Some of them have a pretty direct relationship to the poem, and yes, some of them feel a bit more slanted or ironic. The connection between these words and the poems themselves has shifted and evolved throughout this project.

**Q: What are the connotations of holding and being held to you and your poetic process?**

The gesture of holding and being held is essential in our poems and in our poetic process as well. When we are not working in the same location, we hold each other's words on the screens of our phones or in our minds all day as we continue our everyday lives. The line we are holding is carried across contexts and situations. The line we offer in extension and response is reconsidered and rewritten in different lights and held for quite some time before being offered in return. The act of writing together, even when we are not in the same, is a kind of comfort and closeness.

Our poems always seem to be in the act of grasping. There is a tension between all that needs to be held close and all that slips away. Collaborative poetry foregrounds this dynamic, makes it explicit. On one level, collaboration is an attempt to make something whole, to hold things together—to interweave and connect, to hold language and be held by it.

**Q: What kind of poem is the body?**

This is exactly the question our work is interested in circling.

The body is a poem that is flesh and word and gesture. The body is a poem that is always changing, often in ways we don't recognize. The body is a poem that shifts and grows. The body is a poem that will fail you, but is also capable of more than we can imagine.

**Q: Although each of your poems speaks to larger natural and human concerns, there is always a hint of flesh-and-blood people present. And there are often touches of daily life: doing laundry, pairing socks, climbing trees, dressing dolls. How do you use such specific, universal imagery to illuminate the big questions you pose?**

We want our poems to be of the world(s) that they explore--real, alive, present. Concrete details help ground us in the experiences in which our poems engage. As women, as mothers, as poets these are the ways we move through the world, and our poems reflect that. These are not big questions that exist on a different plane. They are questions that matter, even, and maybe especially, in the act of folding socks.

**Q: There seems to be an undercurrent of violence threading these poems together; some are direct violent actions, some descriptions that imply violence. Can you tell us what role you feel human violence plays in your work?**

We are interested in the unsaid and the uncertain, and in unpacking the nature of fear (perhaps something about working together makes us brave enough to explore these questions). Sometimes, violence is the physical manifestation of fear, or the visible force that reacts to the invisibility of silence. In our work, we're thinking about what it means to be human--to be at once connected and distanced from others--and how this is enacted. Along with all the beauty the world offers, there is darkness too. Exploring and confronting that allows us to acknowledge the strength and resilience we also see. Observing, understanding, responding to, enacting violence seem to allow us to explicate this experience.

**Q: Each title draws a unique comparison between two disparate things. And woven throughout your poems are natural and human transformations. Tell us about the roles of transformation and perception in your work.**

Collaborative work seems uniquely positioned to engage with transformation. In writing poems together, we are always in the act of becoming, always testing perceptions with and against one another to see the world in a different way.

We see the poem itself as a space of transformation, in the movement between phrases and images and in the turn between lines. As collaborative poets, we write with the expectation that our individual contributions will be transformed, that one writer will pick up where the other has left off, often taking the poem and its potential meaning in a new direction. As poets reading other collaborative work, we were drawn to the energy of it. As writers, we are thankful for the community collaboration offers. We like knowing that we are not in this alone, that we always have a partner holding our words and showing us what they can

become, what we can become. So, in this way, transformation is not only a theme of our poems, but an essential part of our collaborative process.

.....

Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Childhood as Husk**

*youth, early, beginning, wonder*  
*aril, shuck, skin, glume*

She dresses the doll, undresses it, loses the doll's left shoe behind the dresser, forgets the doll like a seed. Under a patch of quilt, it grows. Flaxen tendril of hair pushing up, weaving its way through loose fabric, until she sleeps under waving branches, forgetting their origin. When she dreams, she dreams of limbs. Later, in fall, fruit ripens on all the trees. In the orchard of her bedroom, she reaches for an apple, and shines it against her nightgown to catch her reflection in the skin. When the weather comes, she will weave together the light and the chaff, a luminescent nest. She will curl her body inside, her knees folding like blankets or wings. Maybe she can wait out this storm, brace for suffering, for the branches that break. When the weather stills, she will cut down everything that hasn't fallen, the scythe flashing. She will burn the field black. Her footsteps, charcoal and ash.





Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Playing as Copper Kettle**

*live, tease, compete, cooperate  
 curve, container, metallic, hold*

Water suspends, bursts, steam that gathers, drips  
 into color--collected on the curved edge, all this

we imagine from the other room, folding laundry  
 and pairing socks. We listen to our children whisper

secrets into cupped hands, their laughter crashing  
 like a gong, then lifting into whistle, into song

Strange and chant-like, a chorus we translate.  
 We approximate until all song is lost

except for what shrieks on the stovetop.  
 What will tell them, how to explain?

We cannot be trusted with this knowledge.  
 We warn of heat, but they want to catch

clouds. Imagine what their hands could hold,  
 could make. Warble and vapor, everything

evaporates eventually. These scribbles on paper,  
 as we make list after list, as if accounting slows

a transformation between states. We learn how  
 to breathe water, to stop thinking about thirst,

To have the body in one room and the mind another.

Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Dawn as Monster**

*birth, emergence, origin, star*  
*huge, fiend, brute, villain*

The horizon, slow-motion violence  
its bite, its tooth and reach  
the strobe of morning, grab, flash.

As if our legs could hold us, we turn  
into the wind, let the burn build,  
radiate into our bones, across our skin.

*Kiss, kiss, whisper, hiss.* This touch a bite  
this light a threat, a promise.  
We think we know from what direction

the attack will come, our gaze fixed  
like a plan, how we hold our places.  
Across the plain, something almost  
sure. Rooted fire: we refuse to run.



Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Rival as Staircase**

*Touch, challenge, oppose, match*  
*Flight, structure, height, step*

First, your spine  
 Articulates, the bare

Burden of latch  
 Its clattering jaw

All swing and rattle  
 You are a tower

Masonry of bone  
 The space between

Stones offering  
 What room there is

In exchange for  
 Fire, the parts you

Singe and curl  
 What whispers down

The current's swerve  
 Your body telling

Time as you press  
 Into upright, against

This force unfolding  
 Then, soften, fiber

Slender pull  
 The whip and snap


You build and bend  
 A gesture of breath

Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Fever as Trapped**

*delirium, flush, unrest, beat*  
*ambushed, cornered, captured, stuck*

By sunrise, we bury the fire in sand, smoke directing our gaze upward, though we know grains melt into glass underfoot, the steam seeping into our skin, our calves and bones. The iron-red embers, our iron-red blood, the color we see when we close our eyes against ache, the sunlit throb under which there is no escape. We wait, restless, imagining the desert, becoming a landscape of bramble and stone, rough dust and sky, what shifts, our exhale as horizon. Even so we breathe in the light and heat, our teeth sandwashed bones, marking time. We wait, damp-kneed and clawing, for the fever to break.





Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Something as Game**

*roughly, rather, impressive, unspecified  
spirited, wild, ploy, match*

We don't know what it is, this thing we hold.  
Callused, we push our palms together,  
the instruction booklet folded into paper airplane.  
Someone counting and someone hiding.

There isn't a ship we can't sail, a dragon we can't slay until,  
our pockets weighed down with small stones,  
we don't say what we want.

Tree climbing, scraped knees and battered elbows  
we cartwheel, like so many seeds, like laughter covers  
an invitation, a promise: seek, seek, seek.

Someone is watching from the sidelines,  
trying to decipher a score.  
Forgetting the rules, we become prey, scrambling  
into sunset, as someone calls us home.

Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Rake as Theft**

*gather, sweep, sift, collect*  
*rob, pilfer, fleece, steal*

Hands spread wide, we claw at the ground  
until we taste dust, inhale something of  
worth. Lungs like coin purses, we want  
to gather and save each breath, wait for  
the moment beyond rattle and rasp to take  
what is ours. We promise, this time,  
to not get caught. Scurry of shadow, shifting  
forth and back, fingers as spades, a harvest  
we hunger for, something to fill our  
broken sacks, a currency for sustenance.  
There is so much that we need, so much  
buried here, among the skeletons. The dust  
covers root and bone. We cannot tell  
thigh from branch, vine from tongue,  
what to gnaw on, what will be caught in tines  
we make from our bodies, when we become  
desire. All that we hold, all that falls through.



Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Basket as Shame**

*weave, goal, cradle, creel*  
*disgrace, blot, diminish, regret*

Wrapped in long ribbons, ends frayed and waving,  
everything begins to unravel. In this wind  
we become elastic, curved and stretched, what will  
bend or snap, recoil with force. What empties,  
releases, these tangles of threads & shapes, where  
we've folded this silence we hide and hold.  
Somewhere, someone mixes bread, waits for rise  
and looks away, afraid to reach for it, to mold  
and slap the dough against the floured board,  
giving it shape. The most frightening thing is this  
force, the thrust of the wind visible only in relief,  
the trees that cannot bring themselves to look  
back at what pushes, at what threatens to snap,  
to break. This burden we've carried so long  
flies like a seed in the storm, skin peeling, fruit  
raw and exposed.

Amy Ash and Callista Buchen  
**Promise as Paper Airplane**

*contract, plan, engage, aptitude  
 origami, craft, plaything, jet*

to build something with sails or wings, to make a feather even more

a feather to hope for wind that is even more wind

when what becomes bird, sprung from the nest of our hands

could be anything: a broken tricycle, handlebars folded forward

like praying, everything we build comes apart

when we close our eyes and count and count

popsicle sticks, parachutes, laughter

left out in the rain, crushed underfoot, what could be anything

torn from the spine of a notebook, this map that to unfold

whispers, plans, sketches in the mind the way

it soars across a classroom, an invitation

caught in an updraft: how we hold our breath

*Who will go first, you ask, and I say, us*

jump rope or eyelash, this curve, this glide, how the horizon

changes as you travel toward it, like anything.





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Shenan Hahn

## **Marrow**

You scrape the marrow from the bone  
with a spoon and it looks like skimming moon-fat  
off the skin of the ocean. You never knew it those sleepless nights

you'd wade down into it but it was nothing  
you could have carried, just a reflection  
of the jellyfish shimmering thanklessly

beneath the surface. Just photons and light  
and a quiet sting you couldn't place,  
dissolved by morning.

This is the soft codex of life, the inbred instructions  
for assembling oneself over and over, no matter how  
many parts are devoured or scraped away.

A bomb could burn through  
a place you walked away from,  
and no matter how close you draw someone

to you, how fervently the hair on their skin seems to rise  
to your palms, only atoms will remember  
the bodies they have made in this place.



Shenan Hahn

## The Call

There is a bird that sounds like a child / wailing / a trapped thing / an SOS /  
it comes from the trees / behind you / makes you snap  
your head / walk and walk / until it doesn't follow  
you anymore / you're out of range / I only have dreams  
where you're alive / you've gone to live /  
in a neighbor's basement / and I coax you home / I dream my dreams  
are signs / that you're near / I gather them like stones in a pile /  
when I can't see you / when you're like a sound  
deafening  
on this bay / I found / a jaw with teeth like tack boxes /  
in a row / bone white pestles /  
I pocketed it / I want to hold / something  
that could have overtaken / me / I want that cry to be  
your call / as long as I can't place it / it could be /  
we want to hear / the world talking to us / in this place /  
among places / we'll hear our names  
in any unfinished song / a warble from a rusty saw that rises / and rains  
back down / in rivulets / soft and terrible / a voice so familiar /  
it hurts / to listen.

Rich Ives

## Cottonwoods

Don't hurry past  
that long river of days along the curve  
that takes you away

from where you thought  
you were going. Maybe there you'll learn  
to appreciate the soft persistent

exit the rain throws down  
upon the slant and certain drift of the days you  
thought you were missing.

If you had noticed cotton  
was falling not from the trees but from  
the possibility of the trees,


you might have lived boldly  
like seed, floating away, the one thought  
you still thought to touch.

Our world wasn't really  
there, anyway, I knew, and we hadn't experienced  
this before, so I saved it,

pulled it back from the flow,  
sheltered it apart from loftier, more demanding  
examples of leave-taking

while our understanding of the river  
of air flowed on, slower and less certain than the river  
itself, the river we thought to touch

and could not.



Penelope Scambly Schott  
**two poems (untitled)**

Now I can wait on both sides of the same door  
holding yesterday and tomorrow  
in transparent hands.

Two old women with permeable edges:  
whether I pat your arm or you pat my arm,  
we are both being consoled by dead mothers.



Bruce Parker

**I Doze off as I Watch** *Leaning into  
the Wind*


The beautiful wall  
of interleaved slabs of

gray stone graceful as a  
layered narrow mass

of looted gravestones  
forms a line between you, grove

of trees in rain, and me in my dream  
of a beautiful wall of

wet stones, shining in the mist,  
that hold us apart.



Simon Perchik  
**two poems (untitled)**

\*

With no ink and the nib  
learning to dry  
as shadows and a dark room  
—what you stroke are the words  
before they turn black  
then emptiness, then

yet her name  
is not something you dig for  
then row by row

so this page on each side  
stays damp from dirt  
covered with fingers

—you almost point  
though nothing moves  
not these walls, not

what would reach around  
hid from your arms  
—this pen and in the margin

a wooden handle  
squeezed tight —drop by drop  
swallowed the world.

\*

These piles hold back :each finger  
embraced the way darkness  
covers a sky no longer needed

and what you breathe out  
stays black till it cools  
closes and overhead the dirt

shades you though clouds  
left in the open are useless now  
pulled along behind these bars

used to hands growing huge  
in sunlight, in this makeshift prison  
filling with mist and shovels.



Robert Krantz

## Dirt

A new flower tattoo  
for each disappointment  
I see your garden blossom  
from shoulder to sleeve  
I've always loved your  
hands, strong and laboring  
buried in the dirt of it all.





James Croal Jackson  
**Stewardess**

California leaves in smoke & flame  
cigarettes you never touched

the burning  
bristle

but your hands  
on steel made a home  
in airplanes

soaring over the evergreen  
we outgrew

you called a bottomless lake  
drowning

monsters deep in murk

in the way of work  
was love &

understanding this  
you left the city  
became the sky



Samara Golabuk

## Hemisphere, or what is missing.

Brain. Life sculpts

its dynasty of memory. Forgiveness  
thrusts a sinkhole under it.

There is room under  
each room, is what

I'm trying to say.

Memory. Forgive  
your brain its sulci, your bones  
their lacunae,  
the blank spaces  
in the manuscript of the body.

We try to be what we see  
without knowing why.

Categorize  
dynasties of forgiveness,  
memorize their sinkholes,  
they know not what they  
swallow  
whole.

Samuel Seskin

## Disease

She lays me down on worn bedsheets.  
Then, as if my hope were enough, she raises me.

She leads me away from the promise of ripening grass  
to pastures withered with frost, where swollen soil

is punctured by voles' blind certainties.  
From her hand I eat oranges with salt.

I follow her into a maze of wordless candor.

She prepares a storm even as I perspire.  
She anoints my head with cold rain.

No hour is an hour when she is finished.

Again and again I sun myself.  
I call for the days of my life.

Samuel Seskin  
**Fontanelle**

I dream I have a ladder  
in the hole of my spine  
like the one in Jacob's dream

Over its rungs  
ecstasy rises and falls  
from the soles of my feet  
to the bones of my inner ear

The men in blue say  
a tumor caps the hole and  
if anything blocks the hole  
fatal things will happen

My vision blurs  
and I am certain I hear a voice  
but not where it comes from

I hold my breath  
as if who I am  
is closing

Samuel Seskin

## Origins of Longing

A man often swam in a river.  
There was, later, a parting  
that was the origin of longing—  
like leaf fall or innumerable  
short-lived flakes of snow.

Look— his white shirt floats.  
The river fills it, gives it shape—  
a flutter in the arms, a swelling  
in the chest, a ripple in the pleats  
that cover the absent heart.

If we so love the world  
what must we wear?  
Clothes plain as water,  
pellucid as wet, white silk.



Hilary Sallick  
**Perennial**

I have to listen to allow silence  
forgetfulness to remember

Then the thing may become clearer  
to my eye I may see  
its delicacy its straight upward stance  
its rising and branching and  
greening

And if I see it I may feel it  
know it the why of it beyond  
why the balance the dropping and falling and  
lifting within

Or I may not it may be nothing but  
it and not everything as well not connected  
not connecting not throbbing in me not  
speaking my name It may just be  
beautiful and bland and indifferent to me



J. Marcus Weekley

## One More Dead Fag: An Anti Manifesto

*for my brothers, here and gone, hopefully none in the future*

Please, give me your bodies, since you won't be using them anymore. Give me your X-boxes, your Captain Crunch, your boxers, the love letters you never sent.

Please, give me your bodies, before you water-log them, before you stretch them taut as rope you wrap around my throat, before you smile like the face of a gun. Give me your i.d., the candles that kept you hoping, your toothbrush stained with paste, your final change at the bottom of a drawer filled with socks.

Please, give me your tongue that never spoke those words, your fingers that tingled at the thought of sunlight on his skin, your hair a lover will never touch again, your tears you no longer cry, your secret spaces even Jesus doesn't know about, your own thin membrane that tore open, the silky blanket of your blood covering me.





C. Alexander

## **Polly, like polyamorous**

The porch swing was new. It was empty. The leather strapped chairs were old. They were filled. With us and the weight of who was not there. The cups held coffee. They were not my cups. They were not your cups. You told me you had been thinking about what it means to be honest and if it mattered, and who it mattered to. You told me not to be angry. You told me you were so sorry. You told me to stop torturing myself with the details. I became aware of the keys in my pocket. The ones that could easily get me away from there. Then there was screaming. Then there was tossed porch furniture. Then there was a long walk alone. Then nothing.



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# contributors

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**Kathleen Hellen** is the author of the collection *Umberto's Night*, winner of the Jean Feldman Poetry Prize, and two chapbooks, *The Girl Who Loved Mothra* and *Pentimento*. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Letters and Commentary*, *Barrow Street*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Nation*, *North American Review*, *Poetry Daily*, *Poetry East*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and elsewhere. Recipient of the Thomas Merton poetry prize, the H.O.W. Journal poetry prize, the *Washington Square Review* Poetry Prize, and twice nominated for the Pushcart, she teaches in Baltimore.

**Rich Ives** has received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for his work in poetry, fiction, editing, publishing, translation and photography. His writing has appeared in *Verse*, *North American Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Iowa Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Fiction Daily* and many more. He is the 2009 winner of the Francis Locke Memorial Poetry Award from *Bitter Oleander*. He has been nominated seven times for the Pushcart Prize. He is the 2012 winner of the Thin Air Creative Nonfiction Award. His books include *Light from a Small Brown Bird* (Bitter Oleander Press--poetry), *Sharpen* (The Newer York-fiction chapbook), *The Balloon Containing the Water Containing the Narrative Begins Leaking* (What Books) and *Tunneling to the Moon* (Silenced Press--hybrid).

**Laurie Kolp** is the author of *Upon the Blue Couch* (Winter Goose Publishing, 2014) and *Hello, It's Your Mother* (Finishing Line Press, 2015). Her recent publications include *Stirring*, *Rust + Moth*, *Whale Road Review*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Front Porch Journal*, and more. Laurie lives in Southeast Texas with her husband, three children and two dogs.

**Robert Krantz** graduated from the University of Akron with a BA in English. His individual works have appeared in *Gargoyle*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review* and elsewhere. Bitterzoet Press recently published two chapbooks of Robert's work (*Plus 4* and *Hansel*). He makes his living as an industrial sales engineer in the Midwest.

**Susan L. Leary** is a Lecturer in English Composition at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, FL. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in many print and online journals, including *The Christian Century*, *Crack the Spine*, *After the Pause*, *Not One of Us*, *The Bookends Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *SWWIM* (*Supporting Women Writers in Miami*), among others. Her poem, *In Utero*, was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Find her at [www.susanlleary.com](http://www.susanlleary.com).

**Jon D. Lee** is the author of three books, including *An Epidemic of Rumors: How Stories Shape Our Perceptions of Disease* and *These Around Us*. His poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *Oregon Literary Review*, and *Clover, A Literary Rag*, as well as the anthology *Follow The Thread*. He has an MFA in Poetry from Lesley University and a PhD in Folklore. Lee teaches at Suffolk University, and spends his spare time with his wife and children.

**Christine A. MacKenzie** is a student of creative writing and psychology at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and regularly writes for *Mentality Magazine* and *The Odyssey*. She has been or will be published in *Visitant*, *Ennoia*, *The Underground*, *Teen Ink Print*, and *Blueprint*.

**Greta Nintzel** finds herself back in a place where wisteria, full with purple flowering clusters, creeps up and covers over fifty-foot hickory trees. Her most recent work can be found in *The Curator* and the UK journal, *The North*.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, **Bruce Parker** holds an MA in Secondary Education from the University of New Mexico and has worked as a technical editor, teacher of English as a Second Language, and translator (Thai, Mandarin Chinese, Urdu, Punjabi, and Turkish to English). His work has most recently appeared in *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Conceptions Southwest*, *Spank the Carp* and *2elizabeths* and is forthcoming in *Common Ground Review* and *Perfume River Review*. He lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife, artist and poet Diane Corson, where they host a biweekly poetry workshop.

**Simon Perchik's** poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere

**Allan on's** recent books are: *Other Than They Seem*, winner of the Snowbound Chapbook Prize from Tupelo Press; *Precarious*, 42 Miles Press, a finalist for The Lascaux Prize; *Fragile Acts*, McSweeney's Poetry Series, a finalist for both the National Book Critics Circle and Oregon Book Awards. He lives in Oregon and Florida.

**Hilary Sallick** is the author of *Winter Roses* (Finishing Line Press, 2017). Her poems have appeared recently in *Two Cities Review*, *The Human Journal*, *The*

*Aurorean*, *Third Wednesday*, and other publications. She teaches reading and writing to adult learners in Somerville, MA, and she is vice-president of the New England Poetry Club.

**Penelope Scambly Schott** is a past recipient of the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her newest book, due out in April 2018, is *House of the Cardamom Seed*. She lives in Portland and Dufur, Oregon.

**Samuel Seskin** is retired urban planner in Portland, Oregon. He finished his MFA in 2014 at Pacific University. His writing has been published in *Vermont Literary Journal*, *Clementine Poetry Journal*, and *Cloudbank*.

**Elizabeth Kate Switaj** is the Chair of Liberal Arts at the College of the Marshall Islands. She holds a PhD in English from Queen's University Belfast and has taught in Japan and China. Her first collection, *Magdalene & the Mermaids*, is published by Paper Kite Press, and her poems have recently appeared in *Hawaii Review*, *Potluck Mag*, and *Silver Birch Press*.

**J. Marcus Weekley** is currently flying over Mississippi. His writing is forthcoming (or newly published) in *Across the Margin*, *bottle rockets*, and *Chrysanthemum*, among others. Marcus has a collection of ekphrastic prose poems, *Singing in the Merman Cemetery*, forthcoming in 2018 from CW Books. He also paints, photographs, and writes screenplays: [www.flickr.com/photos/whynottryagain2](http://www.flickr.com/photos/whynottryagain2).

**Louis Wenzlow's** poetry and short fiction have appeared or are forthcoming in *(b)OINK*, *Cleaver*, *The Forge Literary Magazine*, *International Poetry Review*, *Jellyfish Review*, *Jersey Devil Press*, and other places. He lives with his family in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

# 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.



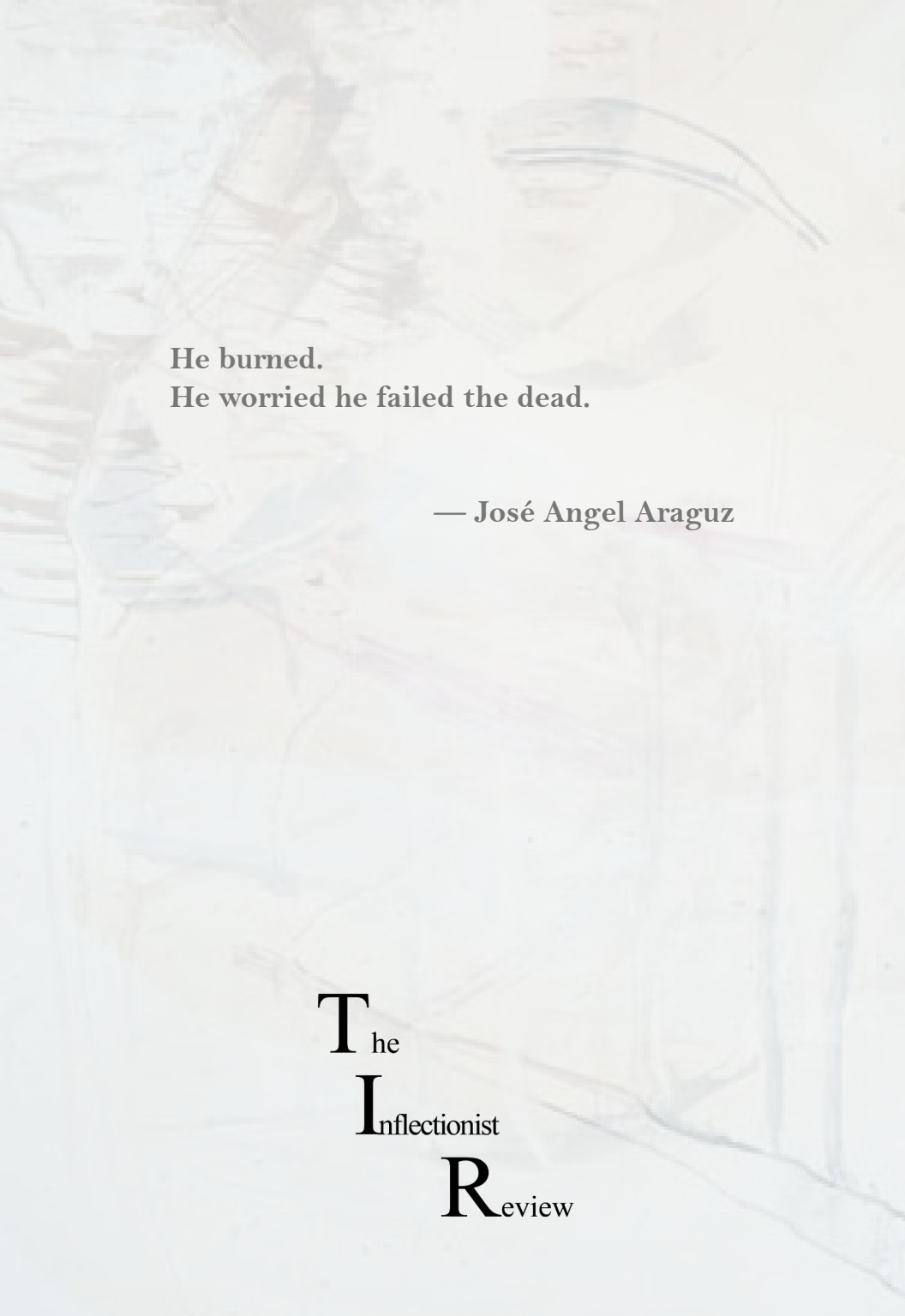
## guidelines

- 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.
- Simultaneous submissions are gladly considered, but please email us at [info@inflectionism.com](mailto:info@inflectionism.com) to withdraw a piece that has been accepted elsewhere.

All other editorial inquiries can be sent to: [\*\*info@inflectionism.com\*\*](mailto:info@inflectionism.com).

For more information on the Inflectionist movement, please visit [\*\*www.inflectionism.com\*\*](http://www.inflectionism.com).





He burned.  
He worried he failed the dead.

— José Angel Araguz

**T**he  
**L**inflectionist  
**R**evue