The Inflectionist Review

No. 7 Spring/Summer 2018

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

A. Molotkov
John Sibley Williams

info@inflectionism.com
www.inflectionism.com
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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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
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 ethereal 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 slippered 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 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.
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.
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
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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.
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.
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

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 everywhere the same
that we live in a period, when morbid anatomy should take a higher stand

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

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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.
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.
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.
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.
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

\[\textit{live, tease, compete, cooperate}\\ \textit{curve, container, metallic, hold}\]

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, heat
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

captured 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.
Wake Dreaming 15
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.
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.
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.

Wake Dreaming 1
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.
Wake Dreaming 23
C. Alexander is a MFA graduate from Lindenwood University. He has been featured in the *Eunoia Review*. He also released a spoken word EP last year called *Cosmic Aging* that you can find on all music sites. He also has a collection called *The Cosmic Hello* available on Amazon or his Instagram @calexanderpoetry.

José Angel Araguz is the author of seven chapbooks as well as the collections *Everything We Think We Hear* (Floricanto Press) and *Small Fires* (FutureCycle Press). His poems, prose, and reviews have appeared in *Crab Creek Review, Prairie Schooner, The Windward Review*, and *The Bind*. He runs the poetry blog The Friday Influence and teaches English and creative writing at Linfield College.

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 teaches in Portland, OR. She has six chapbooks and two collections out or forthcoming: *How the Blessed Travel* (Maverick Duck Press); *Forms Most Marvelous* (dancing girl press); *In Front of the Elements* (Grey Borders Books), *Where You Were Going Never Was* (Grey Borders Books); *The Bow Must Bear the Brunt* (Red Flag Poetry); *We are Procession, Seismograph* (Nixes Mate Books), *Risk Being/Complicated* (with the Canadian artist Lorette C. Luzajic), and *Motes at Play in the Halls of Light* (Kelsay Books). Her individual poems can be found here as well as in *Cordite, The Cincinnati Review, The Carolina Quarterly, Fifth Wednesday, Red Earth Review, The Fourth River, The Free State Review, Apt, Posit*, and more.


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.

**Laton Carter**’s work has appeared in *Chicago Review, The Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review, The Oregonian, Ploughshares, Western Humanities Review,* and *ZYZZYVA*.

**Kevin Casey** is the author of *And Waking...* (Bottom Dog Press, 2016), and *American Lotus*, winner of the Kithara Prize (forthcoming, Glass Lyre Press). His poems have appeared recently or are forthcoming in *Rust+Moth, Valparaiso Poetry Review, Pretty Owl Poetry,* and Ted Kooser’s syndicated column ‘American Life in Poetry.’

**Sandy Coomer** is a poet, artist, and endurance athlete. Her poems have been published in *Mud Season Review, BlazeVOX, Streetlight Press, Oyster River Pages,* and *Sheila-Na-Gig*, among others. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks, including the recently released *Rivers Within Us* (Unsolicited Press), and is the founding editor of the online poetry journal, *Rockvale Review*. She lives in Brentwood, TN.

**James Croal Jackson** is the author of *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017). His poetry has appeared in *Hobart, FLAPPERHOUSE, Yes Poetry,* and elsewhere. He edits *The Mantle*, a poetry journal. Find him in Columbus, Ohio or at jimjakk.com.

**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 bane 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.

**Samara Golabuk** is a Pushcart nominee whose work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Anti-Heroin Chic, Eunoia Review, Plum Tree Tavern, Christian Century* and others. She has two children, works in marketing and design, and has returned to university to complete her BA in Poetry. More at www.samarawords.com.

**Shenan Hahn** is Virginia-born writer currently residing in Portland, Oregon (and on a remote island in Alaska during the summer fishing seasons). She is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University MA in Writing program, and her first full-length book of poetry, *In the Wake,* was published by White Violet Press in 2014. She has also served in an editorial capacity for *Outside In Literary and Travel Magazine, Magic Lantern Review,* and *Prompt & Circumstance.* Outside of her literary
pursuits, she runs a pancake food cart with her partner and enjoys painting, playing the mandolin, and long aimless drives.

**Maximilian Heinegg**’s poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review, Columbia Poetry Review, Tar River Poetry, December Magazine,* and *Crab Creek Review,* among others. Additionally, he is a singer-songwriter and recording artist, and the co-founder and brewmaster of Medford Brewing Company. He lives and teaches English in the public schools of Medford, MA.


**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.

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, Eunoia, 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.


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.

Anuroean, 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.

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.
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He burned.
He worried he failed the dead.

— José Angel Araguz