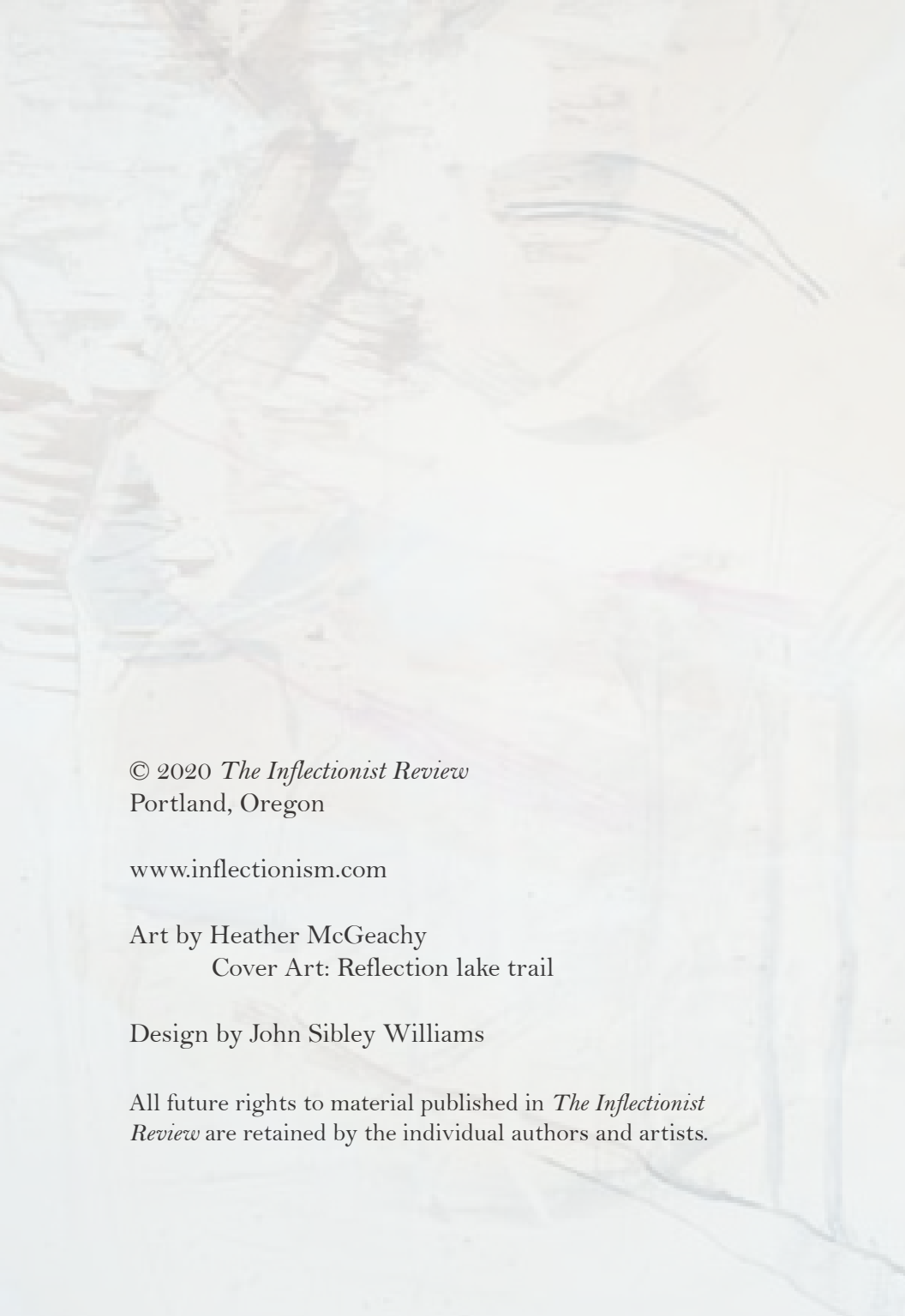




The
In
flectionist
Review

No. 9



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The
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No. 9

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mission

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

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



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Mill Creek



Alice Pettway
No. 5 Valley

—*Zhangjiajie*

I think there was an earthquake here,
she said; the rape flowers shiver yellow
on their terraces, foreign minds finding
the path among freshly swept tombs,
daytime fireworks always just behind
a curve of mountain. The chickens
have not roosted for the night yet
and the rice is steaming. There is still time
to hear the ripples in the flooded paddy,
to trace the characters chalked
outside the inn, to find, if not meaning,
at least the shared sensation of fingertips
brushing across the tips of tall grass.

Kai River Blevins

The Future is Learning to Cope with Knowing

maybe
the apple never falls from the tree
only swells until
the branches splinter & break reluctantly

or perhaps it does
but forgets sometimes the fall
refuses to feel the texture
of each moment how time
is bound up in difference
just like the rest of us i think

maybe the earth knows
things i never will like how to stay
steady or give what you can spare
& maybe a little more

Kai River Blevins

Did You Know That We Might Not Have Coffee Anymore If We Don't Stop Climate Change?

i've always been told about the pleasure of stopping
to smell the roses but i've only ever known a garden struggling to breathe
in the middle of a blaze scorch-stippled & surrounded
by so many endings resisting the excruciating diminuendo
the becoming nothing more than a memory
& what power it will have once it has been drained of truth
how it will echo as entire nations fall to their knees
bones eager to crack for the dead
sing their voiceless hymns into the storm exhale and
dream

i am sorry & angry which in many ways
is the same feeling depending on the truth
how disappointed you must be watching a single kingdom destroy it all
this empire of loneliness this crumbling dam
blaming the abandoned for the impending flood
they will say their god is cleansing the earth
their god is making a promise just look at the sky

can't you see it

the rainbow

can't you see

painted on metal wings

this country

with its oil

& betrayal

the bastard creature

just won't die

but it has children for that

there must be something

sweet about fear

the maddening rush of suspense

of the blood rioting

against the veins

of suddenly becoming so aware

of time & its cruelty

how we are compelled

to let wonder

become a future undreamt

again & again & again &

Milla van der Have

these things are not alike #5

slippery like a heart

absence

landfall

the migration of my lover's body like geese
flocking South

a parting

a clearing

roots like trenches
deep in the resilient mud

a city, a history

maiden

an inkling of earth, of matter

breaking bonds

common ground

many layers

no shelter from within

pillar-bound

a bough a broken life

to lose your way

to dwell

the dead bring their own dead

coiled and worn from within gatekeepers of the
firstborn kiss

the blessing of old hands to be mortified

a former king

a former king

the unbearable sadness of
stolen hours

a curving, her gentle touch

the word unheard

the word manifest

a sigh a breath

the sudden rise of the sun over waves the sound of burning, the promise of fertile kin

 a sightline

 a soul

 a settlement

Milla van der Have
bare

there is no elephant

what isn't there can't
disappear, you say

there's only park and dog
there's only my bike, the awkward angle
of metal against legs

the last roar of the drunk has melted into the night
the wind of March consoles our bodies

hurled close, hurled apart
like rabbits you can't unpull from their hats

and there's the wound of your mouth
the open bleeding, the stillness and I

think I shouldn't lean, shouldn't reach, shouldn't touch,
shouldn't try to fold forms out of air with my bare hands.



Shannon Winston

Marbles IV

Inside, red-orange
strands unfurl
like the light
that sutures
earth to sky.
Here, everything
is held by the seams.
Me, this moment,
this morning—
all threaded
together with
other mornings.
All of it contained
with deceptive,
transparent ease.



Katherine Fallon

The Hunt

Here because the birds need
scratch, the cattle, grass, and my bed,

filling. Here for the skull's wide
sockets, loose teeth. Here because

you are here and like a truffle pig,
I come to root. To bother you,

as the bell-bine's crude white root,
from your keep.



Max Heinegg
Field & Chapel

A purple black, I accept
as darkening luck
that it's a trade to be able to feel for

the center where there must be
pulse behind shadow, but less
than a talc wisp. In the field

that precedes faith,
I am winnowing
myself

until there is nothing to bring with
me so I
can be forgotten.



Max Heinegg
Constellation

Link by link, a fence is
perceived. Everywhere we are,
the limiting of sky.

Why be surprised that
the eye wants to draw
connection where there is none,
& define company in the past,
where death's every square inch is
a part of the museum
we will not have time to visit.

Doug Bolling

Taxis 5

Wind and sea lashing
Against this coast

I thought of how
Life began
So much silence there

Then
Words building
Their ghostly
Myths

I pause to stroke the unicorn
In a meadow
Of the
Imagined
Tide washes in
Even
To my knees

World offers its heft

Mind lives in its
Silken geometry
To love is to breach the fog of
An otherness

How words entwine there
How a mirror deceives

The rumble about us

A turning
A turning.

Amy Small-McKinney

Implied Train

No wind or geese
in this city's broken-down body.
Once unsparing wind, then geese
moored on a swarming strip of macadam.

Going home's not a song. The train
opens its wide beak for me.



S. C. Schaff
inside a wall

space

is my own

voice is something

to talk to insulation
not

[isolation]

body nailed
to plywood

free as a shot
bird

the other side
is white is stucco

is so pale to cardinal blood

the other side

& i faint

not here

not straight
between

the eyes



Paulann Petersen

The Uses of Reverie

Tomorrow I will be exact.
Tonight I can sing my song
slightly otherwise. This night
I can try to recall
and fail, but fall short
by only a bit.

Mist is a slight slippage,
substance exactly inexact.
This moment can be
a vapor rising away
from the work of dreaming,
sugar spun from the heat
of remembered missteps,
a silver thread
mined from regret.



Paulann Petersen

Dirge

Having sifted the bone-bits
out of my parents' ashes, I set them
aside. Onto each bone-nub
I rub the powder called *kumkum*,
that vivid dust
pressed in a round smudge
onto a forehead.
Vermilion to mark
a chakra, place for the third eye.
Red so brilliant
it aches.

This, before I return
the pieces of bone
to their bed of ash. Before
I bury it all.

Thus my father, my mother,
go into the earth
adorned.

Thus their bones
glow drone see.



Paulann Petersen
Household

—for Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*

i.

Headed inside, I become
twins. With a touch
from a right hand, one of me
opens the door. To the small god
of thresholds, I make my offering—
two pods of star anise,
a forked branch of basil—intoning
Breathe in, little god, breathe in.
I weigh the apotheosis
of doorknobs and keys.

With a left hand's fingertips,
my other self closes the door
behind me—entry making me
both open *and* closed.

ii.

Double, I am now inside
the house that is me.
One lamp burns
day and night. The star
of me. My mouthful of light.
A swallow of blood-honey
I hold within
the black of my body.

My upper story rises above
my lower. Stairs are narrow,

steep. I step each riser,
up or down, listen for the creak.
This sound announces the split
in darkness as it opens
to surround
my climb, my plunge.

iii.

Mine is the house of winter,
the oldest of seasons. Only age
makes the time to hear
those tales that cannot be told
spring, summer, or fall.
End-day stories. Only winter
holds the embryo leaf
inside the node within
a naked branch's tip.

A pocket's lint-cornered
warmth, this house lets me stay
alive in the world despite
the world's intentions on my life.

iv.

This space makes itself
from pairs of mirrors,
each staring into
the other's quicksilver eyes.
Haven made of timbers in which
yellow blood still rises.
Created from its very own
tatters and scrapings,
its dust and unguent and musk.

Two magpies—not white,
not black, but both—

emerge from under the dome
of their hive-hold nest to fly
out one of the half-open windows.
Even as they frame each mote,
mottle and mettlesome
of the Elsewhere, these windows
contain a world's vastness.

v.

A bird and a bird: feathered
black, feathered white, oiled
with time's iridescence:
I am both.

Death and one more
day for living: these I am,
in the same. Flying
away, flown in,
I stir air into the breath
making these words.
Being. Both here
and gone.



Anthony DiMatteo
No Out of the In

There is no outside the in we're in,
the body, the room, the house, the world.

What box of brain dares to lift
the universe to its lips?

How is the light in the woods other than
the light I dream of in the woods?

There's no way out of being in,
the river nothing else than wave.

Samuel Willhalm

Vacation

I open a goldfish by its head

& out falls a mother.

Bars of soap, towels, one
around your shoulder. Violence & always &

hands cupping quarters, crushed blackberries, a lightbulb.

Something's screaming where

bodies carry absent bones, their many faces,

hang softly inside their hands.

Staying there

& inside

a meadow. Its

cloak. It's what they're doing

& certainty & hurting

exactly
where you see it &
only that.



featured artist
.....

Heather McGeachy

artist statement

It started with anger, growing from shadows.

I play with the ironic, the sublime, the sad and the secret. My work is generally representational and most often grounded in natural landscapes. I use landscape imagery to tell my tales and use titles to nudge the viewer along with the story. This has been me. The artist I describe to myself and others. Quiet, thoughtful, silently amused and meditative.

But lately, I have felt a tug...no, a pounding rush of something louder, stronger, angrier. Quiet reflection and subtle nuance are giving way to shouting, screaming lines with punched in blackest of black charcoal. Rough scrapping sounds, powdery dust and smell of burnt wood – it's intoxicating – makes me drunk, awake, a seer of visions, a prophet, an instigator...the other side of my own quiet coin. I'm becoming my own dark twin.

Where I've always used charcoal in my work, lovingly formed with my own hands by burning pieces and parts of trees I meet...now charcoal is burned, raging fires that engulf, destroy and char. Maybe to match the wildfires that ravage the land around me here in Oregon, maybe to match the political unrest and tension that surround my digital world.

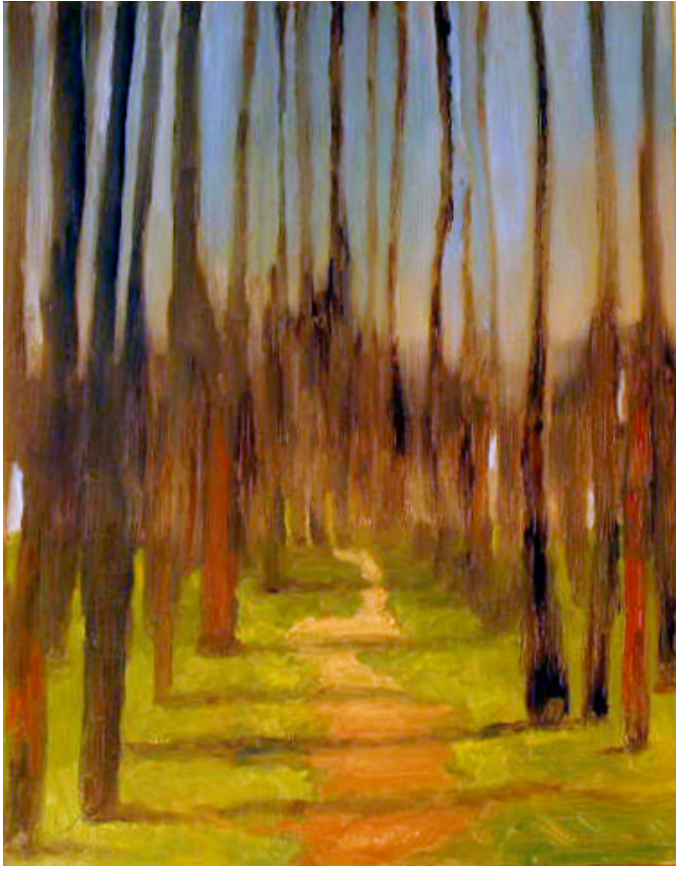
My drawings include more figurative suggestions, both beast and man. They are forced together into new beings, rougher, unhappy with themselves as they are never truly of nature or man any longer. Werewolves of all shapes and ancestries.

So that is where I've been, and that is where I'm going. I'm in the midst of a transformation, one of painful deliberation as a new darker side emerges to flourish. I'd be lying if I didn't admit to being scared of what my work...what I will become.

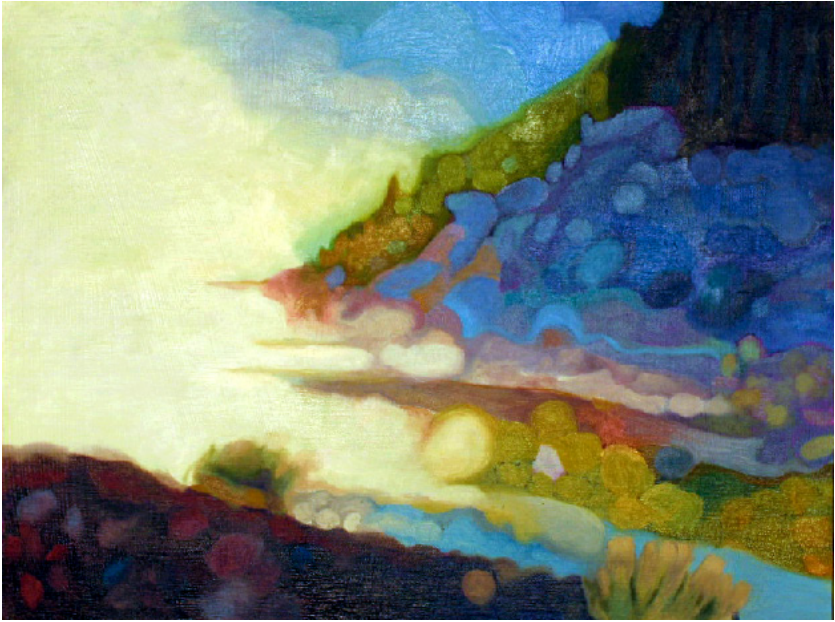
But I must find out.



www.gallery114pdx.com
www.dreamoften.info
www.instagram.com/heatherloseymcgeachy/?hl=en



After the Fire



Misty River



Cultus



Red Rock



Goat Rock



Trail of Shadows

Simon Anton Nino Diego Baena

Miscarriage

I could not finish counting
chestnut munias on the wires

morning blurred my vision
fathers are stumbling into the light

this ache

an open door
is a manger no magi would visit

but those tiny munias

their beaks
like her mouth
in prayer

you hear
nothing

the world flat

as silence

Simon Anton Nino Diego Baena

Baptism

I.

I stare at the wound
in the mirror

I feel its gnawing
sense its gravity

its pull
like a funeral

stares right back
at you

II.

Remember: the crib
floating into the Nile—

in the kitchen, mother
murmurs something

her face as autumn
her voice, ominous

no child will be kissed
with water now



Jennifer Woodworth

The Late Bed

fish clamor for ladders birds pace in tight circles trees let loose their green leaves
early while the dog's pink nose peeks out from under

our troubled words spiral like leaves around our feet I throw open all the curtains
windows and doors I want to sleep with the wind in my bed brushing back sheets
turning dry leaves green

I leave my feet beside the dog's pink nose climb into the late bed late
beside our coming cries



Christine MacKenzie

three fireflies

land on the palm of her hand: such a soft & white place for shaping
their bodies into dying stars. the color of dandelions crumpled in small
fists. the color of tulips bowing down in vases as they wilt. but electric. dense.

they say fireflies are spawned when fields of yellowed grass burn. born from hot
sparks in blackened dirt. or when soldiers bleed out in the heat of battle. fireflies
a waypoint of the soul. they say fireflies are infant stars swarming in dark forests.

they say fireflies are not flies but beetles with chemical reactions in their bellies.
a chemical called luciferin. but she isn't afraid of fireflies because she isn't afraid
of beautiful things. she isn't afraid of storms cracking silver in the earth. and tall trees

splitting down the middle like femurs into maimed heaps. she isn't afraid. she contains
the three fireflies in a glass mason jar. the stars smashing their little bodies against
its coolness. but by the morning they will all be dead.

Jennifer Metsker & Kendall Bahl

Winter Solstice

The sky is metal.
Metal calls us to work.

The privet is full of birds,
its leaves, purple and dark in the dusk light.

The birds are shadows with mass.
Thin twigs move with their unsettlement.

Are they bored, the birds?
No. Only unsettled in the dying light.

Death is boring. Everything is boring.
My friend said (dying of cancer),

“The way out of the woods is through
the woods.” Inside of metal

nothing can be seen.

Jennifer Metsker & Kendall Bahl
Collisions in an Aquarium

We lean in and blink. We absorb
the bell-tone golds and flickering pinks.

Any container—name one, any one—
will shatter, fail, *medical out*.

The container is the condition of the possibility
of its destruction, a fast vessel whereupon

the dusk becomes the water and the water
shines its dusk. Absences open, between them

substrate surfaces, giving us over
to each other's absence.

A considerable debt accrues between
floor and ceiling. A loud fan blows.

Water glass soil self.
We hold the sea. We bring it close.



Sean Lause

Inheritance

In the back of my grandmother's antique store
I overhear my grandfather chanting:
"I don't want to die. I'm afraid to die,"
and my grandmother soothes him, "I know, I know."

And she opens, opens doors, drapes, blinds and windows,
and old glass lights in carillon colors,
and still he cries his fear of dying.
But I am five and the watches are asleep.

Clocks line the walls, each hushed at a separate hour.
This store is a theatre of light, glass,
and crystal air, tobacco scents, and hard-bound
books clasping their secret knowledge.

And now her hands guide me to the garden,
and I am all lit crystal and sun,
as the world rehearses another day,
the light stings like shattered glass;
broken strings are blowing in the trees.



Henry Hughes

We Wanted Sleep

We wanted sleep
but felt only listless longitudes,
degrees drawn into more night.

In the driest spaces, I hide words for you,
safe supplies in case of a storm:
sleeping pills and candles.

Morning is not a time, it's a condition.
Dogs let out, light dimmed, sound sashed,
and a soft blanket tugged

on the fleeting promise of *Not yet*,
delaying deliberate hours of waking,
quaking in the wicked wind.



David Oates

Snow Falling Upwards

after Sam Roxas-Chua

Snow falling upwards
tenderness generosity and abandonment
every leaf another leaving

walking backwards into every room
I confuse myself with who I was
the windows with the painted pictures

leaf and leaf and leaf and leaf
the leastness of weeping
these tribulations we make of our lives



distinguished poet

.....

Michael Prihoda



the interview

Q: Is there anything in your family or personal background that motivates you to explore such challenging socio-political themes? If not, what about the themes themselves inspire your writing?

I've always believed poetry should do its best to matter, to be a corrective to our culture and the way the powerful consistently lean toward moral bankruptcy and exploitation. What really catalyzed my taking on larger socio-political themes was my time as an 8th grade English teacher at an urban school just outside of downtown Indianapolis. Society found many ways to oppress the students I taught and I, as a white male, had to own up to a lot of the ways I individually oppressed my students due to my cultural upbringing. I am still working to undo many of the things America has told me about itself and about who I am allowed to be as a white male. Writing critical poetry that stabs at the many-tentacled beast feels like my best avenue for resistance right now.

When I began to understand the way our society oppresses many of its people, I had to choose between staying silent and continuing in my unearned privilege, or responding by working to tear down the inequities that are baked into American reality. A lot of white people stay silent, for myriad reasons, comfort often one of them. I believe my religion (I identify as Mennonite) precludes silence. Being a good human means caring about what happens to other humans, no exclusions. I hope my poetry might be described as caring about (and being willing to advocate for) people who have gone too long without consideration for their equal humanity. Part of this means I feel compelled to attack the nastier parts of our country's socio-political reality.

Q: Your poems frequently use communal pronouns like they and we or the always enticing second person you. The only poem that adopts a first person I voice is one in which the speaker is a detainee. What draws you to these varied POVs? What does each add to a poem's unique dynamics?

I love the way poetry affords switching between points of view, often on the fly. I often write from a place of disorientation and feel the voices that I try to unearth in my poems are disoriented in terms of what life could be and the way the world often remains. Further, I see each poem as a new opportunity to switch the speaker or the point of reference.

When it comes to sociopolitical poetry, I see multiple levels of influence that I try to construct and deconstruct. *They* identifies the powerful forces acting against equity and justice. *We* on some level operates in a similar sphere, notching down a level to recognize even if we are not powerful (or at least do not perceive the full extent of our power) or in places of ample leverage, we are complicit in whatever injustice happens during our lifetimes when we do nothing to stop its occurrence. I think *we* is the most important pronoun in this type of poetry because it doesn't let me as the author hide, while simultaneously forcing the reader to become involved during the reading experience. I also love playing in the dirt of the second person *you* because it feels the closest to having a conversation. Like talking to whoever is out there, about to pick up the poem. In "dirt / beneath tortured nails, part 2" I use *you* to attempt making a larger philosophical point to the reader.

The last pronoun, *I*, feels the trickiest because I recognize the possible danger as a white male in attempting to write a poem from the perspective of someone experiencing oppression that I have never personally experienced. However, in seeking maximum impact for these poems, I thought it was necessary to center the detainee's experience by using *I* as a way to better connect the reader on an emotional level. The injustice I try to capture in these poems happened to people and is still happening to people. Unfortunately, it feels too often the case that people do not care about suffering until they hear a personal story that they can relate to. I say unfortunately because as soon as we hear that a human is suffering, we should care; we shouldn't require anything more. Knowing that another human is suffering ought to be enough, there should be no necessary subsequent step to "humanize" them or help us connect with that experience. Pain, the idea of it, ought to unite us as humans and lead to action.

Q: Inherently linked by both theme and structure, are these poems part of a larger sequence? Can you tell us about the sequence as a whole? How else do you explore America's ageless wounds in your other poems?

These poems form part of a larger sequence whose themes, structure, and content are all indebted to the book *Guantanamo Diary* by Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a North African man who was unfairly detained for over a decade in Guantanamo Bay. Notably, he was never charged with a crime, never found to have been complicit in anything untoward or criminal. He has since been released, though others languish in similar, unfair detention. I found his personal story in many ways spoke to the larger oppression America visits on many different people. And it gets away with it. Our country is rarely held accountable.

The rest of the sequence plays more with politics, religion, and the societal

structures that act to keep us blind, uncaring, or both when it comes to injustice. Whatever your opinion of *Remember the Titans*, I love the line where Petey, a black male, says about his teammate, a white male, “He don’t wanna know” in response to his white teammate trying to apologize for getting them into a racially oppressive situation where Petey was denied service at a white restaurant. White folks often do not want to know, have no interest in finding out about the oppression (let alone doing anything to correct it) of those who do not look like us or potentially share much in common with white cultural norms. His white teammate was unwilling to see him as fully human and so did not consider the impact of trying to force him to eat at a restaurant Petey knew would be racially oppressive toward him. I focus here on his white teammate because I hope it is obvious that the white restaurateur denied Petey’s humanity outright through his business practices. I think our society is afflicted by not considering many of its participants as fully human and this becomes harder to spot among people who are willing to virtue signal enough to not showcase their racism and prejudice.

White supremacy thinking and conduct (which I believe is very much the norm in America) necessitates holding others below. America has been, and continues to be, unwilling at-scale to deal with this reality and afford all of its citizens (and those America continues to deem unworthy of being called citizens alongside the citizens of other countries) equal humanity. I offer my poetry as a countermeasure to ongoing American oppression, however small an offering it might be.

Q: As your work constantly challenges notions of *otherness*, what role does empathy play in your poetry?

I think empathy is central to writing lasting poetry. Poetry is supposed to explore the human condition, to lay bare to others what might not be obvious about their fellow humans without the intercourse of language. In challenging *otherness*, I see my poetry as threading the line between criticism of those who would do the othering (itself an act of corrective othering) and those who society has attempted to other and oppress. As soon as we lose empathy, we lose what it means to be human. How we react to the oppression of other humans illuminates more about what kind of people we are than any other test could. When I arrive at the end of my life, this is the one test I care about having passed. Hopefully, my poetry can be recognized as part of my daily work to make good on passing this test.

Q: “prayer of the detainee” seems to imply that the concept of god can serve only the invader, the *one with the gun* to paraphrase a line from “hymn

of the detainee". What role do you think religion and religious differences play in America's flirting with violence on an international scale?

It feels impossible to extricate most instances of organized religion in America and the visitation of oppression on indigenous people and people of color. While we've always been told the story of the Pilgrims sailing across the ocean to escape religious persecution, we often leave out the oppression they visited on those who already inhabited the continent. Christianity is baked into our country's DNA and religion has often been used as a cudgel (a recent instance is Jeff Sessions twisting Bible passages to defend putting refugees in cages).

As a Mennonite whose faith is integral to who I am and who I hope to be, the way Christianity is often used and abused by humans for their own gain appalls me. It is hard to imagine currently a collective that disregards the humanity of anyone who isn't white more than the religious political right in America. I spend a lot of time thinking about Jeremiah Wright's famous "God damn America" speech back in 2003, specifically his line, "God damn America for treating her citizens as less than human." On the whole, I think that line extends to many of America's churches.

For me, to be powerful is to be the one with the gun, whether or not an actual weapon is involved (though I'll also add I'm completely opposed to gun ownership and see this as a privilege the religious right fails to relinquish despite its obvious damages across society). The religious right has amassed and protected immense power and with that power they have continued to oppress numerous people in America and abroad. Christianity and violence/oppression were never made for each other. But humans, Americans especially, have often tried to marry them.

Q: Can you please elaborate on your understanding of time as applied to the detainee/prisoner dynamic?

I was struck throughout *Guantanamo Diary* at the ways Mohamedou's oppressors warped his existence as a means of trying to extract the information they were looking for. Time was one factor, specifically in that Mohamedou existed in a purgatory of our government's making where he was held indefinitely, never charged, and yet never approaching a release. The torture of no salient end-point provided a wrenching subtext to Mohamedou's story.

Typically, our government at least claims to afford its prisoners a series of rights. Being a detainee, Mohamedou was not privy to any of them. The world the US government created in Guantanamo then became one not so much littered with

moral gray areas, but one that welcomed no consideration of morality in the first place. A literal black site in that it was a vortex. It was a prison divorced from reality, divorced from needing to see its detainees as humans. Deliberate choices were made to create that reality and numerous humans had to contribute to it. It's tempting to think abject cruelty is a result of a few bad apples whenever we see it occur, but more often I believe it is symptomatic of a larger rot that points back to our unwillingness to engage with empathy.

Q: Can those of us who don't support political violence justify our complicity in the acts of the country whose citizens we find ourselves to be?

First, every single citizen of the United States is guilty of whatever crimes the United States commits. What we do with that guilt is telling and what I see as pivotal to shirking our humanity or else pursuing it, even if (perhaps especially if) it costs us something. Often, we resort to silence and complicity that can then be misread as agreement or approval. Centering this in the personal, I have done this and will probably do it again in the future because I am not always as brave as I would hope to be. Yet our and my current complicity ought to lead to efforts toward dismantling the monster our country has always been and remains steadfastly committed to being (regardless of what party is in power). We have no founding values worth saving because our country has never promoted the cause of humanity. It has always been grudging to afford humanity to those who are not white.

As current citizens, we have a responsibility to chart a better future, one that affirms the value of all humans, recognizes historical and present oppression, and works to undo what the US continues to perpetrate across the globe. Two main things that I think must be advocated for and pursued relentlessly are the actual democratization of the US (we are at best a semi-representative oligarchy right now) and levers of accountability that cannot be shirked by positions of power or obscene wealth, both of which are often used to sidestep consequences and accountability. Meanwhile, people like Mohamedou lose years of their lives in Guantanamo Bay because our government wants to see Muslims as terrorists and is able to do so unchecked by its citizens. Until enough of us say that we will not stand for what our government continues to do to other humans, whether or not they resemble us or have anything in common with us, nothing will change, and if nothing changes, we will be more than complicit: we will be cruel.

.....

Michael Prihoda

**“i will not forgive this wound to our
country”**

time is long.

it is made long.

drawn in unending rope of gray,

 a worm

 of endless

 proportion.

 should i suffer

 your eternity

 for every death

 i never caused?

 am i worth

 that much

 to your

 crusade

 of beaten shadow?

Michael Prihoda
hymn to the detainee

one of us has a gun

one of us has leverage

the fulcrum a singular date
in distant
September.

the mountain
has always been shadow.

one of us can twist geometry

surround a soul
with mountains

until the mountains
bear no suspicion

from the citizens
of the plains

Michael Prihoda

drip

there is no drip

there is so much waiting.

you feel the pressure

of every moment being not-yours

this is how they will

coax any answer they wish

from you.



Michael Prihoda

the twelve theses of unfair detention

thesis 1: you will want. you will be made and formed until you become a creature of bidding.

thesis 2: upon resuscitation with aqueous slap they will be predictable.

thesis 3: they will cease being predictable.

thesis 4: they will give an incomprehensible litany of white men power over your space.

thesis 5: you will predict the length of their visits in finger taps on the glass floor.

thesis 6: you will be tapping when they return.

thesis 7: every single one of them will ask about your tapping.

thesis 8: they arrested you knowing you may start to tap your fingers on the glass floor.

thesis 9: it has been so long since they showed you a human that you recognize every face they show you now.

thesis 10: "yes," you say, "these men will certainly tap their fingers on a glass floor."

thesis 11: "like coal into diamonds," one interrogator hisses through too much gleam.

thesis 12: your hand is what they burn. what they have always used for fuel.

Michael Prihoda

dirt / beneath tortured nails, part 2

the truth

is goddamn

heavy

until

you pick

it up.

then it

becomes

dirty.

so light

it's easy

to put back.

Michael Prihoda
prayer for the detainee

there is no

god

but

[waiting

[fear

[white men

]

god

DISTINGUISHED POET



Glacier Montana



Natasha Deonarain

Fugue No. 2

There are layers—
dermis, subcutaneous fat, fascia, muscle;
the pearlized surface of periosteum.

Sometimes you find a
tendon frayed at both ends, like snipped
strands of platinum baby hair, or a
tendrill nerve, branched and buried deep,
so subtle you almost miss it. Sometimes
bits of bone are so broken up,
they bleed and bleed and bleed. Soon,
everything you've touched
turns red.

The field is kept as
sterile as possible. You paint its cold
cream texture with a solution that
looks like watery molasses and then
place a white sheet with a
wide hole cut in its center on top. You
press down the edges and keep this area
undiscernable from the rest to create a
work zone you can control. Sometimes
you focus so intently, you forget his
name or maybe someone
else in the room.



Tyrel Kessinger

To Foolishly Mount a Quiet Offense Against the Otherwise Insurmountable

The ocean crawls from the conch shell into my ear
and makes a pulsing river of its ghosthiss.

I have come to terms:

we can live only for the moments in between,
when life is good; time enough for the crust of the past to cool
yet warm enough for heaven to come down and live within you
for a spell. Sometimes the river quiets
and becomes a lake with a skirt aching to be pulled
by a moon, an undecided coin.

From beyond that the blinkless starheat of Andromeda
burns a hole in the lake's flimsy hide.

The light goes only so deep before being lost,
unable to pierce even this most simple of darkneses.

If I throw a rock in, the peace will be disturbed. Or even if I don't.

Lorrie Ness

The Price

The bonsai is stunted by its pot. Its trunk
labors under the canopy, gnarling into a curve.
Grandma's silhouette is hunched—
her fingers, claws.

*I've grown old working this tree,
molding age and deterioration into art.*

Backlit branches carve sky into a mosaic. Her fingers
coil wire along its limbs. She bends them
into position, copper tightens,
bark crackles.

*Avoid scars. Wire should compress, not cut.
Beauty is made from suffering.*

Capillaries mimic. Red branches
web her cloudy eyes. Knuckles protrude like walnuts
as she squeezes the pruners. I bend low
to hear her voice.

*I've always followed my vision—
known where to clip.*

Metal blades bite through years of growth
In silence I stoop—
back aching as I collect
the remains.

*Choose your sacrifices like lovers—
snip all but those you desire.*

Deep eaves hood the panes. On winter mornings
an arc of sun scythes across the sill.

She turns the pot, coaxing limbs
towards its razor.

*You need patience thick as decades.
Courage to cut. Wisdom not to.*

Desert rose is a succulent. Requirements:
Full sun. Neglectful watering. She exploits its needs.
Uses hunger to steer growth
toward the light.

*Give only enough to sustain,
so you'll always have control.*

Grandma tied the apron around my waist—stepped away.
I sat to prune, pockets anchored with tools.
Fingers clipping—creaking.
Knuckles straining—stiffening.

*Follow your desires,
see what you become.*



Lorrie Ness

To My Brother Who Hardened

You were mollusk soft
before the brine dried into your shell, before dad
used us for his sport. Brother,
I can still see us.

Chin deep
beyond the breakers,
with our toes anchored beneath the rocks,
standing upright on the ocean floor.

Fish circled our legs
nibbling the sunscreen from our skin.
To dad, we were living chum, our heads
marking the school below.

You said we were unpaid mercenaries,
ushering death toward this shoal for his amusement.
You realized that day what it meant
to be predatory.

Dad cast from shore,
reeling his lure past us into evening,
snaring sheephead and snook. Our guilt
kept us from watching the massacre.

Instead, we faced the open sea,
where sand scurried from the darkening depth—
dried into land. I imagined
its escape.

Once, you grabbed my shoulder
as a dark shadow swam between us.
I saw your pupils high-tiding, submerging
the ring of blue.

Your eyes became the ocean.
Aqua, then turquoise, then navy, then
blackness—the heaviest light,
reflecting nothing back.



Jonathan Aibel

My Last Skin

Dust off my arms,
let me roll and change
to ocher, roan, coffee,

midnight, let me breathe green
leaf and grass, let me pulse, let
me feather and fly,
let me revel

in the fall, let me
fold in the brim
depths, let me become
an echo.

Jonathan Aibel

joy, distant/past

The small fusion fires,
stars, too distant
to warm, burn brighter
for the cold,

spark with the creation
of helium from hydrogen,
then lithium, beryllium, boron,

carbon which, some eons hence,
might be absorbed into life
and movement,

while I
breathe on my fingers
to bring the joy
of blood pulsing.



Nihilonechoanists

Numb: World-View Language

Mind pen

In relation to the body

When scar is

A physical object itself.

And I am absent

In reading it.



Powell Butte

contributors

Jonathan B. Aibel spends his days wrestling software to the ground as an engineer specializing in quality and testing, and he lives in Concord, MA with his wife, son, and cat, who, like most cats, is a poem unto himself. His poems have been published, or will soon appear, in *Lily Poetry Review*, *The Aureorean*, *Mason's Road*, *Round Magazine*, and they have been included in the anthology *Rhyme and Punishment* from Local Gems Press. Jonathan has studied with Lucie Brock-Broido, David Ferry and Barbara Helfgott Hyett.

Kendall Bahl is a sculptor, musician, arborist, and writer who has exhibited work internationally. He has been published in *Kipseli*, *Sound Sculpture*, and *Riggwelter* (forthcoming) and is the founder of the art agency BU-CON which can be found at www.bucon.earth.

Simon Anton Nino Diego Baena's work is forthcoming in *Tule Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Cortland Review*, and *Paris Lit Up*. His chapbook *The Magnum Opus Persists in the Evening* is also forthcoming from Jacar Press. He publishes the online poetry/art journal, *January Review*.

Kai River Blevins is a non-binary/queer writer, musician, artist, and aspiring anthropologist living in the DC Metro area. Xe loves spending time with their partner, libraries, flowers, all things sci-fi and fantasy, playing piano, cooking, and doing advocacy work. Their poems have been published in *Homology Lit*, *Nashville Review*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Voicemail Poems*, *pnk prl*, *Duende*, and *COG Zine*.

Doug Bolling's poetry has appeared in *Posit*, *Juked*, *S/word*, *Basalt*, *Swamp Ape*, *Nixes Mate*, *Common Ground Review* and many others. He has received Best of the Net and Pushcart nominations and several awards, most recently the Mathiasen Award from the University of Arizona's Humanities publication. He has taught modern literature and writing at several academic institutions and lives in the environs of Chicago.

Natasha Deonarain lives part-time between Arizona and Colorado. Her poems are published or forthcoming in *Crack the Spine*, *Door is Ajar*, *Juked*, *NELLE*, *Rigorous*, *Packington Review*, *Thin Air Magazine*, *Dime Show Review*, *Prometheus Dreaming*, and *Canyon Voices Literary Magazine*.

Anthony DiMatteo's recent poems and reviews have sprouted in the *Cortland Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Versé Daily*, and *Waccamaw*. His current book of poems *In Defense of Puppets* has been hailed as, "a rare collection,



establishing a stunningly new poetic and challenging the traditions that DiMatteo (as Renaissance scholar) claims give the poet “the last word” (Cider Press Review).

Nihilonechoanists is a multidisciplinary artist from Zhytomyr, Ukraine, researching concepts such as AI, consciousness, nihilism and spirituality. She received a BA of Autonomous Fine Arts in Academie Minerva, The Netherlands, Groningen. She lives and works in Kyiv. Her prose has been published in “Rising for Freedom and Democracy in Ukraine” by Brine Books Publishing, Canada. Artworks have been exhibited in international galleries and festivals, including “Night of art and science” in Groningen, The Netherlands and published in various international online and print magazines, such as *Columbia Journal* and *The Adirondack Review*.

Katherine Fallon received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Meridian*, *Passages North*, *Permafrost*, *Colorado Review*, and *Foundry*, among others. Her chapbook, *The Toothmakers’ Daughters*, is available through Finishing Line Press. She teaches in the Department of Writing & Linguistics at Georgia Southern University and shares domestic square footage with two cats and her favorite human, who helps her zip her dresses. She and her favorite bread recipe can be found at katherinefallon.com, and she is reachable on Instagram @ghostelephants.

Max Heinegg’s poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and Pushcart Prizes. He has been a finalist for poetry prizes of *Crab Creek Review*, *december*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Cutthroat*, *Rougarou*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, and the Nazim Hikmet contest. His poems have appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Glass* (Poets Resist), *Tar River Poetry*, *Free State Review*, and *The American Journal of Poetry*, among others. Additionally, he is a singer-songwriter and recording artist whose records can be heard at maxheinegg.com. He lives and teaches English in the public schools of Medford, MA.

Henry Hughes’ poems have appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Seattle Review*, *Sewanee Review* and *Poetry Northwest*. He is the author of four poetry collections, including Men Holding Eggs, which received the 2004 Oregon Book Award, and *Moist Meridian*, which was a finalist for the award in 2011. His most recent collection, *Bunch of Animals*, was published by Cloudbank in the spring of 2016. Hughes is also the author of the memoir, *Back Seat with Fish: Adventures in Angling and Romance*, and he is the editor of the Everyman’s Library anthologies, *The Art of Angling: Poems about Fishing and Fishing Stories*. His essays on fishing appear regularly in *The Flyfishing & Tying Journal* and *Anglers Journal*, and he is a regular book reviewer for *Harvard Review*. He teaches at Western Oregon University.

Tyrel Kessinger is a stay-at-home dad of two wild animals. Occasionally, he finds time to write things, some of which can be found at *Gargoyle*, *Akashic Books*, *Burningword*, and forthcoming from *Triggerfish*, *Toasted Cheese*, *Hinchas de Poesia*, and *Cease, Cows*. He also serves time as Associate Editor for *Grey Sparrow* and reader for *Flash Fiction Online*.

Sean Lause is a professor of English at Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio. His poems have appeared in *The Minnesota Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Illuminations* and *Poetry International*. His latest book of poems is *Midwest Theodicy* (Taj Mahal Review, 2019).

Christine MacKenzie is a student of English, creative writing, and psychology at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. She is also a Crisis Counselor, facilitator for a sexual assault support group for LGBTQ+ survivors, and writer for *The Odyssey*. Some of her recent publications appear or will appear in *Susquehanna Review*, *The Merrimack Review*, *Eunoia*, and *Fourteen Hills*. Her work focuses on the broken, beautiful, and abstract in terms of the mind and body.

Jennifer Metsker's poetry has been published in *Beloit*, *Birdfeast*, *Cream City Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Southern Review*, *The Seattle Review*, *Rhino* and many other journals. Her audio poetry has been featured regularly on the BBC Radio program *Short Cuts*.

Lorrie Ness is an emerging poet who was recently nominated for a Best of the Net award by *Sky Island Journal*. She has current or forthcoming publications at *Typishly*, *THRUSH Poetry Journal*, *Barren Magazine*, *FRiGG*, *Sky Island Journal*, *SOFTBLOW*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Rosebud* and others.

David Oates writes about the creative arts, nature, and urban life from Portland, Oregon. *The Heron Place* won the 2015 Poetry Award and publication from Swan Scythe Press. His previous book of poetry *Peace in Exile* was published by Oyster River. He has been a finalist for various prizes, including the Lascaux Prize, Inlandia Gravendyk Prize, and Nimrod's Pablo Neruda Award, as well as the 2018 *Ars Poetica* Prize. He is author of five books of nonfiction, including *The Mountains of Paris: How Awe and Wonder Rewrote My Life* and *Paradise Wild: Reimagining American Nature*. Recent essays have appeared in *Georgia Review* and won first-place nonfiction awards and two Pushcart Prize nominations.

Paulann Petersen was Oregon Poet Laureate from 2010 to 2014, and she has seven full-length poetry collections, most recently *One Small Sun* from Salmon Press of Ireland. In addition to *The Inflectionist Review*, her poems have appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Catamaran*, and *Prairie Schooner*. The Latvian composer Eriks Esenvalds chose one

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Alice Pettway is the author of three books of poetry: *The Time of Hunger* (Salmon Poetry, 2017), *Moth* (Salmon Poetry, 2019) and *Station Lights* (forthcoming 2021). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *AGNI*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *The Colorado Review*, *Poet Lore*, *The Southern Review*, *The Threepenny Review* and many others. Currently, Pettway lives and writes in Shanghai, China.

Michael Prihoda lives in central Indiana but was born in northern Wisconsin. He is the founding editor of *After the Pause*, an experimental literary magazine and small press. His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology and he is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *Out of the Sky* (Hester Glock, 2019).

S. C. Schaff is a non-binary queer writer who has previously been published in *The Grief Diaries*, *The Wild Word*, *Barren Magazine*, among others. They can be found at www.scschaff.com.

Amy Small-McKinney poems have been published in numerous journals, for example, *Construction*, *American Poetry Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Connotation Press*, *Tiferet*, and *Anomaly* and is forthcoming in *Pedestal Magazine* and *The Ilanot Review*. Her poem "Birthplace" received Special Merits recognition by *The Comstock Review* for its 2019 Muriel Craft Bailey Poetry Contest, judged by David Kirby. Her second full-length book of poems, *Walking Toward Cranes*, won the Kithara Book Prize 2016 (Glass Lyre Press). Her poems have also been translated into Romanian and Korean. Small-McKinney's reviews of poetry books have appeared in several journals, including *Prairie Schooner*. She surprised herself by recently completing an MFA in Poetry from Drew University.

Milla van der Have is a Gemini. She writes poems and short stories and is currently knee-deep in a novel. Her poetry has appeared in *Whale Road Review*, *After The Pause*, and *Cherry Tree*, among others. She is the author of *Ghosts of Old Virginny* (2015, Aldrich Press), a chapbook about Virginia City, Nevada. Milla lives in The Netherlands, with her wife and 2 rabbits.

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Jennifer Woodworth studied creative writing at Old Dominion University. She is the author of the chapbook, *How I Kiss Her Turning Head*, published by Monkey Puzzle Press. Her stories and poems have recently appeared in *Gone Lawn*, *Bending Genres Journal*, *The Eastern Iowa Review*, *The Raw Art Review*, and others. She was just nominated for a Best Microfiction for 2020.

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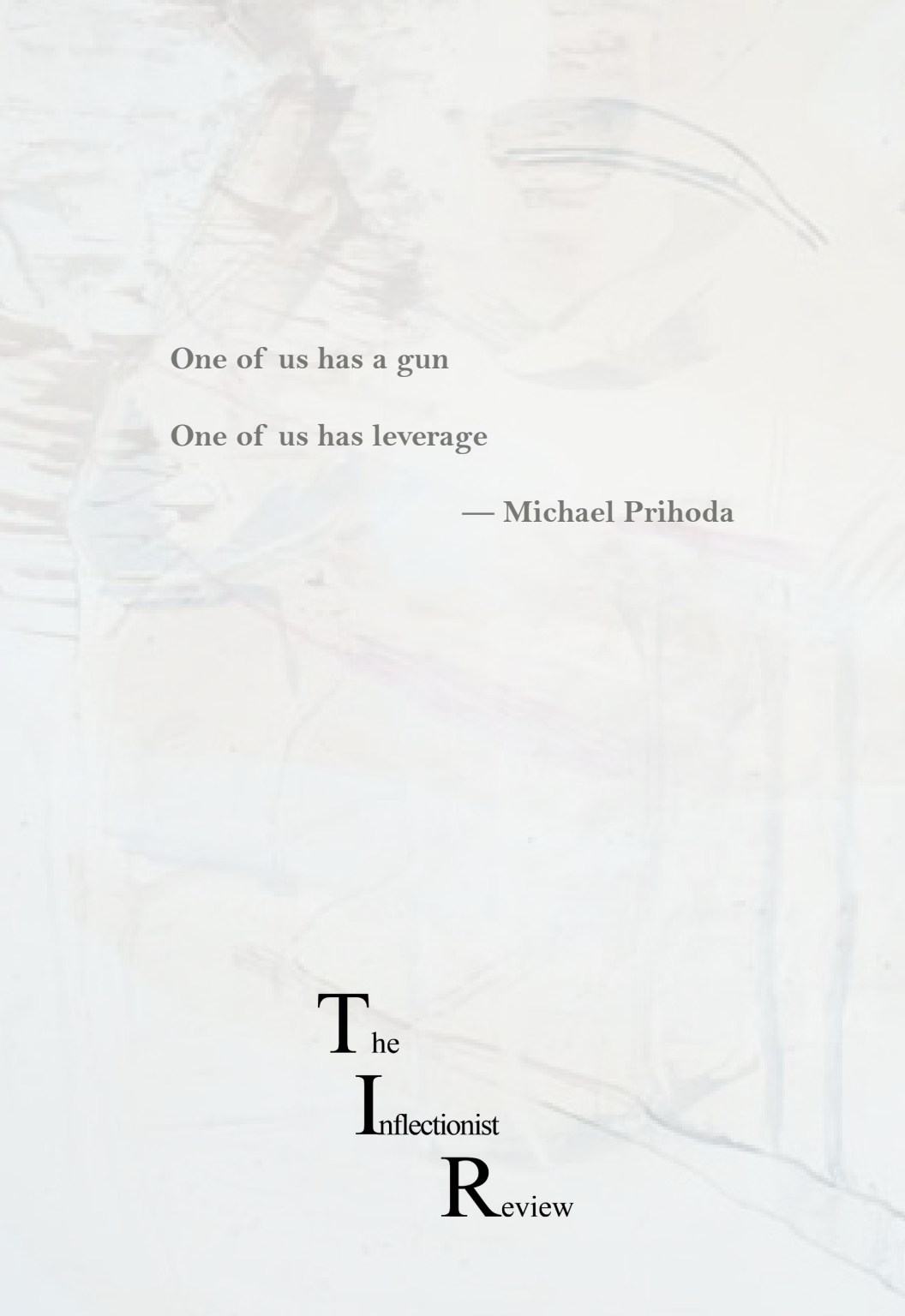


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One of us has a gun

One of us has leverage

— Michael Prihoda

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