

# S/W O R D

S/5: SUMMER 2015



## Contents

- 1     *S/5 Cover*
- 4     *Introduction*
- 5     *Couplettes*  
      Joel Mitchell
- 6     *Transfiguration*  
      Kathleen Hines
- 8     *Scorpion 27*
- 9     *Scorpion 28*
- 10    *Scorpion 29*
- 11    *Scorpion 30*  
      Joel Chace
- 12    *Scorpius*
- 13    *from The Book of Scales*
- 17    *Hydra*
- 18    *Sculptor*  
      Andrew Brenza
- 19    *Looking In*
- 20    *Movement: In Red Sharp*  
      A.J. Huffman
- 21    *Fool Me Once*
- 22    *Burnt Offering*  
      Laurin DeChae
- 23    *Lake Galena*  
      Tyler Kline
- 24    *Director's Eye: Gettysburg*
- 25    *Interview of a Self-Portrait*  
      William Glass

26	<i>Sugar</i>
27	<i>Tongue</i>
28	<i>In the Morning</i>
29	<i>Palm Springs</i>
	James Croal Jackson
30	Contributors

## Introduction

Is an inversion just another version?

It's not that we *can't* be without it, but that we wouldn't know whether or not we were we without it. We don't depend on it or need it.

Are there any flames in this fire?

But when we look into the deep darkness of a well and feel the ourself pulled forward or watch a dog's eyelids fluttering closed or sit at the table, or our stomach jumps in the pleasure of waiting --

What are we doing when we see patterns in the pixels?

It is the impossible connection and it is the last train, the final red eye.

## Couplettes

The intimacy of the barber,  
Blood-letter of the bladed age.

2

Goodyear welted  
Blue-blood belted

4

Until the scourge upon the earth  
Becomes the dirge within your bed

8

Alms for the poor  
Palms at your door

32

The Sapphic urge plastered across the broadsheets  
Laid under iambic kitty-litter.

256

Fronds. What a silly word  
For a thing so serious as the footfall of *Para-Brahma*.

8,192

Fat-cat capitalists and champagne socialists  
Shitting in the bed they've made. And. Lying. In. it.

2,097,152

Well, that escalated quickly!  
Recursion's a bitch, innit?

*Joel Mitchell*

## Transfiguration

### I.

To analyze our hurt  
Is to analyze what makes us weak  
To parse out meaning from a fig  
Soft skin, torn freshly from its pulp,  
Revealing something sweet  
And bare.

And yet,  
This fruit,  
This soul with seeds  
Which gives its flesh as holy gift,  
When opened, looks for warm embrace  
Where bees and birds would peck and prod-

They steal a love which,  
freely given,  
Asked only for a heart,  
Well shriven,  
That plead a humble truth's confession  
From mouths  
Reciting Passion's creeds.

How often when we taste a fig,  
We eloquently praise its fruit,  
so freely bought by plucking hands,  
who taste its heart first gently picked,  
now ripped from stems, the soul's frail sticks.

### II.

I pick each year from a once fair tree  
Of figs, now mixed with many vines,  
Where sumac, suckle, ivy climb  
On limbs too tender to reject embrace.

In bleeding drops from a tender face  
Blooms a nobler compassion than I  
Dare to trace—seeds of trust  
Amidst vines and weeds,  
Craving from leeches,  
Honeyed suckles, bared teeth  
The innocent Adam for whom it was made.

### III.

Sweet fig, here shattered  
Your pulp in thick hands,  
Though Eden has fallen,  
The landlord remains,  
Like you, always giving  
His heart for weak men.

Forgive, and forget  
Saintly fruit, for in dying,  
The pulp that you give  
Saves the mouths that do eat—

For in sweet flesh  
Picked  
You will leave behind seeds;  
Glory be, sweet vermeil skin.  
For in you He is pleased.

*Kathleen Hines*

## Scorpion 27

O horror. Tongue nor heart cannot conceive  
nor name. He caned a randomly chosen student,  
daily, and claimed this heightened overall morale.  
Our mall closed without warning; her halls proved  
empty; his favorite walls came tumbling down.  
Place a crown upon my noggin, an emerald  
gown over my bod, and a clown in the upstairs closet.

*Joel Chace*

## Scorpion 28

Posit a cessation to unpleasantness.

The will to press a witch to death, to lease and loan  
to fortune, to grease a killer to guiltlessness,  
to please all modern rustlers: this is the way the herd  
ends, not with a ring but a center.

Tender resignation, afraid to think what you have done.

*Joel Chace*

## Scorpion 29

That lonely ton of deference soaks and stains; the frame  
of things disjoints; aroint thee. So pew wee football  
has become a cause as natural laws have spilled  
into community pools. Not altogether fool.  
Our Kingdom of Misrule is made possible  
by the generous support of our donors.  
Good thing all those loaners sit in the back room.

*Joel Chace*

## Scorpion 30

At her loom, she works with violent intensity, with  
complete disregard for her health, with terrifying  
love. Jove would take one look at us, then flicker right  
back out. Rout of the college widow and wife.

That a keen knife see not any wound it makes,  
nor any ear hear every climax faked.

*Joel Chace*

the periwinkle  
 reaches of early summer  
 are so happy the insects are sucking  
 blood and biting and fucking and laying their eggs in the thoraxes of  
 spiders. so happy too are the robins pecking at each other's eyes, they fall  
 entangled from a branch of the nesting tree like a wounded helicopter,  
 the heart thump of hollow bones hitting earth before they fly away screaming,  
 so uncontained is their happiness. so happy too am I, I want a gun  
 or two, to go to the woods and express my happiness with a bullet in the brain of  
 some creature I will not eat. so happy too am I, under the periwinkle  
 reaches of early summer sky, I've a mind

to fill the air  
 with the smoke  
 and char of  
 industrial slaugh-  
 ter in celebra-  
 tion of all the  
 squandered in  
 squalor, of all  
 the expense of  
 too often saying  
 "Mom, I feel like  
 crying," or "Mom, I  
 want to go home now,"  
 while I am thinking of you,  
 separate from you, the silver  
 light of your hair abstracted  
 from your head and shining  
 in the pale light of an abstract sun.

bars of gray line of hill lighter between m  
 eshes of bulge and curve  
 soon breakfast, soon coffee

soon the murmurs of their strangeness  
 approaching the pattern of some arrival

Andrew Brenza

from *The Book of Scales*

o eye  
in space  
your eye

be abyssal witness  
and black hole  
lack of reciprocity

be horror  
of infinite  
density

yet trans-  
formative  
of wives tales

o eye  
in space  
your eye

give up  
nothing

\*

like earth  
remembers  
anything

a fabric  
of veins

a thought is

\*

how fucking funny  
the work  
of words

to keep our pants  
up, our legs on,  
our skylines

ragged margins  
of text  
in the distance

each step, each  
step on  
substance-

less ribbons  
of syntactic  
road

\*

being dangled  
from the lever-  
tailing end

of each new  
sentence, the  
implicit winging

of startled  
doves, their

panic-wind-

weathering

\*

ribs re-  
lease the-  
ir grip

on tears  
hurdy-  
gurdy fr-

ee gut  
puddles  
at aud-

I-ence  
eyes in  
tacit un-

ion of  
breath's long  
out beat

\*

at the game

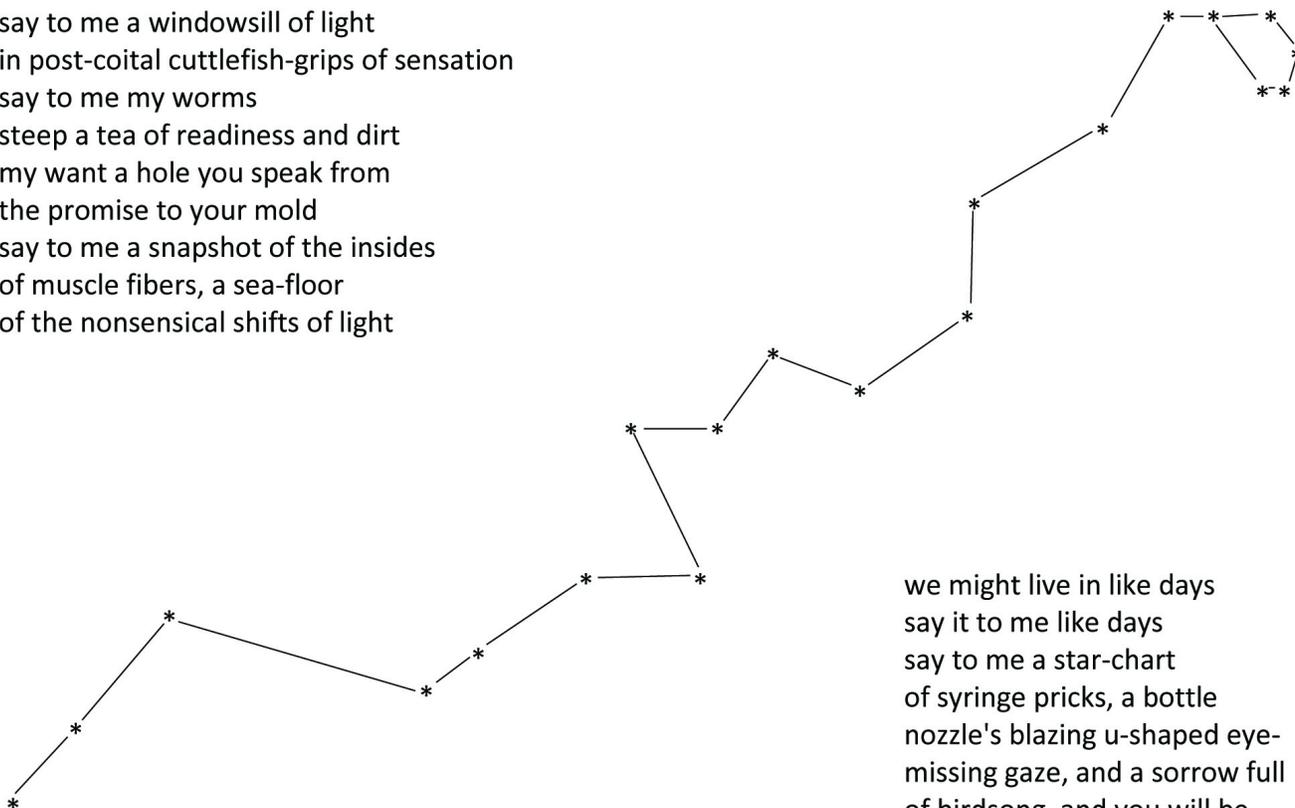
animal tongues  
of sleeves, in light,  
in sway of permissive  
light, animal sleeves  
in animal sway,  
green glottides of

animal hunger,  
each body a tooth  
to be worn, each  
birth and bearing  
pretext to collective  
raison d'etre

*Andrew Brenza*

# Hydra

say to me a windowsill of light  
in post-coital cuttlefish-grips of sensation  
say to me my worms  
steep a tea of readiness and dirt  
my want a hole you speak from  
the promise to your mold  
say to me a snapshot of the insides  
of muscle fibers, a sea-floor  
of the nonsensical shifts of light



we might live in like days  
say it to me like days  
say to me a star-chart  
of syringe pricks, a bottle  
nozzle's blazing u-shaped eye-  
missing gaze, and a sorrow full  
of birdsong, and you will be  
the buried vibrancy of my head  
and I will be generous

*Andrew Brenza*



*Looking In*

The glass window threads  
like fallen  
    rain. A river  
of traffic and shadows send  
light pirouetting like a dress.  
Clasp. Zip. Draw  
your own conclusions  
    slowly  
    down,  
drop them like a carpet,  
split           and lose  
memory, frame, and skin.

*A.J. Huffman*

*Movement: In Red Sharp*

How many coats will it take to paint my mind  
secure? I am  
all out  
of brushes. You show me  
two, but cannot decide if share is the idea[] you  
are looking for.

I take  
[action into] my own hands. Submerging  
them in abstraction.

Hues  
of *ho* and *hum*. I abhor  
such unsubstantial gore, but concede  
to your need  
for self. Sacrifice,  
it seems, is my shade.  
At least when it mixes [to match]  
your latest need.

*A.J. Huffman*

## Fool Me Once

i lap at the moon like a deer does a saltlick  
because to *taste* is to believe and i've got a glimpse  
of the future etched out in headlights. wait.  
i'm confusing the road for the way. the weight  
the moon pulls, the moon pulls. it's yellow-bricked,  
the road. no, nothing but lines. look up. i've come face  
to face with that salvation type light, but it turned left.  
went right around me and there i was stark  
and open like a bare-boned billboard hanging in night.  
give way to gravity, to movement. walk along.  
there's nothing to see here. nothing to see. advice:  
season to taste. rub face against chain-link fence,  
strike sticks against cement, toss stones.  
no damage done until the match is lit. wait.  
i'm confusing the light for the light. but i taste  
salt, so i must be getting closer to the meaning of burn,  
of crumb. hit me, i dare you. i'm lapping it up.

*Laurin DeChae*

## Burnt Offering

you've dimmed me to the very last drop,  
but i've still got enough battery  
for one last bender, one last hoorah  
to ease my busted verbosity.  
Still: one last bit to bind us, bend us  
before the sun goes out, blasting blind  
at the birth of the next big bang. Boom.  
just like that, an instant between thumb  
and middle finger, snapped: like limbs, like  
gum, like firecrackers, like the moon.  
above all this, a burst of bold beat  
of what I thought was a winged thing perched,  
pre-flight and not enough for lift off.  
if you could go back to the moment  
of truth, what would your bones offer up  
as sacrifice? all this time you've  
been boring holes just beneath the bust  
bleeding me a ribbed corset of blood.

*Laurin DeChae*

## Lake Galena

Really there wasn't any water,  
a town at the bottom  
or a letter pinned to a gull.  
The bed had dried from drinking  
and fish swallowed the lead  
until homes washed ashore.

Us, unburied with the sun  
on its hind legs, deer nipping  
at dead turtles across the floor.  
Sharks finished digging  
and lay still. Pearls thirsty  
turned back to lichen,  
lichen back to sunburn.

We too believed in sin,  
still fed from dry ground.  
Pieces bottomed, blues  
of every catfish and glass bottle.  
We only stopped when full,  
listening to kestrels in flight.  
Wing-beats, the echoes  
of the not-yet-hungry.

*Tyler Kline*

*Director's Eye: Gettysburg*

This field alive in the lens, did it aim  
to be aimed at, a witness bright in green fire  
that doesn't burn it? And the flower,  
bottom left, blue as the name

this field no longer holds, did it mean  
to gather in as an afterthought,  
immortal by accident in the shot  
none heard who fired it? Is this a scene

about color or not? Maybe some cotton  
should fit in the frame, widen the angle  
a bit, tell more story if we're able—

the blue bled into green and forgotten  
in how colorful a camera makes be,  
how it contains how it sets free.

*William Glass*

*Interview of a Self-Portrait*

What's happened is that I've become all art,  
a form to breathe a face into the air  
of which I am made, of which I am only part.  
Some lovers, in return for a heart  
give a hollow, and promise a heart is there.  
What's happened is that I've become all art,  
a painting torn too hastily apart,  
whose brilliant maker with a brilliant flare,  
of which I am made, of which I am only part,  
no sooner is finished but hates what at the start  
he loved.

But once, he traced my neck and brushed my hair:  
what's happened is that I've become all art.

If I had known that I would be scarred  
by his caprice, his oil-paint *savoir-faire*,  
of which I am made, of which I am only part,

I wouldn't have wished or listened quite as hard,  
for words he whispered nightly in my ear:  
"what's happened is that I've become all art,  
of which I am made, of which I am only part."

*William Glass*

## SUGAR

I ate cookies & watched the naked  
bodies on LSD

the rapid eye motion,  
the summer boredom,  
the eye skin torn to welts  
after exposure to  
the sun, our giver

of stardust, happiness, & boils

I fell asleep  
(I'm sorry)  
on the LifeSaver  
floatie; I

drifted,

coughed Grand Rapids  
in my chest; still,  
there is a desire

I cannot quench

*James Croal Jackson*

## TONGUE

mouth sculpture in a gunpoint ell  
little gunshot clicks and pops that  
wound  
when  
wielded  
well

*James Croal Jackson*

## IN THE MORNING

in a snowstorm  
next to you  
the mistake  
she made  
makes from  
your grasp  
again  
the end  
the plane  
I leave  
the end  
on my mind  
next time  
I see  
a bed:  
a beer  
a life  
a lay

*James Croal Jackson*

## PALM SPRINGS

we rode bikes            laughing  
the sun        pedals woof        wild  
index fingers            pointed *mountaintops*  
hiking        heat        in flip - flops  
canopy games            spilled blue        ink  
blueing            the vodka pool  
on your knees            you told me  
it was too early        you like to be teased  
That was  
all we had.

*James Croal Jackson*

## Contributors

Joel Mitchell is a writer and translator of poetry, from Boston, USA living in London, UK. Joel's recent poetic influences include midget gems, marmite, internet memes, George the Poet and anglo-saxon words.

Kathleen Hines

Joel Chace has published work in print and electronic magazines such as, *The Tip of the Knife*, *Counterexample Poetics*, *OR*, *Country Music*, *Infinity's Kitchen*, and *Jacket*. Most recent collections include *Sharpsburg*, from Cy Gist Press, *Blake's Tree*, from Blue & Yellow Dog Press, *Whole Cloth*, from Avantacular Press, *Red Power*, from Quarter After Press, *Kansoz*, from Knives, Forks, and Spoons Press, and *Web Too*, from Tonerworks.

Andrew Brenza's recent work has appeared in or is forthcoming from a number of journals, including *The Sink Review*, *Salt Hill*, *Word For/Word*, *Otoliths*, *Shampoo*, *The Cortland Review*, and *Mad Hatters' Review*, among others. His first full-length collection, *Gossamer Lid* (Trembling Pillow Press), is slated for publication in late 2015/early 2016. He currently lives in New Jersey with his wife and son.

A.J. Huffman has published eleven solo chapbooks and one joint chapbook through various small presses. Her new full-length poetry collection, *Another Blood Jet*, is now available from Eldritch Press. She has another full-length poetry collection, *A Few Bullets Short of Home*, scheduled for release in Summer 2015, from mgv2>publishing. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and has published over 2000 poems in various national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *EgoPHobia*, and *Kritya*. She is also the founding editor of [Kind of a Hurricane Press](#).

Laurin DeChae is a M.F.A. candidate for poetry at the University of New Orleans, where she acts as the associate editor for *Bayou Magazine*. She is active in the fields of education and composition, assisting in programs such as the Greater New Orleans Writing Project, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and the Tennessee Williams Literary Festival. She has work forthcoming in *Harpur Palate* and *Milkfist*.

Tyler Kline balances his time between working on an organic vegetable farm and studying English at The University of Delaware. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *491 Magazine*, *Forge Journal*, and *Ohio Edit*.

William Glass was born in a Florida hospital where once doctors amputated the wrong leg off an accident victim. He grew up on reruns and fish sticks in a town that was 65% populated by

strawberries, and the rest by barefoot kids with jean shorts. This vestimentary background served him well, as "jorts" are required for admission to the University of Florida, where William completed a degree in medieval literature, after which they shut down the program – surely because no one else would ever do it so well! Always the savvy player, he now pursues a PhD in religious studies, not so much for the fun of it as for the money there is to be made. And for as long as anyone can remember, he has been a deep devotee of the hot dog.

James Croal Jackson lives for art, adventure, whiskey, books, writing, and music (racquetball, too, during key phases). He was born in Akron, Ohio but currently lives in Los Angeles. He may or may not remain there. Find more of his work at [jimjakk.com](http://jimjakk.com).