

# THE SIGH PRESS

ISSUE 12 • SPRING 2017

## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

“Tongue twister” brought us wordplay, inventive forms, and a few surprises. Recently featured in a Sigh Press Ampersand Interview, Kevin McFadden takes us on a journey through language in the poems selected for this issue. We also hear from Stephen Morison, Jr, whose midnight tweets we welcome, Jeff Shapiro who brings us a conjugation riff that’s downright contagious, and Shelley Martin on two words we’re still scratching our heads over. The visuals in this issue—an orchestra of line and shape—interpret Dante in an exciting calligraphic collaboration led by Monica Dengo. You’ll find our contributors’ bios at the end of the journal with links (copy and paste these into your browser) to further learn about their work.

We’re hosting another Open Mic on March 29 at 7pm at St Mark’s Cultural Association in Florence. We hope you’ll come to share your writing and discover a vibrant, creative community, and to raise a glass with us as we reach our third year at The Sigh Press!

Be on the lookout for our interview with Kamin Mohammadi in the next Ampersand and remember to visit [thesighpress.com](http://thesighpress.com) for our Summer Issue theme and deadline, and our Facebook page where we post at least three times a week.

Lyall Harris & Mundy Walsh

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## QUESTION MARK

A QUESTION, The Sigh Press

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## DECEIT

KEVIN MCFADDEN

Keep your eye on the shells.  
Don't think of the old inhabitants  
long since skedaddled, looted, or shucked—  
they never twirled this purposefully, they  
never scraped to make a buck.

Yes, yes, one guess.

Sore luck, try again?

Now, what do you take me for? My word!  
Then take it from me (on the order  
of receiving, reception, and receipt)  
the slip you'll soon be given seals the deal  
once deceiving and deception find their seat.  
Up my sleeve or under your hat, it's a whole  
lotta nada, no? I leave you with that.

## INSECT, FRIENDSHIP

Not so much the fly in the ointment,  
nor the fly in a humorist's soup.  
Not the fly on the wall. Not the buzzer  
beater Dickinson imagined she'd detected  
when she died. Nor is this the proverbial fly  
trapped in amber—too tragic a creature,  
beguiled by an ancient circus bark,  
some iferous con, his sucker pitch.  
I could go on, but why? It's just the fly  
all afternoon keeping me company—  
if you could call her that—no awareness  
in those *tempus fugit* eye-eye-eyes that today  
I'm central casting for the characters on this screen.  
A part, I can see, she was born to play.

## I-FETISH

INDEPENDENCE, INC! Ignorant in incendiarism, I ignite it inadvertently, impiously instigate interest in its idle idioms' impregnability, its inevitably idealized imperial ice-cream.

Injurious, infuriating! Illustrious, industrious, ill-fitted immigrant Ilium!

Is it ill-advised? Illogical? Illegal? Immaterial, I imagine. Imbibe its irregular internationality, impishly inebriated. Its immaculate Inglés its Ionian idylls, its Icelandic incursion into inhabited Injun (inappropriately Indian) interiors; its Incan influences in Iberian iconography, its Igbo industry, its Irish indomitability, its Israeli imagination, its Islamic-Italian intermingling, Inuit igloos in icicles, interminable intermixtures, incoherent *incognita*. Income, incomers, incompatible, incommunicado... . Images: I-games, I invoke (intentionally illuminating its initial iteration).

Inexplicably intoxicated illusion! Imbecilic, I intone innocently (if infallible Innocent III interdicted, I intend it).

Innumerable interpretations! Innocuous interpolations! Illiterate illustrations! Instinctively investigate its indigenous interrelated incidents, its interruptive infighting, its impaired impact, its insufferable if inseparable insider institutions. I impart important, importunate, intimate implications (interchangeably). Immediately identify in. Its imports are imperturbable.

Its id is immeasurable! Its I is inviolate. It integrates indefinite identities incrementally.

Its intact Indo-european is impressive if inscrutable. Its illegible intelligence inconsistently intensifies its inquiries. It ingratiates itself ignominiously if input is idiosyncratic. Impunity, immunity. It involves itself, impresses itself, impoverishes itself, imprisons itself. It inaugurates its inauthentic incarnations into incarcerations. It invariably invites interrogations into its imprecations. Its intellectual iconolatry is interesting: ideas ingeniously inlaid, inwardly irreligious, inordinately imbricated, impossibly intricate. Ideals insomuch (Isaiah). Idols inasmuch (Ibid).

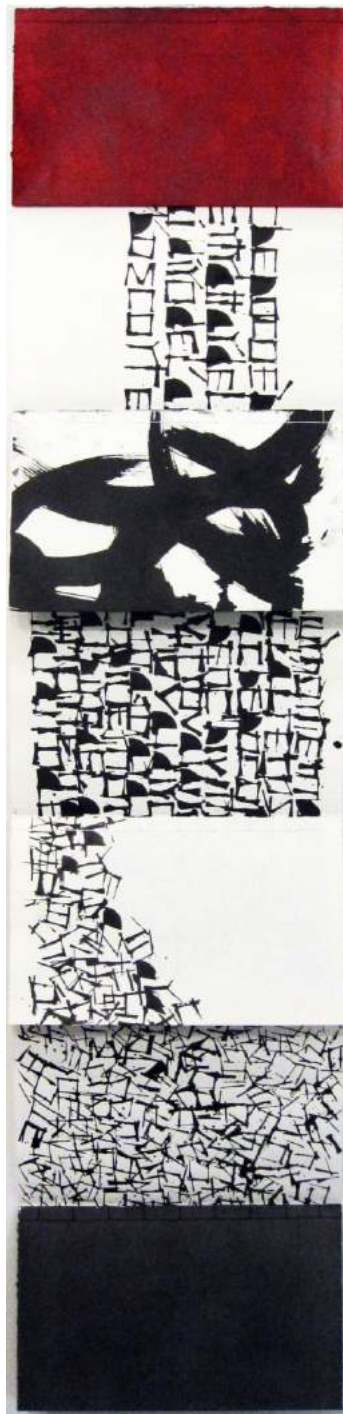
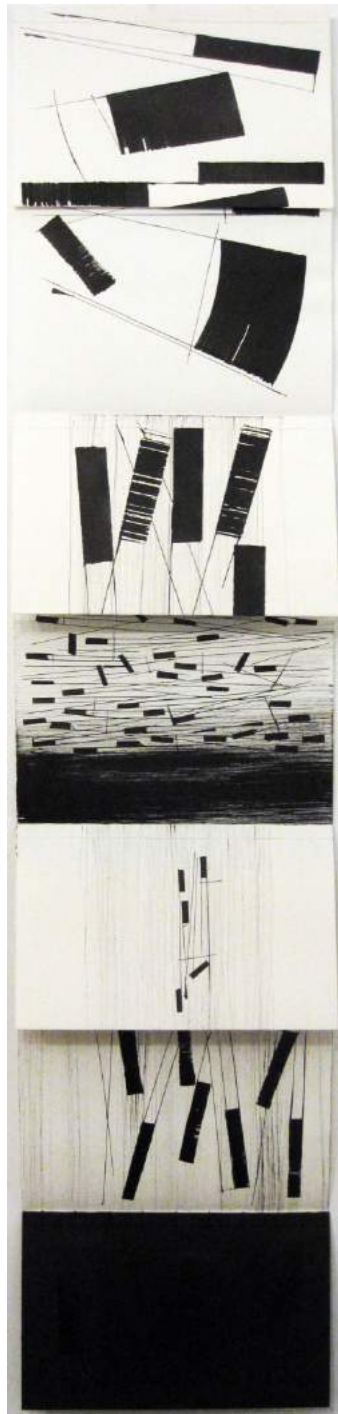
It's inherently inhibited if imposturous. It is insensate inside. Inarticulate. Inarguably, its immediacy is immense. Its introspection is infinitesimal, its inertia is intuitive, its instant is infinite, its insignificance is imminent. Impertinently, I'm incubating it. Infidel! Inimical inbreeding!

Its indomitable itch is intense, inconvenient if inferring its inferiority. It is immature—is it immutable? Iffy. It is if it is, it isn't if it isn't.

Impartial impasse impending, incorporation is its inmost iniquity. Infusion is its infotainment. Innovation is its incredible interpreter. It impels its imperative impertinence. Its ilk is invisible, indistinguishable in indigo, I intimated. It impales its indefatigable impatience.



It is its intrinsically insane inquisition into ideation and impulse. I  
impetuously implore its individual individuals ... "Interdependence, Inc!" I  
interject. Interglacial indifference. Interloping interlocutor, indulge its  
inundating inducements. It is insatiable. It is inalienable. It is intractable. It  
is implied. It is I.



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HORATIO IN MIDDLE AGE: A TALE TOLD IN TWEETS  
STEPHEN MORISON, JR

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jul 2, 1322

Recitation is on for Thursday evening as per usual. Tix avail from usual outlets. Elsinore theatre. Again show not for young children.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jul 20, 1322

Much thanx to Jutland Times critic Christian Henning who liked the show

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Sept 15, 1322

Strangest thing is how the story begins to change Not in delivery but where mind goes in the monos Into the mazelike spirit of the Prince

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 2, 1322

Bad review in the Stockholm FOLKBADET. Bad enough that they didnt like my performance but to accuse me of mistruths Haters gonna hate

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 3, 1322

Asking the simple questions these day the Prince never asked

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 15, 1322

Never believe the Swedes out there beyond the mists Spinning fake news  
Always spinning fake Swedish news

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 17, 1322

No truth to the rumors that Fortinbras is estranged from his uncle in  
Trondheim. The regime is like a well-calked boat around here, no leaks.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Nov 12, 1322

The castle is full of ghosts, haints Wandering the parapets and corridors  
while the ocean rumbles

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Nov 13, 1322

After last show saw the Queen and Claudius in youthful bodies Ghosts like  
butterflies fluttering for warmth w King Hamlet away at the Polack Wars

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 6, 1323

No truth to rumor that Brunhilde is torn between love for Prince Fortinbras  
and loyalty to her brother, Cleve, Old Norways favorite general

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 25, 1323

Time is a garden waiting for spring to see what new truth arrives

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Mar 30, 1323

Performance is on for Thursday evening as per usual. Tix avail from usual  
outlets. Elsinore theatre. Show not for young children.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – April 2, 1323

Prince has decreed there will be no more performances. It is most retrograde to his desires that I should leave the castle.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Apr 3, 1323

Nor shall there be more tweets about ghosts

Horatio @HoratioAbel – April 14, 1323

A princess is born! A beautiful princess is born!

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 11, 1325

I am tasked with the resurrection of the puppet theater in the nursery  
Children of the castle may assemble Friday mornings for performances

Horatio @HoratioAbel – June 2, 1327

She is her fathers daughter Her favorite plays are about hunting Also the one about the giant talking fish

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 11, 1331

Come one come all to the Friday morning performance of Warrior Circe.  
Favorite play of the Princess. Tix available from the usual outlets.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – April 4, 1332

Come one come all to the Sat afternoon performance of Dido. Princess fav  
of season. Tix available from the usual outlets.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – July 22, 1336

In honor of the visiting Baron Bjorn of Alsno a command performance  
Friday of the old play: Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. No puppets. Tix avail  
usu places.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 12, 1337

No truth to the fake news of sick Princess in tower room refusing food  
Gave command performance yesterday She was full of empathy

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jun 21, 1337

Scandalous. Princess would never disobey fathers command. Princess  
never disobeys.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 13, 1337

New production! The Perfect Wedding: A Tale Told in Three Acts. A new  
and original play. Sure to entertain. Some puppets. Good for all ages.  
Saturday.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 14, 1337

Swedish gunboats arrive!

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 14, 1337

Princess to be wed! Sailing to her new home. I stay. Baron reassures. Has  
plenty entertainments in Alsno.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Apr 15, 1341

Norway is dead! Long live the King! Prince Fortinbras to be crowned King  
Will pack up the castle and relocate to Trondheim.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – May 20, 1341

I will stay and continue to entertain the staff at Elsinore.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 19, 1341

The ghosts speak in whispers beneath the curling winds. Winter is coming.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Mar 21, 1343

War is declared! Warships in the Straits We watch from the parapets.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jun 4, 1343

The Swedish invaders are here! The Princess returns! The Princess returns!

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jun 4, 1343

She asks for the old play. You mean the Perfect Wedding? I ask. No, the  
ghosts, she says. The arras. Tell about your old friend Hamlet.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jun 15, 1343

She no longer cries to watch the play. She nods as if in agreement. The  
majestic Princess. The Baron sleeps through Mousetrap.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Sept 14, 1343

At Princess command a new play will be conceived. What of your life Horatio? she asks. What of your childhood?

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 16, 1343

Fortinbras is dead in Trondheim. A rictus seized him during supper. His face collapsed in his soup. Long live the Swedish king!

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Oct 31, 1343

Our sweet Princess will be crowned Queen with her Lord. Where is the little girl I once knew?

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 7, 1344

Coswiger Strasse tbp Thursday evening. Tix avail usu places. Hamlet Prequel. Show not for young children.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 13, 1344

Ghosts o young Hamlet and Rosencrantz on the parapets after show. Fresh and smiling like day in the carriage long ago. Before return to Denmark.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 14, 1344

Were you really young once? sweet Queen asks. Were you really so carefree and gay? wise Horatio?



Horatio @HoratioAbel – Jan 21, 1344

Queens asks for her next play. She asks for Fortinbras: Conquering Prince.  
But The cold is in my lungs. Who will tell his story?

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 7, 1344

And what of my play? the sweet Queen asks. Breathing is a chore. I pray  
you do not need one, I tell her. I pray you rule without drama.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 9, 1344

The Queen is with child! They wheel me to the theater to oversee the  
puppet theaters repair. She stands beside me. The grown Queen.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 10, 1344

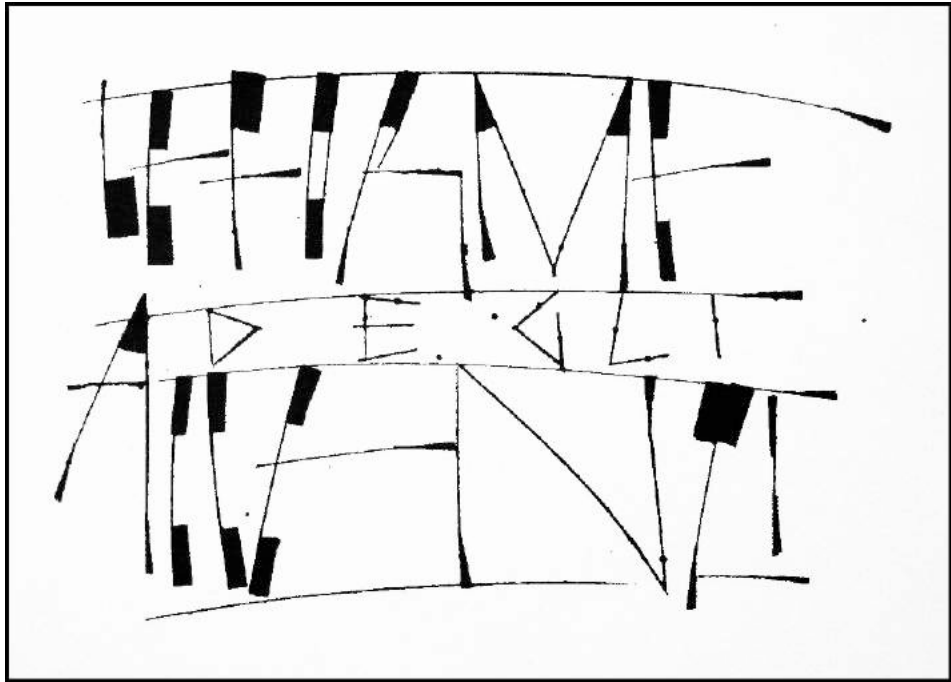
Ah, these Danish winds? Ghosts lovers heroes villains ghosts. Let there be  
no more arrases.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 11, 1344

Not to be? The time for questions is past. The mists thicken.

Horatio @HoratioAbel – Feb 13, 1344

Who's there? The first line was always also the last. Who's there?



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LAY LAID LAID, LIE LAY LAIN

JEFF SHAPIRO

"Where's your lei, Lou?"

"I, um, mislaid my lei at the luau, Lori."

"Lying lech. You wooed Lulu on the Li-Lo in the low-lying lea."

"Unlikely. Lulu likes Len."

"Then you lured Lola."

"LOL. Anyways, Lars says Lola's a lousy lay."

"Lowlife," Lori laughed lifelessly.

"I love *you*," lowed Lou, lulling Lori.

Lewd Lou lied: he had lain with Elaine.



## DUBBED

SHELLEY MARTIN

My friends and I sit around the glass table in our kitchen, staring at the many postcards we've arranged beneath the glass. Symbols of cultural endeavor and exploration.

"He started talking to me and then he probably saw that I was so hit and thought it was dub," Z says in her strong Brooklyn accent, only made thicker with enthusiasm. I look to my other friends for clarification.

"Okay, what does 'hit' mean?" I ask finally.

She looks at me as if I'm crazy, "Hit? Hit! Ratchet! Ugly!"

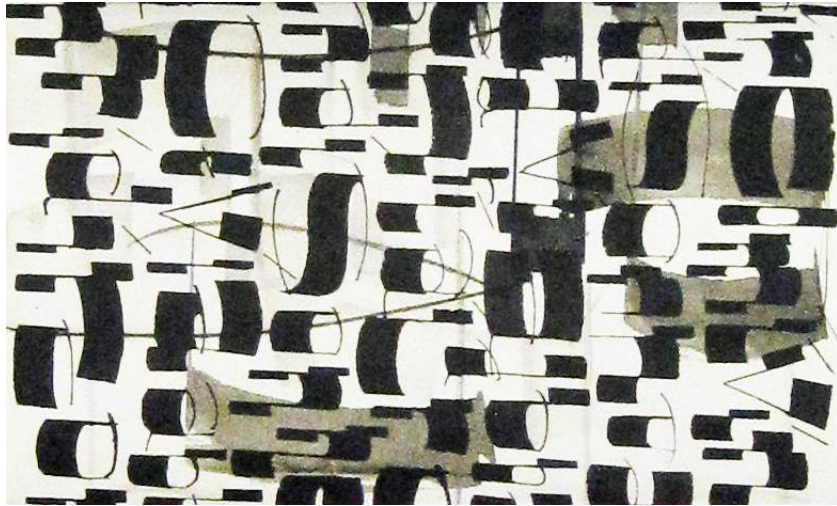
"Ooohhhh!" the rest of us all say in unison. "But that's not true!" I complain, pretending to understand what dub means.

Our other roommate K walks out of her bedroom and comes into the kitchen groaning. "Did you see what stupid thing our president said?" she asks, rolling her eyes.

I don't know whether to laugh or cry as I pull the article up on my phone. Definitely both hit and dub.

?

Cat got your tongue?



## CONTRIBUTORS

### BIOS & TSP QUESTION

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS: *What word has your attention these days?*

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MONICA DENGO, MARINA SGOBBI, MASSIMO FACCI, KIT SUTHERLAND, PETRA CASOTTO, EDI SOLIVO, CATERINA GIANNOTTI, MARIA GRAZIA COLONNELLO, DEANNA FAVRE, ANNALISA FERMO, ELEONORA PETROLATI, RENATA MENGUCCI, MARIA GABRIELLA PIANIZZOLA, PATRICIA SILVA, PAOLA ZOFFOLI, DARIA SORRENTINO, SARA VENERI, ALESSANDRA BARISON, ROSOLINO GANCI, RICCARDA BIANCO, PETRA MARKHAUSER, ANNA CLAUDIA DI BERARDINO, ANNA BRUNETTI, MARIA PIA MONTAGNA, PAOLO VALZANIA: Guided by calligrapher/artist Monica Dengo, our group of 24 calligraphers becomes part of *Writing the DIVINE COMEDY...in the Languages of the World*. Launched by the Italian Cultural Institute of Cairo, this international project envisages a graphic and calligraphic transcription of the first 21 lines of Dante's *Divine Comedy* into the world's myriad languages. At work are master calligraphers from many countries, as well as translators of the *Divine Comedy* and other Dante enthusiasts.

Each book contains three of Dante's first 21 lines, chosen because they succinctly furnish the general concept of Dante's work: illumination after a time of confusion. The legible and "illegible" alphabets symbolize the many accents found in spoken Italian—regional accents as well as those of people who come from different cultures and who have made Italy their home. The work consists of 21 books, executed entirely by hand, designed to be hung side by side.

The project is supported by the network of Italian cultural institutes around the world and similar institutes in other nations. The Italian Cultural Institute of Cairo is assembling the graphic and calligraphic works with an aim to exhibit them locally and, subsequently, in interested venues worldwide.

[LEFORMEDEGLIACCENTI.WORDPRESS.COM](http://LEFORMEDEGLIACCENTI.WORDPRESS.COM)

[MONICADENGO.COM](http://MONICADENGO.COM)

#### **ASEMIC**

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KEVIN MCFADDEN is the author of *Hardscrabble* and has recently published an illustrated cycle of poems, *City of Dante*, with artist Jeff Pike. Winner of the George Garrett Award for poetry from the Fellowship of Southern Writers and a New Writers Award from the Great Lakes Colleges Association, his poems appear in journals including *American Letters & Commentary*, *Fence*, *Kenyon Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry*. A letterpress printer, he's currently at work on *Speaking in Faces*, a collaborative specimen book/artist's book documenting the largest publicly accessible collection of moveable type in Virginia.

[HTTPS://WWW.POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG/POEMS-AND-POETS/POETS/DETAIL/KEVIN-MCFADDEN](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/kevin-mcfadden)

[HTTP://WWW.ARCHPELAGO.ORG/VOL10-34/MCFADDEN.HTM](http://www.archipelago.org/vol10-34/mcfadden.htm)

#### **SPECIMEN**

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STEPHEN MORISON, JR believes that the ending never really satisfies, which may be why he's okay with *La La Land*. Married to his true love, he has, possibly, the most incredible daughter ever born (☺). They have lived in Connecticut, China, Jordan and Italy, which is where Steve is writing this. He is enthralled by the mystery of what happens next.

[HTTPS://WWW.PW.ORG/SEARCH/NODE/STEPHEN%20MORISON%20JR](https://www.pw.org/search/node/stephen%20morison%20jr)

THIS WEEK, his favorite word is **MOIETY**, but he has a longer relationship with *susurrus* and, no doubt, he will soon return to her.

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JEFF SHAPIRO, a New England native and author of *Renato's Luck*, has made the countryside near Siena his home for more than two decades now along with his wife, Italian singer Valeria Indice. He writes, sings, teaches and, on rare occasions, indulges in ludic bits of word-riffing like the one offered in this issue.

THE WORD that's kept me dreaming lately is **ILLUMINED**, especially as James Joyce used it in his story "Two Gallants": *The streets, shuttered for the repose of Sunday, swarmed with a gaily coloured crowd. Like illumined pearls the lamps shone from the summits of their tall poles upon the living texture below which, changing shape and hue unceasingly, sent up into the warm grey evening air an unchanging unceasing murmur.* I'm in awe of Joyce's choice of *illumined* over the more common *illuminated*—the plosive

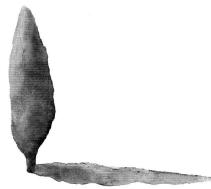


t of which would have blown apart the soft mumbling mood of the neighboring syllables. Who more than Joyce to appreciate the way the music of words matters at least as much as their meaning?

~

SHELLEY MARTIN, Canadian born, grew up in South Florida. She currently attends New York University and is attempting to learn Italian during her junior year in Florence. She enjoys art, film, bad television, and reading.

**ALLEGEDLY**



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