



The Big Windows Review

Issue 22 Winter 2021



The Big Windows Review is a publication of the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. We publish poems and short (500 words or less) prose.

Design and digital images by Tom Zimmerman.

The works herein have been chosen for their literary and artistic merit and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Washtenaw Community College, its Board of Trustees, its administration, or its faculty, staff, or students.

Copyright © 2021 the individual authors and artists.

The Big Windows Review
Website: thebigwindowsreview.com
Email: thebigwindowsreview@gmail.com
Editor: Tom Zimmerman

The Big Windows Review

Issue 22 Winter 2021

Contents

Maria A. Arana	Sea Turtle	5
Rey Armenteros	Falling Again, Again	6
Jodie Baeyens	As the Sirens Sing	8
Phillip Barcio	Muddy Waters	9
Roy Bentley	Car Wheels on a Gravel Road	11
	Little Richard in a Red Suit Getting into a Red Cadillac Convertible	12
Michael H. Brownstein	Hike	13
Clara Burghilea	A day spent curled around your face	14
	Plucked glances	15
	To the god on watch	16
Mark Cassidy	Lenny (circa '60)	17
Shannon Cuthbert	Thereafter	18
Jakima Davis	Kansas City Blues	19
Holly Day	Late Night	20
Michelangelo Franchini	Happy ending	21
LC Gutierrez	The C paper	23
Megan Lee	A Day In	24
Grace Maselli	To Overlook	26
Daniel Edward Moore	Downpour	27
Cameron Morse	Canteen	28
Mark Niedzwiedz	Dogearied	29
Robert Nisbet	Stranger	30
Emalisa Rose	waterfalling	32
Marjorie Sadin	"Sometimes it's best to be a little deaf."	34
P.C. Scheponik	On Being Done	35
George J. Searles	from <i>Verbatim</i>	36
Sanjeev Sethi	Go South	38
Roger Singer	Faithful Cycle	39
Michael Steffen	Book Report	40
James Thurgood	rum-pot	42
Contributors		44



Maria A. Arana

Sea Turtle

your underbelly
 scaled
 protective

you swim
circling waves
 undercurrents
that smooth out

your reptilian skin
 spots
 flippers
 sharp bill
 snap shut

reef fills with food
 a home
 so sweet

like your sapphire eyes

Rey Armenteros

Falling Again, Again

Then, he saw her in the company of many good people, talking from the veranda, laughing in the kitchen.

She looked at him in a manner — unidentifiable. It made him feel good.

They stepped onto the balcony, as he noticed it was now empty, and she kissed him in a tender way, so unlike her.

He was falling in love with her again. “This is a dream,” she told him.

The music rolled in his head and turned woodwinds into long brass that plummeted, when he recognized that he was really sleeping, and he tried to push himself back into the dreamworld but the coiling notes were already coming apart.

He heard her say, “You will forget this very soon. I will treasure it as a reminder of what we once had, before you went away.”

Loss and regret accompanied him on his way back, and he had no way of knowing he was actually entering another dream.

They drove to the side of a road. It was an open field in the darkest night.

They walked without the guidance of light through tall grass that had a manner of hiding almost anything that occurred to the mind.

Cold, stone tablets appeared suddenly at their feet, spaced like marred tiles at intervals of a few paces.

In the distance, there were statues of things white against tree branches so black, they were feeding fissures into the marbled, pale limbs.

But the tablets, as they discovered, had names and numbers cut into the concrete and moss.

“Don’t you remember any of this? We were here before.”

He was filling up with dread and something like wonder. “I always thought it was a dream.” He insisted. “You just said it was a dream!”

They took a few steps. A pool of still waters appeared, and immersed in the murk, a mausoleum was tilting away from them and then disappeared into the depths.

This is where they had kissed the first time even though they were not supposed to.

When he turned to mention it, she was looking at him with bloodshot eyes.

“Of course I remember. You got drunk. And you passed out. Before I left you, I saw the translucent forms of three women hovering over you, meaning you a great deal of harm. You slept right where you’re standing, and then you thought you woke up.”



Jodie Baeyens

As the Sirens Sing

I slide out from between the warm sheets
gently lifting his heavy arm off of me
and tiptoe through the strange apartment
to find the kitchen table
and begin to write
of some moment the night
stirred in me

Maybe a graze of the nipple
or the way a shirt draped the chair
the singing of the sirens
mixing with the echo of the moans
the moonlight passing through
the glass from the bottle on the nightstand
the way the sound of him snoring fuses
with the smell of Tide to become almost corporeal

And I will remember these things
long after I have forgotten his name

Phillip Barcio

Muddy Waters

I see thousands of me standing on the sidewalks, riding the subway, lying in the grass and walking on the beach.

Who is teaching us not to trust?

The lady next to me at Muddy Waters coffee house on Valencia Street got up from her seat and walked outside to talk to someone on her cell phone. She left her laptop sitting out on the table, along with her wallet, open, with a credit card sticking out of it.

About fifteen minutes later she came back in. Everything was still sitting there exactly as she had left it. She looked at me and laughed and said, "I must be pretty trusting!"

"Why shouldn't you be?" I asked.

What, just because this is an economically depressed neighborhood in a large American city? Just because there are desperate, homeless people asleep in almost every doorway? Just because every morning the business owners around here spend half an hour washing the urine and human feces and vomit off the sidewalk in front of their cafes and shops? What's any of that got to do with trust?

What she didn't know was that while she was outside talking on her phone, I counted eight people who came in off the street, ordered at the counter and left again, walking right past her stuff. One was a trembling, disheveled man in a filthy coat. He shuffled up to the counter and stared longingly at the Iranian woman who owns the cafe. She smiled at him, reached into her tip jar, pulled out some change and handed it to the man. The gentle creases around her smiling eyes as she handed him the money looked to me like sun rays lighting up the room with love.

How many other laptops and credit cards resting on vacant tables had this man walked past on his way here?

I'm not an idealist. I am only speaking from my own experience. Most people will not steal from you, even if they have the chance.

Most people will not hurt you, even if you deserve it.

Most people are ready to share whatever they have with whoever truly needs it.

Most people love each other without hesitating.

There are no enemies, only collaborators in the creation of moments, all waiting to find out what we're going to do together next.



Roy Bentley

Car Wheels on a Gravel Road

Lucinda Williams' song unfolds in a mythic South, her telling kids, whether real or imagined, to pick up after she goes. Hence, the car wheels on a gravel road.

I hate to say it, but the *wheel* is what we put a Michelin or Goodyear or Firestone or Pirelli onto: it's the *mount*. That aside, the singer is telling kids to do something.

Her intention to love them and be someone they trust, but Creation is restless. Part of her wishes to be gone, on the road. She fantasizes summertime in the South,

though she knows the godawful history like it's hers. In the song, either side of this metaphorical roadway, there are July-ripe cotton fields for mile upon mile.

Louisiana is a big Crayola box of coloration. And what better metaphor for the human condition than the Crayola box with the built-in sharpener: wanting

all the colors. If there is a gladiator, you need blood red as daybreak over open country. Gladiatorial gore that cottons the floor of the Colosseum. The world

being what it is, the imaginary champion is awaiting wound-stitching and a bed of straw. Maybe a woman when strong again—if she's called in from the fields,

she carries the rage of leaf-fall: the scents of the world and lovers falling back after lovemaking, looking up to watch the so-called wheel of night-sky stars turn.

Roy Bentley

Little Richard in a Red Suit Getting into a Red Cadillac Convertible

It's sometime in the 1980s in New York City.

David Bowie brings a photograph of Little Richard

into the studio. Shows it to his collaborator, Nile Rodgers.

Says, Nile, darling, that's what I want my album to sound like.

Rodgers parks his Fender Stratocaster so he can Scotch-tape it—the photo of Richard Wayne Penniman in a red suit getting into

a red Cadillac convertible—to the hexagonal piece of Plexiglas above the recording console: a black man with Jeri curled hair

and loads of Attitude, enough to get him lynched in the South in the 1950s. And though there are no words for what it says,

the photo with the deckled edge, we glimpse Little Richard and the sum total of his fame thus far. The lack of a smile

I might translate as: the world adores you until it doesn't. David Bowie adores him. And knows *tutti frutti* means

“all fruits” in Italian, *that A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-boom* is untranslatable: a drum-beat rhythm

the Architect of Rock 'n' Roll claims to have dreamed then risen from deep sleep to repeat like a shibboleth

or clandestine chord to be performed to gain entry into whatever ungated heaven is left him, left us.

Michael H. Brownstein

Hike

near the peak of the mountain
a shadow of warmth
the scent of snow

the breath if light

a hard packed trail head
and every direction, poetry

Clara Burghilea

A day spent curled around your face

This achy October, heavy fruit thundering
down. In the grass, brown apples, warm scent

of spoil. Clouds smeared half-way across
the treetops. Among rotting sweetness,

in the tall grass, your chest that rises
and sinks unnoticed, my fingers floating

across familiar flesh, getting lost under
the brittle foliage. The way days oxidize,

tiny summer flakes coming off everything.
Who can trust the hours? The ticking two-timing

hands that push us farther away. Hard to imagine
what lies ahead this dangling numbness, light

growing softer, then deafening dark. In between,
bodies plastered to one another, awaiting winter.

Clara Burghilea

Plucked glances

These cord tote bags were my everything when I was living in Long Island. My aunt in Rochester had dozens of them from Lancôme to Victoria's Secret and kept them piled up in her impeccably ordered basement, twice larger than my rented room in Mineola. She treated me to lavish meals and shopping trips and I never mentioned my eat-once-fast-twice days in NY, her gifts were no match for poor grad students who saved for used books and practicum Friday trips to Varick St. She gave me my first designer dress which I still keep all foiled up in my Romanian closet, for the book signing tour I will never take, except none of the totes matches the wannabe black lace and the bruised poems, the way their bodies leap, node to node, spiked with anticipation. The tongues of longing speak louder than thunder, heart walls upon heart walls, cast their lengthy shadow.

Clara Burghilea

To the god on watch

This corner of the afternoon is mine and the eyes that won't leave me alone. I am robbing you of the sweet pleasure of washing the world. In blood, tears or brine from the Black Sea. I know a Romanian song about love that tears the flesh open, a mouth that chars every syllable, every milky daybreak tumbles down choking these October skies bearing the weight of your smile, a knot of hunger in every breathing throat and the drizzle that follows me everywhere. Go blind, now.

Mark Cassidy

Lenny (circa '60)

He is sitting alone at the counter of a downtown diner somewhere along the middle of the evening, late in November. Kind Of Blue is playing. People pass by outside the window, their features distorted by the rain streaming on the glass. He smokes a cigarette. He keeps a cup of coffee and a notebook in front of him at all times. He is ready. When it comes, he's gonna be ready. He's wearing an open necked white shirt under a corduroy jacket. With patches.

Towards midnight a cab will pull up to the kerb, spraying gritty, icy water over the sidewalk, and someone will not get out but will roll the window part way down and peer for a moment into the diner's interior before pulling away again in the direction of the train station while he lights another cigarette and does not turn around. Later, the rain will turn to snow and the chilly streets will fall silent, swollen with mystery and longing.

Shannon Cuthbert

Thereafter

My heart in a bucket
in the barn black with ice
and warm lambs lantern-lit
to tease it apart with greedy tongues.
The world revolves
taking with it wolves and pipers
green hills stacked like pears
and me, departing your expanse
in a glass-bottomed boat
doomed to precariousness
my eyes weighed with candlesticks
too white to light.

Kansas City Blues

Libraries gives me power
Champagne and cocaine
Libraries gives me power
Champagne and cocaine
Poison on my bottle
Drown in Malted Milk

Pieces of my heart gone
Guitar play me my tune
Pieces of my heart gone
Guitar play me my tune
I'll trade a rabbit's foot
For a blood soaked ear

I'm a design for life
The American settlement
I'm a design for life
The American settlement
High school cipher
Bars bang on the cafeteria table

Potholes in my lawn
I'm the ghetto farmer
Potholes in my lawn
I'm the ghetto farmer
Give me the cotton
And I'll get the yams

Holly Day

Late Night

Sometimes I miss the mystery of the late night phone call from a random stranger
the ridiculous panting of a chronic masturbator, the lonely man or woman
randomly punching numbers into their telephone, trying to make some connection
reaching out into the dark over and over again until they find someone
with the time or curiosity to respond.

When I was a teenager, I used to jump to answer those late night calls
before they woke my parents up, would whisper into the phone to these strangers
patiently quiet as they said dirty things to me, try to guide them into proper
conversations
because I was lonely, too. Eventually, I could steer a conversation away
from promises of butthole-licking and finger-fucking
to conversations about what I liked to do, what I thought of my parents
what I thought of school. I'd read poems over the phone to them
if they stayed on the line long enough, ask their opinion, tell them I was trying real
hard
I didn't have a lot of people in my life who liked poetry.

Sometimes, when the phone rings, and I don't recognize the number
I pick it up anyway because I'm curious. But now, it's never anyone making fuck-
noises
into their end of the line, or someone wondering what I'm doing, what I'm
wearing,
what I like to do, it's always someone trying to sell me something
or alert me to hail damage in my neighborhood, or ask for a donation
it's never anyone particularly fun.

Michelangelo Franchini

Happy ending

I told the police I tried to save him. I said to them I grabbed his legs, but he was already dead, or so it seemed. They asked me a lot of things, and I can understand that it may seem a surprisingly weird coincidence that the man who found the hanging body is the one who hates him the most. Did I hate him? I didn't deny I wanted him suffering. I told them that his death is nothing but a relief to me; still, I tried to save him, because when you find someone committing suicide, you immediately try to help him. Also, I'm not good at acting.

Elvira was the first to arrive. When they told her what happened, she was petrified. They said we both were shocked, and maybe it's true. Elvira is a nurse, and that night she was at the hospital. She said, don't worry, we'll be okay. The cop asked if I wanted psychological assistance, but I said I was okay. They told me about the analysis and the questions. Elvira nodded and gave them her cell number, just in case.

I clearly remember the weight of that body, a human body softly swinging from the ceiling. I tried to revive the scene many times, while Elvira was listening to me and holding my hand gently. She said it was the best thing to do, to summon every detail, such as the creaky door, the guttural noises, the thud of the body hitting the floor. She said that, if I was too anxious, I could have some pills, since she's a nurse and knows how to get the right ones to make me feel better. I felt hurt, and I said that I was okay.

She smiled at me: I knew you were strong enough.

I don't blame her for Giorgio. The affair is now part of a forgotten life: I recognize I was horrible, and even if I didn't cheat, I treated her in a way that made her forced to cheat. They were both drunk and unhappy, it just happened—troubling times, the ones that made them live together in his beautiful house.

Are you okay?

I told her I was okay, she smiled. That night, we went to a restaurant, and she proposed a toast to our new life. We had sex. The next day I felt nervous. She was hysterically cleaning the house. We argued. Then she asked me if I needed help to review my story for the police. I told her I didn't.

At the police station, I told the cop I knew everything. They had been lovers. Marriage is a hard job.

The cop didn't seem doubtful.

When I came back home, Elvira was worried. It was all okay, I said, I didn't even forget the swollen face and the livid lips. She hugged me. Everything was okay. She said if I had any doubt, I could have the pills. I think I may accept.



The C paper

It was her best work by far.

Covered like a casserole she'd cradled it to class,

handing it like a tribute into his soft white hands
tendered well before deadline

she'd used a thesaurus and words like solipsism
disenfranchised and hubris

run it through with a Grammarly
free trial version, Chicago style

formatted and cited.

Hardly touched, a couple of red crosses

and slashes where he'd nibbled at the
edges of the first and final paragraphs,

a couple of checkmarks like crumbs
along the middle margins.

It looked like a face- a round little head,
the mouth gaping open in surprise:

another perfect C.

Megan Lee

A Day In

For twenty-four hours,
everything was strawberries,

sweet on my tongue.
Snow blanketed the ground

as we ate seasoned meatballs.
I think of Union Square

and the best truffle gnocchi
I've ever had.

Outside, people shovel their cars
from the depths and drive away,

their lights like the heads of flies.
I wonder if they can see me from the window.

I could miss so many faces
if I forget to look backwards.

I could miss a whole cathedral.
I could forget to miss his face

while I talk of love all day.
I'm slowly tricking myself.

At least my skin is allowed to be naked.
Tingling like carbonated lemonade under my hands.

The forgetting makes me fearful of easy smiles,
scared of feeling cold red flowers
resting on my chest.



To Overlook

She plunges into water, feet first and naked except for her patent leather Mary Janes, shoes she found on corrugated metal in a junk yard, fearless of depth, she swims the water, then gets out to walk the silver sands in her sun-dried Mary Janes to Roadside America and its 8,000 square feet of miniature village, to get more perspective on the world she's part of, to overlook the little village, to see the world she's part of from a height of 5' 8", fearless of scale she pivots and runs to roses made of headlights, as the heels of her cracked Mary Janes begin to splay from wear, fearless of what disintegrates, as she searches in sunshine, as she searches and draws closer, as she searches and weeps for the angels in all those junk yards, in all those searches for ghosts in junk yards where she hunts to find pieces of the past she's lost, fearless of that inscription her dead husband writes 12 years earlier, the one with her name and the names of their two kids and his own name, the names he writes in cement 12 years earlier and rings in a heart he draws with the corner angle of a spackle knife, the one he finds on corrugated metal in a junk yard, the heart he draws in wet cement as he rebuilds her kitchen that she overlooks from a height of 5' 8", while she stands in her broken-hearted Mary Janes and replays the scene, this time as she extends her hand to him, the one that connects from her pumping heart and through the angel that waits for him sooner than she ever imagines the angel could, to mirror the heart he draws, to mirror love, to mirror the inscription inside the heart in cement he will cover forever in ceramic tile, never to be seen again.

Daniel Edward Moore

Downpour

Eerie, the sound honesty makes: three syllables
trickling through lips in a room assumed to be safe & dry.

The weatherman said, you stayed for walls only
I could afford. A rancher redone, interrupting ruin,

where summers invited wounds to walk in fragrant
gowns of grace- Sweet Alyssum, Honeysuckle. It takes

what it takes to translate the bruise into something aromatic,
while watching the sky force the ground to drink the tears of Christ.

Eerie, to be a chalice of clouds above the Lake of Fire, a gray
goblet filled with relief hands refused to pour.

Cameron Morse

Canteen

Out here with my father Sun
light day Star bald
out Side any siding
with Out any wall

with my father my water out
Here is this quiet
corner my father's
house is heaven where he lives
without any siding outside any wall

 where he heaves is
the wild the raw scalp of silence.

Dogearied

I am well worn, thumbled through, creased at the edges
Always stuck on the same page, always mid-sentence
I can neither avert my eyes, turn thoughts, nor paper
For it is my life's work, knowing something of what's gone before
But no clarity as to what comes next
I live in the now of uncertainty
No future, beyond skittish dreams
My imprint is not a doer, but a fence sitter
Who cannot jump till all the jumbled pieces are boxed
But life is liquid, ebbing and flowing
Formless, seamless, perhaps meaningless
Favouring the page turners who run blindly to the next staging post
Whilst visionaries awaiting the grand vision
Are left wanting - wanting to know
Does God give us patterns?
Glimpses of the eternal to send us on our merry way
Or are we just sleepwalking into nothingness?
Weighty questions, light on answers I fear
For the doomed among us, the poor dogearied

Stranger

Her seat was diagonally opposite mine
the whole of the journey to Paddington.
Village people, city people, families,
came and went. She and I were constants.

I'd fetch my coffees from the buffet. She
had her own wholegrain, had beetroot juice.
I read my various papers, magazines,
and she her Germaine Greer in paperback.

She had the habit, an unsettling one,
of flickering her hand across her face.
A long brown strand of hair would fall,
regularly, across her forehead.

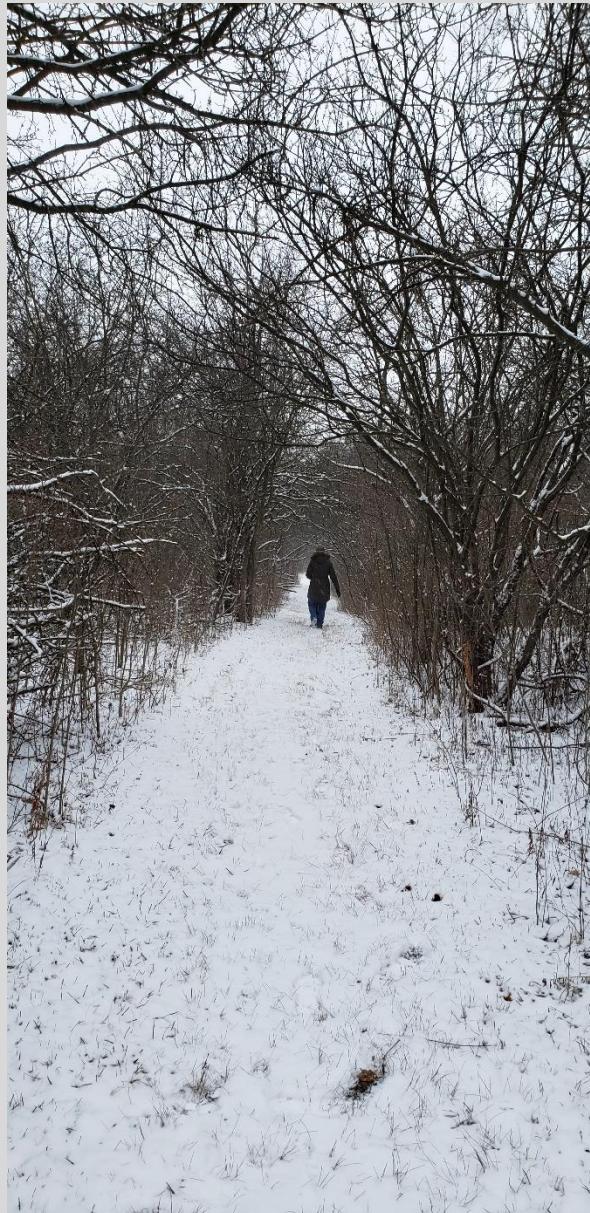
From Paddington, we were quickly swallowed
by London and the Underground, although
I did, for just one moment, wonder
if that was her down-carriage.

It was her though certainly, waiting
in reception, in the news and media office.
Still that hand shadowing its uncertainty
across the tense white face.

Next day, I bought the paper, naturally,
to see my piece. There were also photos
of two different women, named. Either
might well have been my stranger.

One was a woman due to donate a kidney
to a very sick sister. Another an emerging
political recruit, favoured in the hierarchy,
but now accused of office bullying.

Haunted sometimes by that shimmering hand,
the manifest unease, I've often hoped
my stranger was the donor woman.
But I honestly cannot be sure.



waterfalling

up from
the peripheral
streaming the
vertical

pounding the
shutters

your trifecta
pitch perfect
lexicon of
water wisdom

dousing me
window side
in the rococo

the craving to
delve into you

to finger your
braille words

..waterfalling

etching my
tributaries
riding your river
of afterthoughts

somehow you knew...

i was longing
to slither

back under
your rain rhythms



Marjorie Sadin

“Sometimes it’s best to be a little deaf.” (*Ruth Bader Ginsburg*)

You cough in your sleep and curse
I try to listen to you, but can’t.
You praise me, you scold me or worse.
I’ve grown accustomed to your rants.

I try to listen to you, but can’t.
Sometimes it’s best to be a little deaf.
I’ve grown accustomed to your rants.
Despite your complaints I have not left.

Sometimes it’s best to be a little deaf.
The truth is I love you
And despite your complaints I have not left.
No matter what you do

The truth is I love you
You cough in your sleep and curse.
No matter what you do
Even praise me, scold me or worse.

On Being Done

Last night my mother told me she missed me.
Something in her voice reached into my heart
and woke the young boy in me, the one sleeping
for sixty some years--
the one she had labored out of her body, held him
in her arms, fed him warm milk, bathed and changed
him, taught him to walk and talk, watered the garden
of his growth with her tears-- that one,
that one heard her say, " I miss you."
And it became clear to the man in me how impossible
it is to be done.
At ninety, my mother, her life behind her, all but the last
thin chapter read, now only echoes down the long
hall of time in her head, cannot let go of who she was.
How could who she is ever fill the empty rooms of her
present heart, longing for all the memories, all the love
all the purpose of the past?
Dances with ghosts, no matter how beautiful they are,
can never last.
Memories, no matter how hard we cling to them can never
hug back.
All our lives are stories we want to be never-ending.
But every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
And the denouement will never let us pretend ours is different
as we lie alone in our aged beds, waiting for the kiss goodnight,
waiting for the one who will turn off the light, then take us by
the hand and aching heart and lead us into our dreams.

George J. Searles

from *Verbatim*

#26

He: So what's that
you're reading?

She: Joyce.

He: Joyce who???

#31

He: Trust me. This actually happened.
It was in *The New York Times*!

She: What's that? Some kind of *book* or something?

#56

She: I read where global warming is actually good for the caribou; now they
can eat vegetation that used to be covered with ice.

He: The caribou. They're, like...Eskimos?

#71

She: You don't do nothin' but sit in front of that t.v. all day like a god-damned
prince.

He: I'm not a god-damned prince.

She: Y'can say *that* again!

#102

He: You're wrong. *Lots* of people don't have last names: Madonna, Prince, Cher....

She: I'm telling you, he had a last name: Bonaparte...Napoleon Bonaparte.

He: Here's your Bonerpart...right here.

#153

She: I can't stand it. You're so *into* yourself right now.

He: No I'm not. I'm so into *you*.

She: You wish.

#161

He: Oh, c'mon. Cut her some slack. She can be really funny.

She: I know. But not "Ha, Ha" funny.

175

He: Hey, look. You knew what you were getting when you married me.

She: I wouldn't go *that* far.

Go South

Your flashback
is akin to a planigraph.
Others in the album
forfeit their focus.
By and by
is it tyranny
or the thrill of transition?
All of you is a blur
like the fine print before me
without reading glasses.

Roger Singer

Faithful Cycle

there on a meadow flat

soft and equal with
weeds and flowers
life weeps up
from soil
rich with breath,
the gasp between
heaven and earth,
plain colors, yet healing
to the soul,
a bounty in season,
asleep in winter,
resting till alive
once again

Michael Steffen

Book Report

I'm such a slow reader
that I began The Iliad shortly after
the Trojan War, and today—

bloodshot and squinting
in the thin light of my desk lamp—
I finally turned its six hundred, sixtieth

dauntingly thin page, and read, with exhaustion,
that gorgeous last line, *Thus they buried Hektor,
tamer of horses*. Christ, I can't wait

to plow through the sequel!
As if the names weren't hard enough—
Iphigenia, Clymenestra, Agamemnon,

Astyanax—all ideas of love and law
seemed to count for nothing.
Almost everyone died for the sake

of the gods' desires and a foolish dispute
among men—two armies whaling on each other,
while Achilles played blanket burrito

in his tent, then carved a murder canyon
through the Trojans. Finishing Homer's epic
was an odyssey in itself.

I'll never get back the years
spent slogging through its plot,
a page or two at a time, tacking forward,

then circling back on a dactylic tide,
a ship lost in the fog. How good it felt
to finally glimpse the ending's rocky cliffs,

a coastline vaguely familiar, family and friends
standing at the edge of the last page,
waving me home.



James Thurgood

rum-pot

how many autumn months
from its annunciation
did it ferment
in under-counter dark

revealed Christmas night,
it drowned cake
with sweetness
– we pushed away
sticky bowls – then piled in more,
half-wittingly grew drunk
by candlelight, as snow
snuggled up outside
– my sister and I
with then-spouses (small cousins
asleep down the hall)

finally
amid groans and giggles
hands dropping limp to bellies
pledges of abstinence,
the rich mess dumped in,
the pot was capped

– to re-emerge
daily the Twelve Days
– last syrup crumbs
shoved into my mouth
like medicine,
the washed pot
was hidden away

after,
mention of 'rum-pot'
was a joke –
while we still laughed
at failed recipes



Contributors

Maria A. Arana is a teacher, writer, and poet. Her poetry has been published in various journals including *Spectrum*, *The Pangolin Review*, *The Kleksograph*, and *Cholla Needles Magazine*. You can find her at https://twitter.com/m_a_Arana

Rey Armenteros is a Los Angeles-based painter and writer who has had his essays and poetry appear in numerous literary journals and art magazines, including *The Nasiona*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Umbrella Factory Magazine*, and *Still Point Arts Quarterly*.

Jodie Baeyens is a professor at American Military University. She was deposited in Arizona from Manhattan, against her will, and now lives in a rural farming community writing poetry, drinking expensive coffee and cheap red wine.

Phillip Barcio is a fiction author, arts journalist, and host of the *Apocalypse Mixtape* radio show. His writing has appeared in *Western Humanities Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review* online, *Space Squid*, *The Swamp Ape Review*, and various other fine publications. He can be stalked at philbarcio.com, or around Evanston, Illinois.

Roy Bentley, a finalist for the Miller Williams prize for *Walking with Eve in the Loved City*, has published eight books, including *American Loneliness* from Lost Horse Press, who is bringing out a new & selected. He is the recipient of a Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and Ohio Arts Council. Poems have appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *Rattle*, *The Southern Review*, *Crazyhorse*, and *Shenandoah* among others. *Hillbilly Guilt*, his latest, won the Hidden River Arts / Willow Run Poetry Book Award and awaits publication.

Michael H. Brownstein's latest volumes of poetry, *A Slipknot to Somewhere Else* (2018) and *How Do We Create Love?* (2019), were recently released (Cholla Needles Press).

Clara Burghilea is a Romanian-born poet. Recipient of the Robert Muroff Poetry Award, she got her MFA in Poetry from Adelphi University. Her poems and

translations appeared in *Ambit*, *HeadStuff*, *Waxwing*, and elsewhere. Her collection *The Flavor of The Other* was published in 2020 with Dos Madres Press. She is the International Poetry and Translation Editor of *The Blue Nib*.

Mark Cassidy writes, “I was born in the UK and emigrated to Canada once my schooling was finished. I have worked all round the world and now live in Texas.”

Shannon Cuthbert is a writer and artist living in Brooklyn. Her poems have appeared in *Collidescope*, *Bluepepper*, and *Chronogram*, among others, and are forthcoming in *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*.

Jakima Davis writes, “I’ve been writing poetry for almost 21 years. I’ve been published in underground publications, including *Misfits*, *Street Value*, *Big Hammer*, *Barbaric Yawp*, *The PEN*, among others. In 2016, I collaborated on a chapbook entitled *JMDS*, published by Marymark Press. I also collaborated on a broadside, along with many Glve-Out sheets, also published by Marymark Press. As of now, I’m posting my poems on Facebook to gain a fanbase.”

Holly Day (hollylday.blogspot.com) has been a writing instructor at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis since 2000. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Asimov’s Science Fiction*, *Grain*, and *Harvard Review*, and her newest poetry collections are *Into the Cracks* (Golden Antelope Press), *Cross Referencing a Book of Summer* (Silver Bow Publishing), *The Tooth is the Largest Organ in the Human Body* (Anaphora Literary Press), and *Book of Beasts* (Weasel Press).

Michelangelo Franchini is an Italian author, founder of the artistic collective Yawp. His stories and essays have been published by many Italian literary magazines, such as *Tuffi Rivista*, *Frammenti Rivista*, *Pastrengo Rivista*, *Reader for Blind*, *Altri Animalì*, *Carmilla*, *Verde Rivista*. He has a bachelor’s degree in literature.

LC Gutierrez is a product of many places in the South and the Caribbean, as well as writing and comparative literature programs at LSU and Tulane University (PhD). An erstwhile academic, he now writes, translates, edits, and plays trombone in Madrid, Spain.

Megan Lee is a student studying law. She enjoys writing poetry in her spare time.

Grace Maselli's work has appeared in *Cleaver Magazine*, *Poydras Review*, *Streetlight Magazine*, *The Penmen Review*, *42 Magazine*, and *Barometric Pressures*. Her poem "Queen of African Violet," was the 2019 first-place winner in the Jacaranda Poetry Contest sponsored by the Pasco Fine Arts Council and the Cannon Memorial Library at Saint Leo University, St. Leo, FL. She studied in New York City at the Writers Studio founded by poet and author, Philip Schultz. Grace lives in the Tampa Bay Area of Florida. She's at work on a new collection of poetry and flash.

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island. His poems are forthcoming in *Nebo Literary Journal*, *Main Street Rag Magazine*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, *El Portal*, *Emrys Journal*, *The Meadow*, and *West Trade Review*. He is the author of *Boys* (Duck Lake Books) and *Waxing the Dents* (Brick Road Poetry Press).

Cameron Morse was diagnosed with a glioblastoma in 2014. With a 14.6 month life expectancy, he entered the Creative Writing Program at the University of Missouri—Kansas City and, in 2018, graduated with an M.F.A. His poems have been published in numerous magazines, including *New Letters*, *Bridge Eight*, *Portland Review*, and *South Dakota Review*. His first poetry collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *Baldy* (Spartan Press, 2020). He lives with his wife Lili and two children in Blue Springs, Missouri, where he serves as poetry editor for *Harbor Review*. For more information, check out his Facebook page or website.

From the UK, **Mark Niedzwiedz** is a professional composer and lyricist. Relatively new to poetry, Mark's poems so far have appeared in poetry journals such as *Grey Sparrow*, *Oddville Press*, *Scritura*, *Wink*, *Rat's Arse Review*, *Sac*, *Literary Heist*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Wordgathering*, *BlazeVOX*, and elsewhere.

Robert Nisbet is a Welsh poet who has been published widely in Britain and in the USA, where he was a Pushcart Prize nominee in 2020.

Emalisa Rose is a poet, dollmaker, crafts artist. She has worked in Special Education and animal rescue. She has been published in several online journals. When she is not writing, she is created a bond with her 6 grandkids, trying to instill in them a love for art and an understanding of kindness.

Marjorie Sadin is a nationally published poet. She has five books of poems in print, including a full-length book, *Vision of Lucha*, about struggle and survival, love, death, and family. Recently, Marjorie published a new chapbook, *In a Closet*. She lives and reads her poetry in the Washington DC area.

George J. Searles teaches English and Latin at MVCC and has also taught creative writing for Pratt and graduate courses for The New School. A widely-published literary critic, textbook author, and poet, he is a former Carnegie Foundation NYS “Professor of the Year.” He writes that the poems in his manuscript *Verbatim* are snippets of actual conversation he has overheard.

P.C. Scheponik is a lifelong poet who lives by the sea with his wife, Shirley, and their shizon, Bella. His writing celebrates nature, the human condition, and the metaphysical mysteries of life. He has published four collections of poems: *Psalms to Padre Pio* (National Centre for Padre Pio, INC), *A Storm by Any Other Name* and *Songs the Sea has Sung in Me* (PS Books, a division of Philadelphia Stories), and *the Sun Still Dared to Shine* (Mazo Publishers). His work has also appeared in numerous literary journals, among them, *Adelaide*, *Visitant*, *Red Eft Review*, *Boned*, *Time of Singing*, *WINK*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Streetlight Press*, and others. He was a finalist in Adelaide Anthology Contest 2017, 2018, and 2019. He is a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee.

Sanjeev Sethi is published in over 30 countries. He has more than 1350 poems printed or posted in literary venues. He is joint-winner of Full Fat Collection Competition-Deux organized by the Hedgehog Poetry Press. Recent credits: *Lummox Poetry Anthology #9*, *Pomona Valley Review*, *Ephemeral Elegies*, *The Cannon’s Mouth*, *Rochford Street Review*, *Otoliths*, and elsewhere. He lives in Mumbai, India.

Dr. **Roger Singer** is the Poet Laureate of Old Lyme, Connecticut. He has had over 1,150 poems published on the internet, magazines, and in books and is a 2017 Pushcart Prize Award Nominee. He is also the President of the Shoreline Chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society. Some of the magazines that have accepted his poems for publication are *Westward Quarterly*, *Jerry Jazz*, *SP Quill*, *Avocet*, *Underground Voices*, *Outlaw Poetry*, *Literary Fever*, *Dance of my Hands*, *Language & Culture*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *The Stray Branch*, *Toasted Cheese*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, Ambassador Poetry Award Massachusetts State Poetry Society, Louisiana State Poetry Society Award 2019, Arizona State Poetry Society Award 2020, and *Mad Swirl Anthology* 2018 and 2019.

Michael Steffen's fourth poetry collection, *Blood Narrative*, has just been accepted for publication by Main Street Rag Press. His work has recently appeared in *Chiron Review*, *The Chestnut Review*, and *The Comstock Review*. Michael is a graduate of the MFA writing program at Vermont College and currently lives in Buffalo, NY.

James Thurgood was born in Nova Scotia, grew up in Windsor, Ontario, and now lives in Calgary, Alberta. He has been a labourer, musician, and teacher—not necessarily in that order. His poems have appeared in various journals, anthologies, and in a collection (*Icemen/Stoneghosts*, Penumbra Press). He is also the author of *His Own Misfortune*, a work-in-progress.







Arana
Armenteros
Baeyens
Barcio
Bentley
Brownstein
Burghelea
Cassidy
Cuthbert
Davis
Day
Franchini
Gutierrez
Lee
Maselli
Moore
Morse
Niedzwiedz
Nisbet
Rose
Sadin
Scheponik
Searles
Sethi
Singer
Steffen
Thurgood