

lullwater review

VOLUME XXXI



A JOURNAL FOR THE LITERARY ARTS

lullwater review

VOLUME XXXI

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Editor's Essay

Annika Polatsek

I promised myself when I entered college that I'd make my decisions based on what scared me the most.

As I wandered around the club fair with my roommate on the field one weeknight, I looked for community. Something I could join that had nothing to do with academics and everything to do with meeting like-minded people. I took home some copies of *Lullwater Review* that night and decided to try it out. After the first few meetings, I realized one of the girls who lived in my same dorm was also in it. We walked to meetings together, talked about creative writing, the workshops she had done before college. She was a writer. I was decidedly not. That's when the fear set in: maybe I'm not supposed to be here. I don't have the qualifications. I'm majoring in History and French. The fear was an indication of the opposite of what it seemed: I needed to become a member.

I got to know the writer, Sarah Marzouk, a bit better. Two years later, I selected her to be my co-editor in chief because I believed overwhelmingly that she was supposed to be there long before I believed the same of myself. Her comments were always smart, her perspective valued. She was the leader I wanted to follow. In a wonderful turn of events, over the course of our junior year, she became one of my best friends.

This issue is a love letter to the editorial staff. To the enchanting Sarah, my dear friend and co-editor, I'm so glad to have met you and led with you; this friendship is everlasting. To the perceptive Tori and the gregarious Nico (our successors), the artful Eleanor, the imaginative Celi, the astute Dani, the thoughtful Kayla, the intuitive Meg, the clever Lindsey, the bright Lili, the musing Anikka, the passionate Eliot, the exuberant Vicki, the insightful Victoria, the quick-witted Sofia, the gentle Madeleine, the ebullient Ella, the warmhearted Khushi: thank you. Each and every one of you have made a mark on my life.

Bonding over our love for the poetry produced by this issue's cohort of magnificently talented writers has been far more meaningful than any achievement or title. Thank you for letting me be one half of your leadership.

Love,
Annika Polatsek
Lullwater Review Co-Editor-in-Chief 2022-2023

Editor's Essay

Sarah Marzouk

I keep a running tab of writing that inspires me in the Notes app on my phone. My personal, haphazard collection of literature that I find myself returning to time and time again when I am in need of inspiration, reminders, or comfort. *Lullwater Review* is much more tailored than the dozens of random lines and internet links that scatter themselves in my pocket, but to me, the sentiment of putting all the work you love together in one place is the same.

The best part about *Lullwater Review*, though, is that, unlike my Notes app chaos which probably should not be revealed to the outside world, this magazine is something that I am immensely proud to shout from the rooftops. Working on *Lullwater Review* throughout my entire undergraduate career fueled me in ways that exceeded my expectations. And being Co-Editor my senior year is an honor I will carry with me everywhere I go. Because even when I was stumped in my own literary studies or personal writing, I found inspiration in reading the works of people whose hearts reached me despite the distance. And those works will continue to inspire me, little eternal lights reflecting off deep nighttime waters. Thank you to everyone who submitted to *Lullwater Review*. Writers like you help writers like me keep going.

An immense thank you to everyone who I got to know, befriend, and collaborate with during my time working on *Lullwater Review*. To every member on our Editorial Board who contributed their valuable thoughts and opinions as we read through submissions: without you, this magazine would be nothing. Thank you for allowing me the honor to hear your voices.

Thank you to the Editors-in-Chief before me, Emma Lazerson and Kelsey Perry, whose support and kindness helped prepare me for taking on the role of Co-Editor myself, both in terms of technicalities and in terms of learning what superb leadership is. And a warm welcome to the next Editors-in-Chief, Tori Jordan and Nico Mestre, who I know will be raising *Lullwater Review* to even higher heights. And to my wonderful Co-Editor Annika Polatsek, I give the greatest, deepest thanks. I am so profoundly grateful that I got to work on something so meaningful by your side, and I am even more grateful that we became best friends. In every universe's timeline, I would find a way to be by your side.

In a time where distance seems to preside over all aspects of our lives, there lies a special intimacy in spreading the words that inspire us. Emailing an article you read online to a relative; analyzing a poem in class and telling your friends you've found your new (but really just current) favorite poem; texting your mom about book recommendations. No matter the distance, words reach. I can only ask that you keep connecting to people with words. And, with that, to keep connecting to yourself with words. To always, almost incessantly, bookmark and sticky-note and annotate chapters you love, you hate, you're confused by, and above all, you never want to forget.

Notes app or literary magazine or worn-down journal, I believe putting all the words you love together creates life. A heart that pounds slowly, pausing between lines, but nonetheless beating and breathing and feeling forever.

With love,

Sarah Marzouk

Lullwater Review Co-Editor-in-Chief 2022-2023

Feral

Holly Day

Address me with all of the care you would give
when checking the inside of a conch shell before putting it to your ear
because I, too, may be full of monsters.

You should always poke me with a stick before attempting an embrace.

Before you leave, you should flip me over with your foot
to make sure I'm sleeping and not dead.
If I flip right back over again I'm just pretending to be dead
and you should leave me alone because I might be feral
I'm not much of a morning person.

If I say your name during sex
it means you must have an extremely common name
because I'm really bad with names.
You must not take any of this personally.
I'm really just here for the beer.

Personal Note

Holly Day

even though
a spider
can be as large
as a man's hand

it does not
feel like
a man's hand

when it's
touching
your face.

Insomnia

Nicholas Kriefall

The fire in my chamber is nearly dead,
Just embers now, fading
In a child-sized crypt.

The skeletons in my closet
Have kept me up again—
One reads a confession aloud

While the second one prays,
And the third picks at the lock
With a rib.

Contrapposto

Uri Rosenshine

the pool locker room
as a kind of museum
a room of nude strangers
tall and muscular
chatting or going quietly
drying their chests
or dressing or undressing
adjusting
their trunks or handling
a blow dryer or frowning
in a mirror

the next day
you bring me a sandwich
from the kitchen
and put on Madonna
we haven't listened
to Madonna
since February
she's so good

all day I read
a book, finish
your Camels
and search
for words
I've made
a start of it
and now

can see
the evening beginning
the starry decoy
cruising
in the blue park

Epiphyllum

Andrea McLaughlin

Because my grandmother
can no longer travel
is house-
bound she sent along
with my mother
a small succulent
pretty thing, single flower.

Once a great gardener—
then she'd have spotted
the absence
of a drain in the ceramic
pot, pure presage.

But as she lives today
just barely
breathing, seeing
next to nothing
she sent a doomed
little bloom to its quiet-
us with me.

Of course, I helped
us in the reach
for conclusions,
leaving it too much
in the sun.

Now the sole
red blossom puckers
with boils;
the pain of witnessing
a slow death is too great
for me, grandma.

Have you ever loved
so much you had to
hasten a thing
to its end?

Posterity

Andrea McLaughlin

I know what my friends say
about me, nearing forty, child-
less, a sad case, less
a woman. They don't see me
on a Sunday searching
the web for an answer
to last night's miscalculation:
nine ways to induce
miscarriage at home—the doctor
writing the article warns
I should not, in fact, try
this at home:

Vitamin C, encapsulated
administered on the hour, though
not to exceed six thousand
milligrams in a day.

Blue cohosh (native cure
for the condition of expectancy)
an angiosperm with encased
seed; nonetheless a fruiting plant
medium-tall perennial, its flower
very much like a blueberry
and the foliage a deep
blue green.

Parsley, sprig.

Sepia (homeopath's squid
ink), remedy as metaphor
for the long-suffering mother, holder
of silent furies; her dark undertone seeps
as a black cloud lingers in the wake
of our squid's complaint.

Green papaya, purposed
by contraction of
the uterine wall.

Pomegranate, red seed that stops

Pomegranate, red seed that stops
all others from planting.
Cinnamon, sweet, raw
like me, diluted
by cooking.

And camembert, too, along
with some other cheeses.

Last, but not least, Dong-
Quai, naturopathic quieter
of menopausal heat
and the general moodiness
of women.

It's not without sorrow
that I look to you, nature
to solve the problem
of my own nature: the unbearable
craving that drew him in the first
place to come inside me.

If every time it is different

Daisy Bassen

What is real about a memory,
Its extremities, the farthest reach
Of nails, of skin to be sloughed off,
The cast left behind in Eden,
Its limbic inward reach toward
The central root that can't breach
The earth because we won't stay still.
The ice-melt amid the other waters,
Sweet and brackish and brine,
The long trek of the sea-sponge, the long
Conversation of the trees, oaks and lindens,
Riddled elms, raddled birches;
Something defined by decay, searching
For what you put down, an emptied cup
On the table, the names, not of strangers,
But of your most beloved, a covenant
You make to wake every day yourself
And no one else, no matter what you dreamt of.
No matter what you dreamt of, Horatio.

Masquerade

Bradley R. Strahan

Within the hour
you have become
a memento:
colored bead
in a box, envelope
with a foreign address.

Taste of your mouth
another flavor lost.

Dive Position

John Grey

I'm at the very tip of the board,
bent like a bow
with my arms stretched outward.
Below me are lab rats,
women in floral hats,
impressionist painters,
illusions of love,
gulls and picknickers,
climaxes and stood-up dates,
unreality and locality,
Bohemia, Dada,
an inexplicable light,
a bird on a bough,
Morris dancers, cancer cells,
funeral marches, shrouds,
the beautiful and the dumb.
I've suffered from expectations long enough.
It's time for a happy accident.

Survivors in Barbed Wire

Frederick Levy

Late at night, when dreams and wakefulness struggle
adding weight to my covers,
I'm nine again, and my mind plays pictures
of my favorite uncle, Bob,
with Germans ripping him from a foxhole
and dumping him in a hell
stitched in barbed wire
years before my birth.

I sit beside him, feel the Germans
take us to the ground
with rifles at our throats.
They pull us by the shoulders
and throw us head first
inside their German jeeps.
The road tosses us like corpses
between doors
along the cloud-covered road.

Bob's story captured my sleep
like searchlights sweeping my room.
I shook as he convinced the Kommandant
he was Catholic even with Jewish features.
And though he survived
the POW camp and the fate of Dachau's ashes,
it wasn't much.
When Americans saved him,
he sank like a sack of bones smelling of decay.
On the third day, the stench rose
and his pale remains took its permanent
place behind his eyes
draining a spirit half alive.

As I grew older,
he taught me chess,
to hit a ball,
and took delight in me
without trying to change, mold, or scold.
He was my brother, sometimes more father
than the man whose rage
froze me in my bed.
Maybe it's not just Uncle Bob's pain
that keeps me fighting my covers,
a nine-year-old boy waking up alone,
dripping from hair to toes
with my clock shuffling
from 3 to 4.

Hatzer: Ghost Town Fortress

Frederick Levy

North of Galilee, the dig shovels layers from time,
lives and nations interred in earth.

Sediment, melded with tools and utensils,
has kept its secrets intact.

Strata of ancient browns, rusts and gray,
resist every eon's winds.

From Sumer to Israel,
how many lost
their dwellings and gardens
to the grave that buried dreams?

Bones mingle with pots and earthen jars;
idols curse animals, children,
families and comrades to unholy ash.
Warriors lose all to love affairs and war,
all missing from the annals of scribes.

Who witnessed Hatzer's vanquished fortress,
a ghost standing vigil on the land?
Who foresaw the empire of the north
scatter names in the ground,
lost now to the loneliness of pieces.

Heterotopia in Emergency Room 40

Mikal Wix

Treatment gaps are but dim vision
in a Chagall dreamscape framed in gold
and cherry on the wall,
your better eye awash
in cracked vessels.
You are in a chamber of gloom
lost in the sorting—
the umbilical to the vast, unbroken chain of days
is kinked, or preoccupied delectatio morosa,
while draped along your body in tubes,
where even your memory of self
arouses suspicion,
like the soft tissues so sloppily injured
in his black swan spell,
the stretches he seethed at you,
your beard and sidelocks spoken.

Soft, latex hands hold you
to offer gauzy, loyal membranes
unlike the ones some nights before
that taught you the lesson
about “a fighting chance,”
and “a losing battle,”
as you float undulating on the surface
of a trenchant, single-cell wish:
to be safe again.

But on the top sheet of his top offer,
tugging you beyond the reach of sorrow—
he airs a strong dose of remedies, chosen treasures
once prized.
They now hang fixed in a rip current
of firing synapses, these cherished
yellow, red, and brown things
falling to the hand of Morpheus,
beset by forgetting
and exchanged for the skunky asphalt
embedded in your cheek
and the shrieking throat in a clutching motion preserved,
you are little more
than the hot breaths bubbling stolen flashes of tight air
taken as you lie on his driveway waiting,
waiting for the bells,
or waiting for the last thing: curiosity.

Queen's Royal Park

Marc Harshman

Below the transparent, breeze-rumpled blanket of the lake,
the stones could talk for days and years
and few of us would ever savvy their sentence.

All those words . . .

We'll never know

how far they've traveled.

And from here to there—how many miles,
how many for the telling?

Along the bank butterflies lift
on the same breeze.

One after another
they pass before me, from one stem
of milkweed to the next, marmalade wings
clever as steel and more alive.

A fish jumps. Splash. Bashō.

Before, and after—

silence, the rocks
still listening,

still talking.

And another butterfly.

Another heartbeat.

I draw the lake's comfort to my chin,
slip inside, listen hard, begin
the translation.

-- Niagara on the Lake, Ontario, Canada

Exaltation

Saloni Kaul

Bag of bones precious
Empowered by breath's treasure
Exalted dry-dipped.

School Time

Saloni Kaul

Mindset's perfect rules
Inhale-exhale yoga school
Bone for breath for bone.

Wedding Photograph of My Parents

William Miller

A near perfect couple, right off the cake,
my parent's courtship was finally complete,
their picture snapped in the chapel
rented by the half hour.

My dad needed a real drink, vodka
with an onion, "vermouth" whispered
over the rim of the frosted glass,
his favorite magic trick. My mother

loved her face more than she loved
her new husband, more than anything
in a world of dirt-road, red-clay poverty
drought like a ghost in the summer

cornfields. His drink fueled big dreams
of big money, capped teeth and a golf tan
unheard of in his shotgun house behind
the railroad cars, a mother who drank

all night though three beers were too many
for her frightened children. She waved
a .38 in God's face, threatened to put
a round between his bully eyes....

They believed in movies more than
any hillbilly preacher, muddy creek baptism--
the lingering stage kiss while
screen credits rolled.

Little movie star people, Tony and Marilyn,
anxious for the liquid burn, the mirror
my mother checked so often to see
if she was still there.

CAIRNS (IV)

Philip Memmer

*Sisyphus, asks the stone,
are you awake?*

*I dreamt, I say, that I pushed a stone
up a mountain.*

*I hope I wasn't heavy,
the stone replies.*

*It wasn't you, I say.
It was some other stone.*

*

My fate, some say, is
an absurdity. Well,
whose isn't?

In the ski lift chairs above me,
perdition's couples always learn too late

they hate each other,
there is no snow,
they have no skis.

*

*Have you seen, the stone asks, how
as you labor
our shadow mirrors the meeting
of egg and sperm?*

I'm not your husband, I murmur.

...But I think of the souls
beneath us and
I push, I push.

*

Without someone to bear it, what
is a burden
anyway?

Call me
your stone, wails my stone...

Sure, stone, I pant, shoving it onward.

No, whimpers my stone.
I want you to call me
your stone.

*

Are you as intimate with anything
as I am with
this rock? With whom
have you ever

walked as we have walked?
When you don't talk, who
hears you? Whose resounding silence
echoes your thoughts?

*

Once, at its request,
I stepped in front of the stone,
relaxed my long-cramped limbs,

and waited
for it
to push me.

And waited.

I'm sorry, said the stone, *I'd hoped—*

So did I, I lied. *So did I*.

*

Listen. When I'm nearly at the top,
beyond earshot
of all you there
on the ground, the stone

cries out. As if
it is human. As if
someone else's hell
is to be
the weight I push.

*

The stone falls, and comes to rest
amidst those souls condemned
to watch my failures.
Another botch,

they sigh, and wander off.

For my long and dark walk down
nobody stays. No one waits
but the stone.

contributors

Holly Day's writing has recently appeared in *Appalachian*, *Analog SF*, *Earth's Daughters Journal* and her recent book publications include *Music Composition for Dummies*, *The Tooth is the Largest Organ in the Human Body*, and *Bound in Ice*. She teaches creative writing at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis and Hugo House in Seattle.

Nicholas Kriefall Native to Missouri, Nicholas Kriefall's first collection of poems, *Attic Pieces*, was published in 2014 by Unsolicited Press. His work has appeared in *Barrow Street*, *The Conium Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Writing Tomorrow*, *The Ampersand Review*, *Enizagam*, *The Healing Muse*, and is forthcoming in *Evening Street Review*, *The Helix Literary Magazine*, *Concho River Review*, and *The Orchards Poetry Journal*.

Uri Rosenshine lives in New Haven, Connecticut, where he works at a wine store. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Missouri Review*, *Sortes Magazine*, *Tikkun Magazine*, and *Minutiae: Three Poems*, a chapbook self-published in collaboration with Directangle Press. His first collection, *Vivid Partitions*, is forthcoming this fall with MadHat Press.

Andrea McLaughlin is a trauma therapist living in Los Angeles. She also holds an MFA from Columbia University. Her work has been shortlisted twice for Glimmer Train, received Honorable Mention in the Raymond Carver Short Story Contest, and is currently featured or forthcoming in *River Stryx*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Bedfellows*, and *Dark Lane Anthology Series*.

Daisy Bassen is a poet and community child psychiatrist who graduated from Princeton University's Creative Writing Program and completed her medical training at The University of Rochester and Brown. Her work has been published in *Oberon*, *McSweeney's*, and *[PANK]* among other journals. Born and raised in New York, she lives in Rhode Island with her family.

Bradley R. Strahan taught poetry at Georgetown University. He has seven books of poetry & over 700 poems published worldwide. His two latest books, *This Art of Losing* and *A Parting Glass* (poems written in Ireland) both translated into French.

John Grey is an Australian poet and U.S. resident, recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Stand*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Hollins Critic*. Latest books, *Leaves On Pages*, *Memory Outside The Head*, and "Guest Of Myself" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *Ellipsis*, *Blueline* and *International Poetry Review*.

Frederick Levy is a 72 year old retired psychotherapist living in Newport News, Virginia with his wife, Cindy - they've been married 43 years. The subject matter of his poetry ranges from Jewish spirituality, trauma, whimsey, and existential agony.

Mikal Wix grew up in the American South, which seeded insights into many outlooks, including visions of a revenant from the closet. He has work in *Penumbra Literary Journal*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Hyacinth Review*, *Hearth and Coffin*, *Roi Fainéant Press*, *Fiery Scribe Review*, among others, and works as a science editor.

Marc Harshman Harshman's *WOMAN IN RED ANORAK* (Blue Lynx Prize) was published in 2018 by Lynx House Press. His fourteenth children's book, *FALLINGWATER* (co-author, Anna Smucker) was published by Roaring Brook/Macmillan. He is co-winner of the 2019 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and his poem, "Dispatch from the Mountain State," was printed in the 2020 Thanksgiving edition of the *New York Times*. Poems have been anthologized by Kent State University, University of Iowa, University of Georgia, and the University of Arizona. Appointed in 2012, he is the seventh poet laureate of West Virginia.

Saloni Kaul author and poet, was published first at the age of ten and has stayed in print since on four continents, including seventeen states of the U.S. As a critic and columnist, Saloni has enjoyed forty-four years of being published. Saloni Kaul's first volume, a fifty-poem collection was published in the U.S. in 2009. Subsequent volumes include *Universal One* and *Essentials All*. As a broadcaster, Saloni had won considerable acclaim with innumerable features and documentaries to her credit as writer-producer-presenter. Most recently, Saloni Kaul poetic production was published in *The Horror Zine*, *Mad Swirl* (contains ongoing Saloni Kaul poetry page), *The Penwood Review*, *The Imagine*, *The Charleston Anvil*, *Treasure Chest*, *Poetry Leaves Anthology and Exhibition*, *Amulet Poetry Magazine*, *Arteidolia* and *Quail Bell Magazine*. Upcoming publication acceptances include those in *The Penwood Review*, *OVI*, and *The Horror Zine* (print), *Amulet Poetry Magazine*, *Arteidolia* and *Quail Bell Magazine*. An essay is to be published in *Away Journal*.

William Miller's eighth collection of poetry, *The Crow Flew Between Us*, was published by Kelsay Books in 2019. His poems have appeared in *The Penn Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Prairie Schooner*, *West Branch* and *Folio*. He lives and writes in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Philip Memmer is the author of five books of poems, most recently *Pantheon* (Lost Horse Press, 2019). His work has appeared in such journals as *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Poetry London*, and on the Library of Congress's *Poetry 180* website. He lives in upstate New York, where he founded and directs the YMCA's Downtown Writers Center in Syracuse, serves as Associate Editor for Tiger Bark Press, and teaches creative writing at Hamilton College.

Scarlett Scott is currently a 12th grader attending Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School in Marine City Michigan. She has many passions in her life but would say one of the strongest of these aspirations is art. Since she was a child, she has held tight to creativity and always knew that she would want to pursue something of this path. Drawing is an ambition she has always loved and because of this her younger self set her dreams of becoming an artist. She can remember illustrating her own paper books and writing down hundreds of stories that would come to mind. Whatever sparked her creativity she had to replicate onto paper. Little did she know that these seemingly miniscule moments would aid her future self and her journey of becoming an illustrator.