

# COVID Winter

A WCC Poetry Club Anthology

Edited by Tom Zimmerman





## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**This *COVID Winter* anthology is a production of the WCC Poetry Club, at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.**

**It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, and alumni that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website from December 2020 through March 2021.**

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## **My Life as a Cat: A Pandemic Tale**

Pre-pandemic, I always set three alarms. Cannot oversleep! Got to get those kids to school/music lesson/tutoring/basketball/running club/orthodontist. They are counting on me! I have to push through my driving anxiety. Darkness, snow, I cannot be stopped! Got to get my mother-in-law to the doctor/PT/lunch/church! Got to meet friends for lunch/dinner! Time for hubby's date night! Meanwhile my cat Bette calmly surveys her scene: napping/eating/resting/playing.

Then: lockdown. The kids live elsewhere. No one goes for lunch or date night. Church is on Facebook. Campus is online. No driving anxiety because no driving! Let it snow, I don't care. Now my life is napping/eating/resting/ reading/fear of gruesome death. With my cat.



**Quareese Calhoun    NYC**

*Artist's statement: "This was a photo I took during the height of covid of the empty streets of the usually bustling NYC, which I think does wonders to show the contrast between normal and the 'new normal.'"*

## Kisses Come in All Sizes

I was a chess brat on a chess team back in the late '80s, packed in a van full of hormonal middle school aged teens, riding along to the *Dirty Dancing Soundtrack*. We were going to The Nationals—the Chess Nationals in Memphis, Tennessee, home of Elvis Aaron Presley. And, having seen too many John Hughes movies, you know, *Pretty in Pink*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Sixteen Candles*, and all the rest, I was certain love couldn't be too far behind.

Enter: Danielle. The girl of my dreams. She was from a sister school, but that was okay. My chess coach brought her along and she brought her mother along as a chaperon. Still, I was foolish enough to believe we'd have a moment alone before the trip was over. She was sort of awkward and shy—that's what I told myself when she averted her gaze. I'd never been too pushy in the love department, not at 14, but that red clay brought out a primal beast, one who would stop at nothing for a kiss. Just a kiss: “A Kiss to Build a Dream On.”

The girls on the team got wind of my crush; they wanted to help. I wrote notes and they were passed on to Danielle. This pretty girl with light brown eyes, brown skin and curly hair, had agreed to give *me* a kiss. More notes were passed and I was given a specific time to knock on Danielle's door.

I was ready to get this love bug, this kissing virus out of my system.

I rode the elevator up in anticipation. When the elevator doors opened, my heart was beating a fierce pattern I'd never felt before. I hadn't kissed a girl before and couldn't believe it was going to happen in Tennessee of all places. I kept repeating the room number over and over to myself, so I wouldn't forget it.



Finally, I arrived.

Knocked three times (as it requested in the note). Then another three. I started to worry. Glanced down at the foot of the door, and there it was—two Hershey's Kisses.

There was a series of giggles and sidesplitting laughter from down the hall (my teammates) and even Danielle had a good laugh—that's the part that hurt most. I didn't get my first kiss that day, but I sure tasted what those kids in John Hughes films felt when they got their heart broken to modal synth pop.

In my case, a chess queen actually broke my heart.

The perfect checkmate.

Or more accurately, a Fool's mate.





**What is your story?**

I am a writer who is the son of a writer.

I am an artist who is the grandson of an artist.

I am a man who was raised by a woman.

I was brought up in Detroit, so by default,  
Detroit is buried in the labyrinthine strand of my DNA.

Unlike Dostoevsky's underground narrator, my liver  
does not hurt, but my reality likes to perform  
right before my eyes  
in a blinding carnivalesque  
worthy of Bakhtin.

My polyphony usually resolves itself from  
the distinctive "S" curvature of a maze  
to the "I" of intersection,  
a straight highway with no discernable exits.

In fact, my first act was *Harrisonian* ("I Me Mine")  
in nature.

This second act is something different ...

It's not I, or me; rather,  
the narrative of my story has shifted from  
the first person to the third,  
pressing gingerly against a fourth wall:

A wonderful *spatial encounter*,  
where in the course of helping others  
shape their thoughts into words,  
new worlds emerge,  
in a whirl of stunning possibilities.





## The Boundaries Crossed

Instead of bad news, my little sister exited the middle school gleaming,  
A pep in her step as she slid into my vehicle.  
This had been a significant change in her aura from previous days,  
When she quietly fumbled into the passenger seat,  
Without even muttering a hello.

There remained this feeling that I was creeping too far over the line,  
A boundary set up for all young teenagers,  
The point where they're free to keep their insecurities to themselves,  
The place where older siblings and pestering parents weren't supposed  
to venture to.  
I guess I hadn't realized I was outside that boundary now.

So when she entered my car,  
I felt like I had just received a free pass,  
My one ticket to board onto her train of ongoing life,  
Speeding away into distant lands I was now on the ride for,  
But I didn't know if it was my place to continue on.

At that young of an age,  
Just before we're old enough to fall into the dullest patterns of life,  
We're trapped inside shimmering bubbles, transparent and  
glimmering.  
This display is one in which we want to stay, safe within the realm of  
youth,  
But we all end falling astray, never to be the same.

With the pop of our protective barriers,  
The guard is heightened,  
We start to push those around us farther and farther away.

These words my sister confides had no significance to me whatsoever,  
And yet, here I was, listening as if I was still on the inside of the  
borderline.

When she explained to me she got invited to a party,  
I had to bite my tongue back,  
Using all my strength to not reveal the truth,  
The reality that she didn't need to be a part of yet,  
That a middle school gathering was insignificant.

With these thoughts in mind,  
I keep up my hardened smiles for her,  
Remembering the times when I got excited for social gatherings,  
Until the day came when I crossed the line into the real world,  
But let her ramble on anyways, the entire way home.





## Open the Door

In spite of the rasping whisper  
of a snake shedding its skin in there

In spite of the tobacco-colored smear that could be anything,  
that you will touch in spite of yourself, that will stick like tar

In spite of the creaky hinges which will turn every ear  
and draw the gawking crowd

In spite of the certainty that your body is on the other side—not posed  
in dim light but splayed like a Mapplethorpe exhibit.

## Traces of Winter

I stamp into empty woods brimmed with snow.  
My boot soles rub out the robin's three-toed  
calligraphy, replace the rabbit's tracks  
with pigeon-toed zigzag treads, size nine.

Wizened bittersweet berries shine crimson  
from cross-country ski trails as if arranged  
by a child's hands then pressed in wax paper—  
third-grade art class, hot-candle smell.

Must be a whiff from memory because  
my nose is numb, my fading fingers ache,  
shafts of sun crash like two-by-fours through clouds  
creating painless wounds which disappear  
like me—unbodied, restless, soundless, white.



**TOMMY KAMINSKI** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Lost in Thought**

Blue water flowing  
Through a stream of consciousness—  
Not clear, but beautiful

## Interlocutor

There's nothing to see here.  
We're all wearing masks, great, gory  
caricatures with feathers and beads.  
Oh, the surgical N95s are there too,  
covering spewing, viral mouths.  
Those who should be wearing them aren't.  
And the ones who shouldn't be wearing them  
have them glued to their faces under bandanas.

At least with feathers and beads we should  
be able to assume a party posture on Zoom,  
dress up and have a masquerade call. We're  
going to be Zooming for a long time, so we need  
variety—cover our most recognizable faces  
and play a voice recognition game.

Then who's going to want to pay attention  
to what we say and how we say it—no smiles  
as cues, no facial tics to tell whether we're  
hamming it up or dead serious, whether  
that cough is just allergies or viral doom,  
whether that comment comes with a sneer  
or a smirk, whether the conversation  
needs an interlocutor.

Masquerading under the mask can become  
a serious endeavor. We get to be whatever  
character we want to be in this passion play  
for the sleep-deprived, and deaf looking for  
lips to read. If we're convincing, we may have to  
mask up more often just to not be ourselves.



Perhaps we need a conversation with that masked person in the mirror—can't tell if it's a he or she because the hair's pretty long, the eyes are a bit blurry from blue-screen syndrome, and the voice distorts. Perhaps we'd get along better if we just didn't have to see all those lips flapping, that spit spewing. We'd only have those rolled-back eyes to signal a bald-faced lie.



## The Seduction of COVID-19

I often delay until I think I can make  
the perfect choice,  
but no choice is as simple as black or white,  
right or wrong, me or you.

Gray comes in a thousand shades,  
from your blackest heart  
to a mere shadow  
of your pale apparition.

Clouds gray when laden with rain,  
letting go the darkest of floods  
to wash the lightest  
of your moods into hate.

What's right is indisputable.  
What's wrong is indisputable.

What's right for me may be wrong for you—  
if it's any of your business at all.  
What's right for you may be wrong for me—  
so you'd better listen up.

For me no perfect choice exists. Every day  
has its silver-lined cloud that spatters my mirror.  
Every night holds a sliver of moon,  
and a million stars to blind me to your love.

Every meeting hovers on the edge of me and you,  
teetering between a joining or a loss,  
a mating or a broken heart, keeping me intact  
or scattering my viral soul to the countryside.



## Slow Change

This comfortable world is slow to change. Like every younger generation that's been born into their parents' world, youth believes, insists, on having what their parents took decades to earn by hard work.

In whatever circumstance, kids need to know they have to work just as hard to deserve and accumulate a life's worth of comforts.

Likewise, they get to share in the consequences of the decisions made by their parents' generation. They get to social distance, wear masks, share in the care of every other person they come in contact with.

And they get to know the consequences if they don't. They get to lose family members, friends, teachers, coaches. They get to witness the inside of an ICU just like the neighbor next door.

They get to have quarantine rulings applied to them if they become sick, even a little bit. They get to be grateful to their families for taking care of them. And they get to learn the lesson of caring for their family who've become sick too.

Those slow to change their habits have not had to reckon with the consequences of their ignorance or defiance. But a time will come when they too will care enough about their fellow beings

to quicken their response, to change when change is needed rather than waiting until the 11th hour when there are no more beds in the ICU.





## **The Story in Your Breathing...**

The story in your breathing  
is not a fairy tale where the Prince  
rescues the Princess from the evil ogre,  
kisses her back to life and lives happily  
ever after.

For one thing, ever after is a Disney myth  
and neither the Prince nor his lackeys  
will wear a disguise.  
Therein lies the tale.

The real-time tale resides in the plague  
upon the people of little care,  
the good common folk who believe their  
Prince will slay the Dragon with his  
papier-mâché sword.

The story begins, evolves and withers  
on the vine in the third act set in the ICU  
that's crowded and noisy and full of angst.  
The story there is all about breathing.

Or more correctly, not breathing,  
which is how many end up because  
the Medicine Man cannot figure out  
where to put the blood that's starved,  
the lung that's hardened with scarring,  
the party mug this Patient still clings to.

The plot literally thickens.  
The story begins and ends with breath

after breath for some, until no breath is enough.  
Until the once-healthy Patient is no longer  
able to fill a breath with air, the blood  
with oxygen, and literally drowns  
in his own body.

The story in your breathing is a tragicomedy.  
Those playing the role of Patient are poorly paid  
and do not get a dressing room of their own.  
Those playing Medicine Men have lost their  
wise-feathers, one for every Patient lost,  
one for every failed cure.

Those playing the invincible Innocents  
wander clueless from bar to bar with  
their mouths agape—just what their ancestors  
warned against. Those in the gallery seats  
turn their heads away in disgust.

Those of us with one foot in the River  
gather close our gloves and masks, shields and Bibles.  
We are in it for the duration—covered,  
distanced, hiring cabs to do our shopping,  
watching other talking heads Zoom about,  
skirting the topic, but washing our hands  
to “Happy Birthday” and planning to hide out  
for months until the Dragon is driven  
from the Kingdom.

## 2020 Lost and Found

We've lost the soul of our country  
somewhere between micro-politics  
and macro-consumerism, decompression  
and disrespect; somewhere between  
I-need-it-now and It's-all-your-fault.

There's no waiting for common sense  
for new ideas to ripen like beans  
in the garden—let's pick them over  
and pack them before they've sweetened  
forgetting health and husbandry.

Let's pick them all, put them  
in a hat and make a lottery of it,  
run them up the flagpole  
and call them the latest, greatest  
idea to be recycled from the  
pandemic.

Let's back it with big bucks  
and bland consciences.  
We've lost the soul of the soul.  
The place we promised to God,  
the place we promised to each other  
and to mother Earth.

Our souls have holes like the ozone,  
round holes in which square pegs  
still won't fit. Large holes where cynicism  
creeps in and sets up housekeeping,  
where common sense, self-worth  
and charity should be.



They both headed south to vacation  
where hurricanes and tsunamis roam,  
drinking rum and nectar of the gods of greed.  
Corrupted by the sun, which also shines  
on fools and folly, homegrown  
war-mongers and thieves.

We've lost all hope of redemption  
if we continue to listen to the talking heads  
that draw our souls closer to the reef  
of insensitivity, the rapids before  
the falls of irresponsibility, the temple  
of care-less-ness and a new normal.

We've lost what it takes to be human,  
what was given back in haste before we  
got to lick the icing off the spoon,  
and realize what we had lost.

We've found in our solitude  
words, Zoom-box community, respect for  
first responders, and the resilience  
and patience to allow democracy to work  
despite the despots, and science to  
conquer the novel coronavirus.



**Hannah Lain**    *Locked In*

*Artist's Statement: "This piece is entitled Locked In. It's a feeling I think we're all familiar with due to COVID so I wanted to photograph that feeling."*

## Burn It Down

Swarming, climbing, tearing  
The angered masses flowed  
The halls of freedom hardly bearing  
Their audacity, firm and bold

*Burn it down, burn it down, collectively they cried  
Burn it down, burn it down, their intention to divide*

Despite sacrifice of men before them  
The horde conspires their subjugation  
Trampling souls meant to defend them  
The Capitol succumbs to desecration

*Tear it down, tear it down, the angered horde did think  
Tear it down, tear it down, bringing justice to its brink*

Men and women of integrity  
Defend the Capitol on the hill  
To protect our hope of unity  
With Their purpose and their will

*Hold them back, hold them back, they screamed for all to hear  
Hold them back, hold them back, they cried amidst the fear*

And in their wake, there lay  
The broken pieces left in fury  
That marked the actions of the day  
Leaving righteous minds to worry

*Why did they come, why did they come, to justify their cause?  
Why did they come, why did they come, in contradiction to our laws?*



One brave man, now lies in state  
Leaving family, friends and all to grieve  
The result of man's undying hate  
Never to forget what happened on that eve

*Heal the wounds, heal the wounds, the rest of us do pray*  
*Heal the wounds, heal the wounds, we must act, without delay*



**Broken Record**

My life is a song that is stuck on repeat.  
Repeat is the only button I can press.  
Press through the days that seem to move so slow.  
Slow but the years go by so fast.  
Fast and I can't seem to catch up, I'm stuck.  
Stuck like a broken record that won't stop spinning.  
Spinning and spiraling out of control.  
Control what I can, but life just goes on.  
On and on playing the same tune.  
Tune out the same things everyday.  
Everyday like the day from before.  
Before I was happy, but now I am lost.  
Lost in this ride, this ride we call life.  
Life that repeats, day in and day out.  
Out of time, I'm running out of time.  
Time that doesn't exist.

*March 26, 2020*

**Covidnotes 1**

The stillness no refuge from  
home, no way to confirm myself  
a part

vehicles parked and quiet, yellow  
light flashing, a distant police car  
keening—singular notion of  
movement.

Witnessed by face-masked sanitation  
workers, birds unburdened by traffic  
noise shriek in symphonic  
confusion

The idea that the president deserves a  
cock-punch consumes my waking thoughts—  
*“If yer afraid the terrorists win!”*

I guess it’s not as bad as Nero’s time



*Dec. 21, 2020*

**Covidnotes 11: Supplemental**

Our sphere of succession continues through the elliptic vacuum, round a blazing ball of life—182 days since springtime uploaded a naive hope.

Historians will recall the time of anti-vaccer reconning, when the sick and healthy chose sides at the expense of all—what we secretly knew came to pass in gory technicolor.

There will be a comin' round to a time when everything changed and normality refused to reign.

## **I Wait in Silence**

A candle burns as darkness engulfs the room  
Desperation silences my words  
But the feelings rage  
Winter is haunted by clouds and a kiss of loneliness.  
Thoughts waltz around me  
Sitting, I hold one  
It will be the one that sets me free.  
The words forgotten, the lines never written  
Feelings I don't say  
And a photo of the one I love  
Reminds me of the fire that burns alone  
Keeping me warm until the day is right.





## Masked

03/28/2030

“Dear Journal,

I begin to lose myself in my own thoughts as if the walls are crumbling in and I have nowhere to go. The world is heavy like I’m carrying boulders on my shoulders. It continues to beat down on me like I’m a boxer fighting in the ring, trying to find enough strength to keep going. And through all that, somehow I am lost at a loss of words to describe what is happening to this planet and even my own life...

Around the world, yet another deadly disease has come upon the human race. One that is hard to battle and find a cure for. Families are directed to stay in their homes at all times unless it’s necessary to leave. The law also prohibits you from going to family gatherings and parties, that way if someone does have the deadly disease, they won’t infect others. Some stores, amusement parks, and movie theaters are required to shut down until further notice of opening back up. The economy begins to diminish over time. Reports of the disease begin to increase at high rates and so does fear that fills the air. Over hundreds of years, no scientist has seen any disease like this one. They call it Aparalistic.

The cause of the disease was simply eating the new species of berries and it is very contagious in the same way Covid-19 was. If you catch the virus, you will start by coughing. Next, you will be short of breath. Then you will experience nausea and vomiting. Not only that, but you will suffer from bumps and rashes. Under this time, you are under the influence to wear a mask and stay 6 feet away from people.

Quarantining isn’t the only negative effect on my life, but being with

my parents is so much worse. A true nightmare. As an only child, my life from other people's perspective is it's tremendous and they would love the lifestyle I have. We're talking 4 Audis all RS7's (sports cars), a mansion, and pretty much anything you have ever dreamed of. Even if that dream includes a private chef, maid, and butler, but in reality, sometimes it's overbearing. My parents are successful and rich, and that's how I want to be, but when they put money over their own child then that's where it begins to become a problem for me. My mother and father aren't totally horrible parents. They push me to do well in school, but when I do perform well, they don't praise me for it or even acknowledge it the slightest bit. I feel like a book collecting dust on the shelf, all alone and forgotten.

As much as I would love to tell them that, the chances of them caring are zero to none. When I walk into a room to try and talk with them, they don't ask how I am because they are always on their phones, and they don't suspect anything is wrong because I plaster a smile on my face. I remember telling them I won a scholarship of \$400,000 because I didn't want my parents paying for my schooling. I even donated \$200,000 to charity and the only thing they said was, 'That's great son, but I have to take this call.' As I told them this, they didn't even glance at me, they were too busy glued to their phones. As a result of my parents, money and work are their priorities.

What really keeps me going these past few years is my best friend Harper, who I have a tiny crush on. She's helped me through everything, thick and thin. She threw me a birthday party last year because my parents forgot my own birthday and by birthday party, I mean the 2 of us. We are all we need..."

"Eric, are you done writing in your diary?" Harper asked.

I closed my journal so fast, the papers on my desk flew off. "A. it's not a diary, it's a journal. And B. I am now since you interrupted," I said.

“Fantastic because I have a couple of questions on why guys—no offense—are idiots? This guy Trenton I am talking to doesn’t even the time of day,” she said.

I said, “None taken because I am not one of them. Anywho, go on.”

After her rant, she asked how I was, I told her some of the things I wrote in my journal, and then she came up with the idea for me to write a letter to my parents about how I feel. She left me to do so, and as I wrote the whole encyclopedia of things, I felt a little weight lifted from my shoulders.

As I headed downstairs, my face began to sweat. I felt as if I was going to puke, I really hope it’s not Aparalistic or Covid. When I stood in front of my parents, I grabbed each of their phones. They looked at me as if I was some sort of alien. Then, I handed each of them a copy of my letter. It was a stressful waiting game to hear what they had to say after reading it. The results were surprising, they both got up and hugged me.

Then my father said, “Son, I am so sorry I made you feel this way. I love you so much.” Something I haven’t heard from them in a long time.

My mom said, “We do love you so much and we want you to know that. I will make room in my schedule to have a family night and Bob you clear your schedule too. Friday nights are family nights.”

I walked upstairs happy for once, knowing that things were going to change. This time I didn’t have to put my “mask” on, it was a genuine smile. Once I got upstairs, I continued to write in my journal.

“Sometimes I think to myself, am I the only one who puts on a ‘mask’ all the time, or are there other people out there that do the same thing. What does it take for people to realize that sometimes a person is not



actually okay? How do you know people aren't hiding behind a mask all the time—not the ones you actually wear at the store? Coming forward to my parents wasn't easy. The thought that rushed through my mind is will I lose my parents after this or have I already lost them? I felt like all my emotions broke through and became flustered the moment they started reading my letter. Almost like molecules trying to break free from being trapped in a tight squeeze in order to find room to breathe. Finally, the aching moments were over when my parents looked up at me, hugged me, and began apologizing to me. I felt free and glad that I could catch my breath knowing things will begin to change. I was no longer suffocating in the dark. Everything at that moment felt like they were grabbing my hand from the shallow depths of me drowning. As if those boulders were finally lifted off my shoulders. My whole life I felt like I have been wearing a mask. So, I will no longer be wearing it because when you wear a mask, sometimes it's hard to breathe.

Until next time Journal,

Eric”



## World Wide Web, Trapped in My Tiny Little Bed

Any glare I fix the blank page  
Gets thrown back at me  
Even harder  
Even colder

I sit at the table,  
Hours ticking by  
Just as fast as the minutes do

My mind wanders against my permission  
Thinking about a TV show  
About a story  
About plans with friends  
I yell at it to focus  
Focus, focus  
But I focused so hard on *focusing*  
That I'm not paying attention at all

In times of old,  
School was my prison,  
Home was freedom  
But now all of my time is spent in one place  
Bed to desk  
Desk to bed  
Go to sleep  
Repeat again  
Again  
And Again

Even my choices of escape come from screens  
Binge watching a tv show



Scrolling TikTok  
Snapchatting friends  
E-books because the libraries are closed

I try to write everything down  
On paper and pen  
Looking for some relief from the blue light  
That I see more than my family  
But going back and forth  
Takes extra time  
That I don't have because I've procrastinated until the last second

I have too much time on my hands  
But not enough on my feet  
My legs bouncing with an unreleased energy  
My lips raw from the biting  
My fingers itching to type something  
The knowledge that due dates are quickly approaching  
But still no energy, no drive to get me to do it

I used to be able to spend the whole day at school  
Then go straight to rehearsals  
And then sometimes to work  
Now too many notifications send me into a sensory overload  
Where I have to lay down for 3 hours

On my twin sized bed  
In my small bedroom  
With a bookshelf  
And a desk  
I can access the world at my fingertips  
But I'm so burnt out  
I sleep instead





## I Think of Things I Love

When things are going really bad, I think  
of things I love: this Glenn Gould Bach that's on  
the playlist now; my memories of Pink  
Floyd's caustic *Animals*, the vinyl gone;  
there's *Giant Steps* and *Kind of Blue*: the first  
jazz albums that I bought; Bob Dylan, yes,  
my fetish; Otto Klemperer, the burst  
of thunder in his Beethoven; the press  
that published my first poems; verse by Bly,  
two other Roberts, Frost and Lowell; plays  
I'm teaching: *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; the sky  
on fire at dusk or dawn; hard rain on days  
I need to read; pandemic dogwalks; hiss  
of coffee brewing; chance to live through this.



## The Morning After

A grim freewrite last night: “Subconscious COVID poem,” a fellow poet said.

This morning,  
out with Ann and Trey, I photographed a frozen  
pond, the etchings in the ice like synapses,  
the reedy tendrils fossilized, an ancient  
giant’s thoughts locked down, a ghostly ruin  
traced, museum piece.

Piano music  
playing now: the sounds like cracking ice.  
“Beloved dead still hover round me, black  
but spangled with some matter shedding light”:  
I thought this true last night.

If not epiphany,  
at least a little comfort. Coffee’s gone  
but coursing through me. Trey’s asleep,  
his belly full. And Ann is making toast.

### Sonnet with Four Requests

Before you speak, please count to seven: gives  
your demons time of eat themselves, and then  
your angels can ascend. New virus lives:  
at large but wildly seeking cells, and when  
it wormed inside our heads, its shadow killed  
and sheltered, soaked our speech in poison swirled  
with medicine that some of us distilled  
to waves of energy that lit the world.

Before you speak, please put your hand, there, on  
your heart. We'll all like better what we hear,  
the mind and body joined, old lines redrawn,  
emotion and cognition stronger, freer.

And don't forget to breathe. A million dead,  
toll mounting. Dream of better days ahead.

*25 Dec. 2020*







## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Olivia Bottum** writes, “I have been taking classes at WCC since 1992. I’m retired from 30 years at the University of Michigan and still taking classes at WCC. Reading and writing are my favorite things to do. I have a cat Bette. Write on!”

**Quareese Calhoun** writes, “This was a photo I took during the height of covid of the empty streets of the usually bustling NYC, which I think does wonders to show the contrast between normal and the ‘new normal.’”

**Cornelius Fortune’s** work has appeared in *Yahoo News*, *CinemaBlend*, *The Advocate*, *The Novel & Short Story Writer’s Market*, *Midwest Living*, and others. He holds an MA in English Literature and has taught composition, technical writing, as well as poetry and drama. He is a part-time faculty member of WCC.

**Taylor Hart** is a full-time student at Delta College, and after her completion, will be transferring to Saginaw Valley State University to pursue a bachelor’s degree in professional and technical writing and minor in creative writing. She believes that “writing is the gateway for expressive thoughts and communication, a way to tell stories in a variety of methods. We all have ideas and stories to share, it’s just a matter of how we choose to express them to others that will leave the greatest of impacts.”

**Amy Higgins** teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at WCC.

**Tommy Kaminski** is a student of 3D animation at WCC. Tommy writes, “Storytelling is my passion, and I forever seek new ways to improve my skill. Writing in poetry, especially in haiku, makes one truly appreciate the value of every single word, and I encourage it for all aspiring storytellers.”

**Diane M. Laboda** is a former teacher-librarian and retired WCC executive assistant. She enjoys exploring life's mysteries and sharing with others in her writing and artwork. She's published poetry, short stories, articles, and photos in literary journals and anthologies both online and in print. She has published two chapbooks, *Facing the Mirror* and *This Poet's Journey*, and is working on her first book-length collection of poetry on grief and care giving.

**Hannah Lain** writes, "This piece is entitled Locked In. It's a feeling I think we're all familiar with due to COVID so I wanted to photograph that feeling."

**Draganel Magda** writes, "I am currently enjoying retired life after working as an automotive designer for over thirty years with both General Motors and Ford. The tragic events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th moved me to convey my emotions into the words of a poem."

**Ella Markel** is currently a student at WCC and wrote this poem for a creative writing class.

**Scott Schuer** teaches English at WCC. His latest book is *Covidnotes*.

**Sophia Sims** writes, "I'm a student at WTMC who spends my free time making music, writing, watching movies, and spending time with my dog. I find a lot of inspiration through personal and other people's life experiences. And one way I express that is through poetry."

**Thaliana Smith-Ponce** writes, "I am a student that loves to write and getting a chance to submit this to your competition is a chance I am willing to take. Not only is the opportunity amazing, but having people read my work would be a dream come true. Due to Covid-19, despite changing the economy. It has changed the way people live and who they are as a person. I hope that is portrayed in this piece."



**Kesley Walter** writes, “I am a full time student who is dual enrolled as a senior in high school, but I spend my free time at work, rehearsals for my drama club, and writing.”

**Tom Zimmerman** teaches English and directs the Writing Center at WCC. He also serves as editor of *The Huron River Review* and *The Big Windows Review* and faculty advisor of the WCC Poetry Club.







BOTTUM  
CALHOUN  
FORTUNE  
HART  
HIGGINS  
KAMINSKI  
LABODA  
LAIN  
MAGDA  
MARKEL  
SCHUER  
SIMS  
SMITH-PONCE  
WALTER  
ZIMMERMAN