

Who Are We?

An Anthology
Edited by
Tom Zimmerman



A Note from the Editor

This *Who Are We?* anthology includes work written by attendees of creative writing workshops offered April 12 and 13, 2021, by the editor, as part of Free College Week at Washtenaw Community College, in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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Book design and digital images by Tom Zimmerman. Photo on page 5 by Rachel Barsch.

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Contents

Amber Augustson	4
Rachel Barsch	5
Renee Baumunk	6
Leeann Botkins	8
Pam Brown	9
Ive	10
Donald Johnson	13
Krysta McBride	14
Heather O'Neal	16
Luis A. Paez-Cano	18
Lana Valentine	19
Carol Wier	20
Lauren Woodley	21
Tom Zimmerman	22

Amber Augustson

Who am I?

A mother of three that sets her mind free
Just to see what life could be.
A beautiful struggle
Trying to get through a dark tunnel
Good days, bad days
Always got a smile to make it easier to release any troubles
I set my mind free
just to see what life could be
That's me.

Rachel Barsch

Who Am I?

The bird at my window is chirping.

I think his song is beautiful.

Is he singing the song of spring?

He throws his body at the window.

His reflection confuses him.

Knock, knock, knock, knock, knock is the beat of his drum.

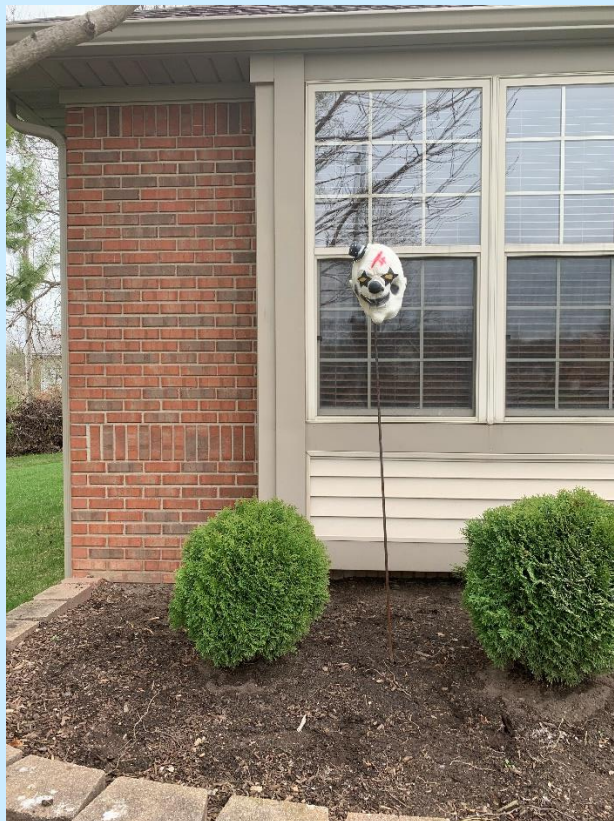
While his singing is rhythmic and soothing, his drumbeat is chaotic
and bruising

I find the Halloween costume of the scary old clown, hoping to settle
the bird down

I tie the mask to a tree and then wait and see

But alas! The bird has made the mask his nest.

Knock, knock, knock, knock, knock



Renee Baumunk

Who Am I?

I am Renee Annette as named by my parents 60 years ago.

My name means "reborn pixie".

I am the 3rd child born...

the 2nd daughter...

1st in this body as far as I know.

Back then, I loved my little brother who arrived prematurely on
February 29, 1964.

He is 4 years younger than I am but in leap-year time, he is 14 today.

I am glad to have a sister and two brothers.

I am glad to have had my parents for as long as I did.

I am glad to say I reared two fine sons to two fine men.

I turned 60 during the pandemic.

A time the Japanese celebrate as Kanreki: the beginning of second
childhood.

Having made it around the different cycles of life, again to a new
beginning.

Covidtime brought me a granddaughter.

I would like her to call me 'Tutu', Hawaiian for grandmother.

I was lucky to live in Lahaina, Maui from 2013-2015.

I was a caregiver for an elder woman who had Parkinson's disease.

I learned everything I needed to know from Geri in order to return to
Michigan.

I watched as my dad came to the end of his life, on hospice in my
home.

He lost his memories to Alzheimer's and his life 3 years ago,
yesterday.

My Hawaiian time brought me many lovely memories.

The beauty, love and spirit of 'Aloha'.

I am officially retired as an elementary art teacher.

I enjoy travelling blue highways across the US with my partner in our
RV.

As we have been sheltering-in-place since 2020, and having both
been vaccinated twice,

We are hoping to resume our road trips beyond our Great Lakes
States pleasant borders.

I discovered I was part mermaid while in Hawaii.

I must make it back to an ocean somewhere in 2021.

Until then, Ada, who will be celebrating her 1/2-ey birthday next
Friday, is my world.

I am honored to be able to watch her twice weekly as her folks work
remotely from home.

She has a larger-than-life mermaid doll named Coral.

We sing 'Under the Sea' and Coral pretends to swim.

From the way Ada kicks her legs in pure joy when we sing, I suspect
she is part mermaid too!

Under this 'see', life is the bubbles~~~we got no troubles~~~

I am Renee Annette, a reborn pixie, grateful for all this wonder!



Leeann Botkins

Will You Ask?

You see me there but do not know me.
You glance at my hair and assume you know,
You know I think but don't know my thoughts.
You peek at my scars but never ask their story.
You assume how I act without knowing me.
You don't see my cares or my hopes
You don't know my thoughts for each action I take.
You don't learn my stories when you never ask.
I know who I am trying to be,
I know I want to show others too.
I know I have stories still left to tell.
I know each question has a new answer,
I know each answer can be a new challenge.
I don't know how the challenge can begin unless one of us asks.

Pam Brown

Who Am I?

After a structured and time consuming career, I am a lifetime away from where I began.

I have diverged from my previous journey.

I am lost in the silence of time.

Trying to find myself a new direction

What are my options?

Where do I look?

What will I see

What will I hear?

Will I be seen?

Will I be heard?

Ive

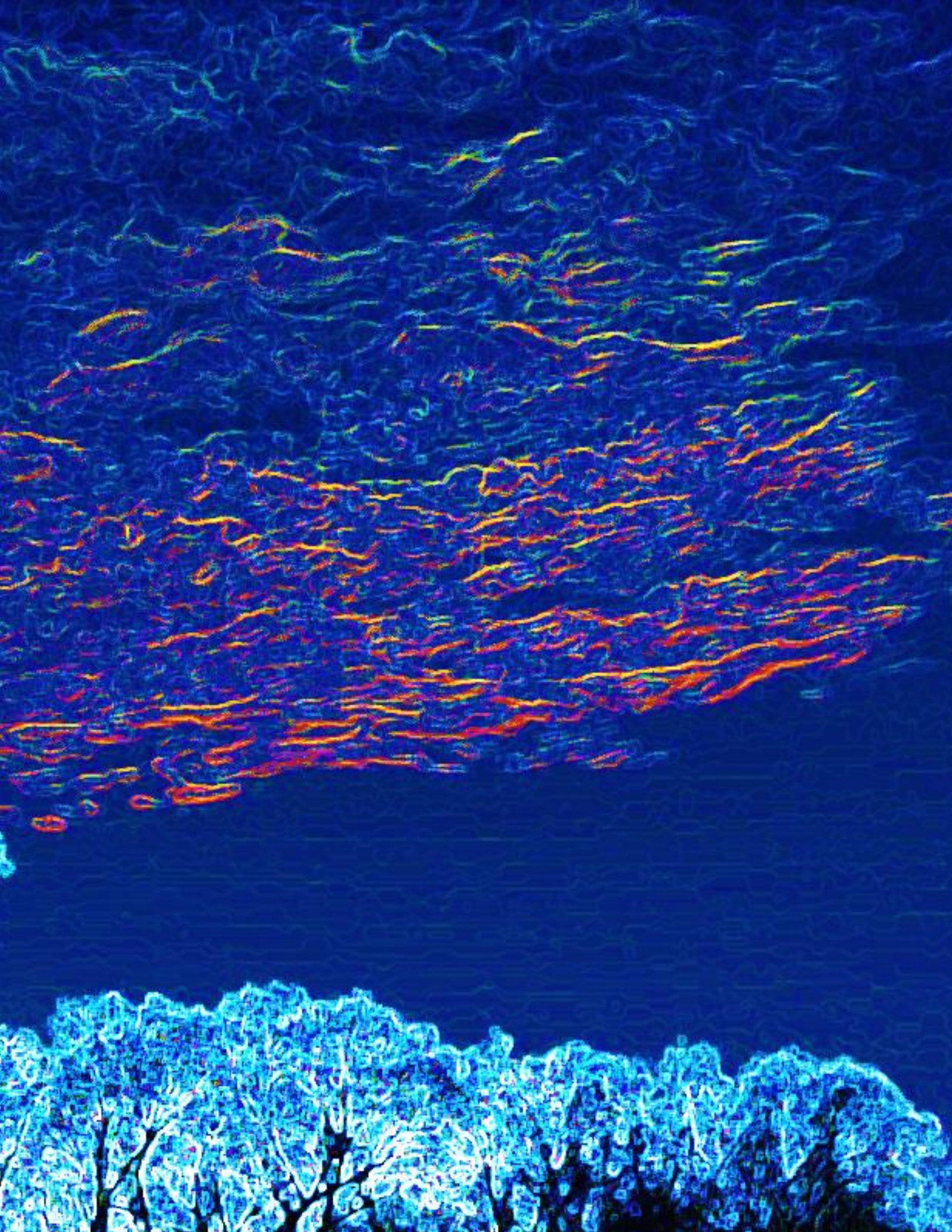
who am i

I am writing, that became the title
am no garbage collector,
and this is what she will do
i am impenetrable;
she is one, who uses those words of harsh and hate
that only will write her own fate

-so i don't know why she keeps dumping these loads on me
-is it Jealousy, I've been told
-wouldn't you want for a daughter to be better as a result

can't quite understand
but i have let up,
as I've been trying to tell
"since the one who you don't see"
...is me
now, i am knowing





Donald Johnson

Who Am I?

At 66, the answer should be obvious and easily ascertained. I've worked a lifetime, but now I'm not. I've defined myself by my work, my family, my domicile, and accomplishments. Now I have none of that to lean on or to blame. I've arrived at a place where I'm free of encumbrances and obligations, able to bask in relaxation and reminiscence. I'm open to peruse the world or any part of it. Many choices are open, but I've no longer the desire for most of them.

Recently watched HUMANS which contemplated this this question through the vehicle of Artificial Intelligence. The entire point of sentience meant that the question was asked, but never answered. Perhaps that's it.

Is asking the question enough? Is the soul-searching probing that constitutes the Journey of Understanding an end in itself? Are we even programmed to figure it out?

This question invariably loops back on itself, perhaps as a necessary precursor to our evolution. We have to know where we are, why we are doing this, to know where we're going.

Are we not all in Nomadland?

(Are those who choose to run in place to be harshly judged?)

I have a good life, a wonderful Significant Other, so why is this not the epitome of contentment, why is it not enough? Or is satisfaction never guaranteed or granted?

Krysta McBride

Who am I?

I am a messy pile of emotions
I am at war with myself
I am strong and weak
I am constructive and destructive
I am blissful and depressed
I am helpful and selfish
I am independent and imprisoned
I am loving and resentful
I am productive and procrastinating

I am truthful and avoidant
I am healthy and dysfunctional
I am surges of energy and stretches
of fatigue
I am wise and immature
I am warmth and brick walls
I am speedy and poky
I am resilient and inexperienced
I am narcissistic and empathic
I am spacious and little

I am learning
I am growing
I am starting to heal
I am getting real
I am the one who is always trying to
figure things out
Gratefully, I am discovering that...

I am forgiven and forgivable
I am lovable no matter what my mistakes

I am worthy despite my flaws
I am - only in part - my battle scars
I am saved from the guilt and shame
I am a reflection of my progress

I am a creative human being
I am a writer
I am a dancer
I am a mover
I am crafty
I am a free spirit
I am a bottomless vat of ideas
I am an entrepreneur
I am a ray of light

I am 25 years old
I am a child at heart
I am a beautifully old soul
I am an intelligent adult
I am open minded
I am positively relational
I am a supportive wife
I am a caring friend

I am falling and getting back up
I am a nonlinear ascension
I am a hard worker and doer of good
I am a heart of authenticity
I am patient and forgiving
I am one who walks with passion and integrity
I am being built up and poured into
I am God's masterpiece

Heather O'Neal

Who am I?

On the marble of the earth
I slip over the glassy finish
Dancing sometimes
Deliberately walking
Wandering for sure
The reflection of the surface
Finds me content
Colors, lights, shapes
Those forms drawn inside me
Mirror images outside and in
I carry so much as I travel
But want to be light and free
My bags, my cargo
A barge floating heavy on water
Loaded to the hilt
I take it all in, on board
I sort, organize and shuffle
As I go
Slow with a firm hold
To what I have gathered
Plotting the next passage
Reminded of sunshine
Moonlight
My free spirit drifts
The artist says "no!"
Society's child
But really the mother I am
With pride for her son
I leave crumbs behind
After lunch
And continue

Over mountains, along seashores
What is, is mine
What is me is the world
Black and white shadows extend
In all brilliant directions
Dreams of sparkles and rainbows
Scattered on the floor
The rolling world revolves
As I am still
Each breath
In a time and place forgotten
But so many wound up
In happiness, pure joy
Observing
Just being
This is
Am I?
Who?



Luis A. Paez-Cano

Spring '21 or, "Writer by his window"

"De Colores" comes to mind;
flowers, trees tremble awake in full sun...
cemeteries and graves-full remind
everyone of Life and Death: One Sum.

And the birds keep singing by my window sill!

Lana Valentine

Who Am I?

A lover of life and clean fun,
Who also likes to speak and sometimes use puns.
Never met a stranger, grandma said
Talk so much, you can converse with the dead.

A lover of life and almost anyone,
So glad spring is here, we can have some outdoor fun,
One of many that got their work done,
And wants to go to the lake and enjoy a cold one.

A remote volunteer and editor of good tidings,
Now, I have that extra time to do some reflective writing.
Can't wait till the restrictions are lifted,
So, we can get to dancing and get our hips shifted.

But until that day arrives, I pray
That we continue to help each other along the way.
Let's do what we can in our own place,
So that we can all be winners in this pandemic race.

Carol Wier

Who Am I

Young in spirit and old in age

Seeking newness and clinging to the past

Smiles for the future and also some fear

The past was my teacher and now I look for more

Always seeking. . .

Lauren Woodley

Who Am I?

I am Passion and Resilience;
I wonder If I'm enough;
I hear the screams of my inner child;
I see the daggers;
I want to be me again;
I am Passion and Resilience.

I am a Villain;
I feel the point of the spear;
I touch the blood;
I worry about death;
I cry for my heart;
I am Passion and Resilience.

I understand my words hurt;
I say I am love;
I try to scream my feelings;
I hope you do well;
I am Passion and Resilience.

Tom Zimmerman

Who Am I?

A walking hairy bag of water, two
dead people's son, two women's brother, one
dog's servant.

Shaggy spruces sway outside
my window now, just like my COVID haircut.
Dark clouds moving in: yes, they're my moods.
A poet told me I'm no better than
the grass.

The coffee's gone, it's way too early
for the scotch: I'm on my own here with
my thoughts, whatever I can conjure, capture,
conquer.

Birthday wishes to my wife.
She doesn't want to talk about it. Age
is the just the price of staying. *Be*. It's always
now. In borrowed robes, I channel Basho:

*In the new Zoom school,
A poemcry—
I!*



Augustson
Barsch
Baumunk
Botkins
Brown
Ive
Johnson
McBride
O'Neal
Paez-Cano
Valentine
Wier
Woodley
Zimmerman

