

mind  
&  
machine

more poems on life & love  
by  
michael r guerin

## **Books by Michael R. Guerin**

Ghosts, Flames & Ashes (2016)

world thru a window (2017)

mind & machine (2018)

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## Table of Contents

### *fire*

just like november	7
farewell mr. tin man	8
this clockwork	10
it figures (my valentine)	12
i feel myself (there)	14
by the garden gate	16
a ghazal	18
temptation	19

### *air*

cut flowers	21
waiting for (a moment)	22
still the monkey	24
corporate frankenstein	26
bone dreams	27
about pandora's box	28
a perfect paradox?	30
in ashes	31

*earth*

into dust	33
a landscape	34
until it's gone	36
as we always do	38
be(friended)	40
rusted out	42
paradigm lost?	44
down (to this)	45

*water*

fading (into memory)	47
which, if left to chance?	48
some illusion of love	50
each passing day	52
the slow turn	54
under it all	56
blood and bone	58
i surrender	59

*ether*

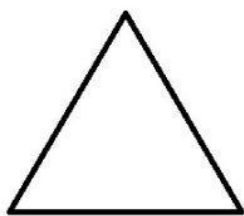
out like a whisper	61
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"Sometimes it's not enough to know  
what things mean, sometimes you  
have to know what things don't mean."

Bob Dylan

"Can there be love when the mind is  
occupied with itself all the time?"

J. Krishnamurti



just like november

your voice heavy with the fog of waking  
whispered the sweetest nothings.

cool crisp mornings beneath an antique  
quilt waiting for coffee to perk.

this silence like the late november air  
grows colder each passing day.

from hearth to heaven and back again  
embers from an autumn bonfire.

the need for space and a place to call  
home beneath this setting sun.

maybe it was love or just a bit of play  
before dried leaves began to fall.

farewell mr. tin man

when you get right down  
to it a word is just

a word and she piled them  
up so beautifully

stacked between rhyme  
and artfully displayed

about a robot i believe  
or cassini's final end

which got me thinking  
of all those thoughts

we dole out to no one  
in particular hoping

every once and again  
that something might



finally connect heart  
to heart or (possibly)

head to head and more  
than mechanically

but does it really need  
to matter when the day

is done whether we're  
ever able to find a home

to call a home beneath  
this yellowing sun?

this clockwork

when she turns her head  
just slightly away  
exposing the subtle  
curve at the nape  
of her angled neck  
is it merely instinct  
which awakens these bones  
or is this rush to desire  
choicelessly made  
on some microscopic,  
cellular level?

this dance like any other one  
slowly unwinds beat by  
subtle beat counting time  
like every piece  
of clockwork  
or crafted machinery  
until it's done,  
and yet just beneath  
the outer layers

fluttering more than skin  
deep some thing  
that's not a thing  
continues to stretch  
its wings.

## it figures (my valentine)

it figures  
ee cummings would emerge  
from the pages of my  
personal history  
(once again)  
to land his message  
of a moon (or  
balloon)  
and of sailing higher than one might  
have ever reached on one's own  
or even imagined possible  
all things considered  
with feet made  
of clay  
(yet stuffed full to bursting with dreams  
of a keen city which no one has  
ever seen and spring reigns  
eternal) and the land is  
drenched with love  
and daisies  
so many daisies

just fields and fields of daisies  
and no hands to pick  
them clean.

i feel myself (there)

i feel myself  
(there  
between each heartbeat  
and deep intake  
of breath)  
just before it's time  
for bed  
when you draw  
the curtains (tight)  
before turning out  
the lights.  
or when you step  
from the shower  
(dripping  
wet) —  
i can be found  
between each thought  
as they flow  
like streams of liquid  
night  
bound one after next

in rapid succession  
(waiting for  
love) or waiting  
for time  
to bring along  
a swift retrograde  
as you take  
on the day (once  
again) emerging  
into rays of golden  
sunlight.

by the garden gate

spring daffodils ready to bloom  
as you stand like sunshine

by the garden gate on a day like any  
other about to pull dried

weeds left behind from last year  
wearing that silk floral

summer dress which comes to rest  
just below the sweet

curve of thighs soft as butterfly  
wings and twice as creamy

as warm buttermilk and sitting here  
lost among dead thoughts

of too many yesterdays never lived  
through i finally realize



just how inadequate i felt to give  
what you truly needed.

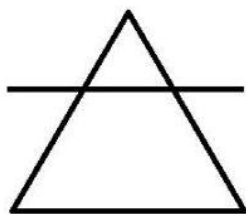
## a ghazal

rumi's ghazal 441 so  
artfully mixed with techno-pop tones  
haunting, divine and indescribably  
sweet wash over me  
to evoke images of another age  
barely recalled and quite  
possibly lost beneath the swirling  
sands of place or time  
yet surprisingly near  
to the still beating heart  
of all we hold dear  
as your pale green eyes  
reach across this distance  
and lock deeply into mine.

## temptation

the look which leads  
to a touch soft  
as velvet  
her smooth flesh  
warm like sunshine  
beneath agnostic skies  
and heated by  
a passion burning  
more than skin deep.

or a word to cleave  
this silence  
thick as autumn leaves  
unraked  
and scattered  
across my lawn  
hungry for the tread  
of bare feet  
once again.



## cut flowers

if we cut all flowers  
would others one day bloom  
or would our springs  
become a desolate thing?  
it's easy to reason  
that scissors are to blame  
rather than a hand  
to hold them still  
or mind which wields  
cold steel — and so  
willingly, too.

waiting for (a moment)

seated.

at rest and (possibly?)

waiting

(for a moment)

to be

seduced by the muse

(once again)

who sets time

on edge.

stretched.

each second drawn (out)

and dissected

for the barest

shred

of meaning to emerge

(once again)

into your light

of reason.

spent.

as if some sign might  
finally signify  
a pending arrival  
(unlike godot?)  
which shocks to life  
(once again)  
creativity  
into motion.

still the monkey

if infinite monkeys  
tapping away on computer keys  
can't possibly re-create  
the works of sir william  
no matter how many random  
sequences of time  
happen to pass ad infinitum  
i wonder how well a machine  
might do on its own  
given a brush and programmed  
in the ways  
of abstract art.

needless to say  
a robotic arm would need  
to wield the brush  
in order to do this trick  
along with someone to load  
an easel with paint  
(and write a program  
in the first place) but just the same



could any mathematical array  
of lines and shapes  
no matter how colorfully  
applied be certified  
as art?

corporate frankenstein (thank you, walmart)

i wonder what kind  
of mind would conceive  
an idea for robo-bees  
(or pollination drones) flying  
ceaselessly through the air  
competing with bees  
for the honey they bring.  
and would they be able to sting  
or swarming from place  
to place prove to be  
a menace for hummingbirds  
and monarchs gliding  
on gentle breezes from blossom  
to blossom to eat?

## bone dreams

if i could think dog thoughts  
or understand their woofy barks  
would their world be filled  
with bone dreams  
and endless squirrels  
to chase up trees  
and a thousand scents to follow  
like invisible trails  
that thread the landscape  
which eventually lead  
to some mysterious  
treat?

i see your lips move instinctively  
as you retell one more story  
but lost in reverie  
your words splash harmlessly  
against the shell of my  
honed indifference.

## about pandora's box

sometimes a box  
is just a box  
i suppose  
with five sides and a lid  
for shutting stuff in  
like a bundle of letters  
yellowed with age  
perfect for reading  
on cold rainy days  
or a book full of quotes  
dog-eared at the pages  
which resonate most  
depending on which  
of your moods is in play  
like some stuck  
pendulum.

it's a funny  
thing about pandora's box  
this proverbial "place"  
and all that it means

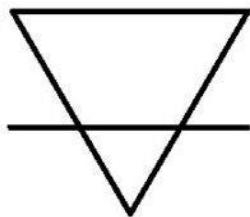
from *pithos* to *pathos*  
and those spaces between  
like an echo chamber  
of soul  
for what we believe  
whether or not we ever  
dare to peek  
below the shuttered  
surface of self  
so seemingly  
fated.

a perfect paradox?

he wrote of a perfect  
paradox hinged on the sole  
fact of our shared existence  
(or experience as such)  
and how we yearn so much  
for something richer or deeper  
than what is most commonly lived —  
but the truth of the matter  
lies closer to the heart  
of this strange desire  
to be more like machines  
while dreaming of a day  
when robots work and play  
with all the emotions we fear  
which seemingly tear us apart.

in ashes

days past strewn like ashes  
scattered haphazardly  
at your feet.  
gods and dreams lose  
their luster in the clarity  
of a question.  
if only you thought  
to awaken like a flower  
ready to bloom.  
words are just sounds strewn  
like ashes at the end  
of another day.





into dust (for faiz ahmed faiz)

with seven lines you moved me from night  
to someplace deeper than despair

a bittersweet truth (perhaps)  
that what has passed (as it always  
must) finds its way into dust

like orange groves on the edge of timbuktu  
never again to bloom.

## a landscape

three jet-black crows  
as fat as cats  
perch like statues  
atop three old  
wooden gray fence posts  
lined up in a row  
which lean awkwardly  
by the side of the road.  
in the distance  
ogonowski's barn sits  
on a low rise  
its red painted sides  
just a bitter memory  
as long beams of bare wood  
bake in this late afternoon  
september sun.  
given enough time  
even crows will fly far  
from these overgrown  
fields choked full  
with thistle and clover

as his once fertile farm  
lies fallow now  
returning to dust  
and weeds.

until it's gone

we treat all life so cheaply  
until it's gone

and then with head's bowed  
appropriately down

for all the world to see  
line up one by one

in another endless procession  
to pay what are called

"respects" eulogizing the lost  
but why not celebrate

life daily (among the living)  
instead of throwing

away again a gift not ours  
to keep and given

for a purpose deeper than most  
can possibly imagine.

as we always do

a story is just a story  
which ends as it begins  
as it must,  
as they always do  
and those threads we weave  
together from imagination  
or belief (the questions  
we fail to ask) —  
yet standing now somewhere  
near the middle  
of this particular dream  
i see the starts and stops  
much more clearly  
than before —  
about how what  
we tell ourselves  
(whether quietly or aloud)  
resounds in the spaces  
of our waking hours  
which helps determine  
what will rebound our way

and what we'll tell ourselves  
it all means —  
as it must,  
and as we always do.

befri(ended)

i have no idea what you see  
from your shuttered balcony

and truth be told i'm afraid  
to ask about those crowded city

streets teeming with the fevered  
pitch of unfettered humanity

while i check in from this quiet  
refuge (and somewhat relieved).

it's strange how fate crossed  
our divergent paths (exquisitely

so) where one part ended while  
another began sewn seamlessly

together like different chapters  
of a book without end or scenes



from a play which seems most days  
like nothing more than a dream.

rusted out

a single strand of rusted barbed wire  
tacked to an old gray fence post

and broken off on both ends hangs  
suspended in space and out of place

while just below a patch of daisies  
in blooms of yellow and white

invite a steady stream of honey bees  
that dance in a rhythm much older

than time and beyond the remains  
of this fence a field of knee high

clover circles old man jenkins'  
weathered rotary tiller anchored

in mud for the past twenty years  
yet once clearly indispensable

but that's the funny thing about  
the tools at our disposal which

we cling to as implements of  
our diversions until one day

having outgrown their usefulness  
they are lost or left behind.

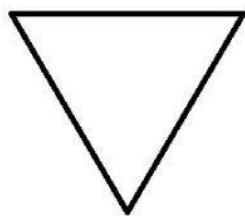
paradigm lost?

all those words  
which you've heard  
piled high like stones  
have weight, have power  
to move you into joy  
or darkest despair.  
they are more  
than a mere vibration  
of dead air  
as the seeds  
of your becoming  
that take root  
like lines of code  
to program a machine.

which words have  
shaped your dreams?

down (to this)

if  
i could  
distill all  
true teachings  
down to  
just  
one word (or  
possibly  
two) that might  
ease your  
troubled  
mind it would  
finally lead  
to this —  
BE  
kind (to  
yourself).



fading (into memory)

at the end of this charade  
what words are left to say?  
and would it even matter  
should i come up with just  
the perfect phrase?  
like a full glass of water  
forgotten on a window sill  
the colors of my reflection  
have slowly bled away  
by some process  
of evaporation, leaving  
only these residued  
remains behind.

please keep me  
in mind.

which, if left to chance?

it's a bit like  
what quantum physics  
states about entanglement  
and the connective thread  
which seems to run through us all,  
seen (or quite possibly felt?) as some "spooky  
action at a distance"  
or non-local phenomena  
and this truth that troubled einstein so  
leading to his famous dictum  
that god doesn't play dice with the universe,  
as if the god which exists far beyond  
our imagining must somehow submit  
to the simple laws of arithmetic.  
or perhaps more like when bukowski quipped,  
approaching as always  
from the somewhat sordid side  
of life, about how we carry around  
our beloved (and intimately so?)  
at the tattered edges of a brain  
despite these constantly



grinding gears of time and space  
which daily tear away  
at this still  
small center of self,  
until nothing left  
can remain.

some illusion of love

robots never dream  
and robots don't go to bed  
and their well-engineered  
mechanical hearts  
won't beat with the same  
blood or passion  
as men.

and in between  
cold sheets surrendered  
to the darkness which bled  
into dreams of monkey love  
i can only dread such  
cold stainless steel  
precision.

feed my soul with dreams  
pure like butter  
which can lift us up  
from the dead even  
if all that's left to me

is some illusion of love  
instead.

each passing day

if i could sit by the sea  
with an eye on the tide

rolling slowly in wave  
after foaming blue wave

would i be able to savor  
each moment passing by

or would my mind wander  
off once again like a kite

left behind and lost on  
a breeze the string trailing

in its wake as it sails  
awkwardly away on warm

eddies of air headed for  
some foreign shore or faint

horizon or perhaps catches  
a downdraft and suddenly

plummets nose-ward into  
blue grey swells so far

from the reach of children  
chasing gulls on the beach?

## the slow turn

i wonder what a tiny cog  
in a big machine  
doing its littlest part  
in the grander scheme of things  
rolling and turning in sync  
with neighboring gears meshing  
tooth into tiniest tooth  
might offer by way  
of some realized truth  
should it or could it stop  
to reflect for a moment or two  
on its own tiny lot  
in this particular life  
as one like the rest  
(only not) —

is this the end or simply a pause  
as a steady rain  
does its best to wash away  
the rusted remains  
of far too many yesterdays

while i (slowly)  
turn blue.

under it all

rain.  
slashing thru space.  
slanting thru gray skies  
to splash on this window  
today.  
monotonous and rhythmic  
with a beat like hot  
water music  
filling my soul  
with muted notes  
rolling darkly in  
from another  
time and place.  
heavy rain  
falling  
on a heavy day  
that awaken images nearly  
forgotten  
like cave paintings  
which dot the landscape  
in acacus.



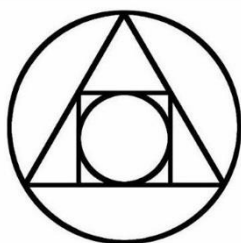
my sands of time  
melt slowly away  
beneath this unrelenting  
rain.

## blood and bone

you haunt my dreams  
my waking hours  
with a presence more palpable  
and rich  
than blood or bone  
for its singular absence —  
an echoed silence in the hall  
which lingers still  
or coffee mug stained  
with lipstick  
by the kitchen sink  
or a simple remembrance  
of what was shared  
and what was shed  
in those unsaid moments  
between us until summer suns  
no longer loitered on your skin  
like a delicate kiss  
or supple touch  
soft as a whispered  
breath.

i, surrender

not to the thought  
but for how it often takes root.  
not any idle wish  
but the impulse to make one at all.  
and not those images  
always in mind  
but what they might possibly mean.  
somewhere between  
the ego's craving and a higher self  
whose whispered breath  
is but a sweet caress  
to a seemingly deaf  
inner ear  
you'll find me waiting,  
forever surrendered.



out like a whisper

i

words afraid  
to whisper in a lover's  
ear (for fear  
of the fool  
lurking deep  
within us all)  
so by proxy  
instead and through  
an incandescent screen  
you'll admit to  
(a certain) dream.

ii

eyes which lock from across  
a crowded room  
(or any empty

space) and in an instant  
just seems right  
in ways beyond words  
to fathom  
what might pass  
and what feels light  
even in those moments  
of entertaining  
a (certain)  
thought.

iii

lost and loaded  
in this latest digression hung  
with the weight  
of (a certain) perception  
and out in the open  
like a whisper.

iv

pools which reflect  
a face (just the latest one  
in a running sequence  
of stories woven  
this into next  
which complement  
a certain time  
and place)  
and those mirrors  
you're afraid to face  
whose polished surfaces  
whisper and reveal  
lines which cut deep  
and unerringly  
true.





## Acknowledgments

I don't know why I write these poems, or for whom. Maybe as Bob Dylan said, "the people in my songs are all me." So maybe this is nothing more than a song to myself... of sorts. Hopefully not of the ego-centric variety.

That said, there are people in my life who inspire me to keep going. My aunt Dolly, for instance, recently said to me "keep writing." How sweet is that? And my dear friend Mark reads most (all?) of the poems I write once I consider them "worthy" of someone else's eyes. My wife and kids continue to put up with me, smiling all the way, so that's probably worthy of a thousand "thank yous" from me. Though, when you get right down to it, "thank you" often sounds (and seems) so hollow when compared with love – true, deep and active. Or as I like to say, "vibrant and alive."

So, alive and still kicking one final thanks to you for picking up a copy of this book. Hopefully something resonated with you (and continues to do so) and if not, then here is my heartfelt apology.

*Cover photo credit  
~ AndreyPopov*

"The question is: If the brain is not active, if it is not working, if it is not thinking, what is going to happen to it? Either it will plunge into entertainment — and the religions, the rituals and the pujas are entertainment — or it will turn to the inquiry within. **This inquiry is an infinite movement. This inquiry is religion.**"

J Krishnamurti,  
*A Timeless Spring*

## About Michael R Guerin

Michael is a veteran of the USAF, serving from 1985 to 1990 and stationed for four years at Soesterberg AB in the Netherlands. From 1995 to 1998 he lived and worked with the Montfort Missionaries, a Catholic religious community, serving in a number of ministries both in St. Louis, MO and Queens, NY.

In 1998 he graduated from St John's University in Jamaica, NY (2<sup>nd</sup> in his class) with a BA in Theology, and received a Master's Degree in Philosophy from Fordham University in 2002.

His first two books of poetry, *Ghosts, Flames & Ashes* and *world thru a window*, are available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). He is currently working on a collection of essays titled *An Awakening Heart*, along with his first novel, *A Road Less Traveled: Memoirs of a Watcher*.

He currently lives in Connecticut with his wife Rumpa and their two children, Adam and Amy.