

world  
thru a  
window

*short poems about life*

michael r guerin

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

Ghosts, Flames & Ashes (2016)

world thru a window (2017)

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ISBN: 978-1975865702

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017914297

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

North Charleston, SC

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**“Relationship, surely, is the mirror in which you discover yourself.** Without relationship you are not; to be is to be related; to be related is existence. And you exist only in relationship; otherwise, you do not exist, existence has no meaning. It is not because you think you are that you come into existence. You exist because you are related, and it is the lack of understanding of relationship that causes conflict.”

J. Krishnamurti

*The Mirror of Relationship*



ocean city 5:27 am

salty waves crash the beach.

in the moonlight seagulls

fly past like ufos.

to the left an unseen

dog barks at ghosts

and on my right two

old women walk side by

side, their conversation

an incomprehensible

yawn.

the sea sparkles like

diamonds while a buoy

drunkenly flashes red

as fishing boats sail out

to horizon's edge

an hour before

dawn.

from a train, anonymously

from the train it's all backyards  
of ramshackle houses  
edged in rusted chain-link  
fencing or tumbled stone  
walls. with dusk fast  
approaching most lots  
are abandoned, save  
the occasional  
threadbare couch  
or truck set on blocks.  
and as we roll slowly past  
the lone traffic light  
flashing in this  
anonymous town  
a gang of shirtless  
boys pantomime  
making funny faces  
as we pass  
before a derelict station  
which time has forgotten  
suddenly blocks them  
from view.



beneath a winter's moon

you were unapproachable  
so clearly out of my league  
yet sweet and serene  
as you strolled those crowded  
halls from once upon a time  
and looking back now it might  
have been mid february or march  
after my honorable discharge  
when i ducked into tw's pub  
on a random tuesday night  
and there across the bar  
with a flannel clad heavy-set  
guy sporting a grease-stained  
cat hydraulic hat you sat  
sipping a beer looking like  
you'd rather be anywhere  
else than holding together  
the severed threads of some  
conversation better left  
unsaid when our eyes met  
and in their desolate depths  
i realized how even beauty  
queens can stumble like

an angel tumbled down  
from the dizzied heights  
of grace to land in this place  
beneath a cold winter's moon.

## a vacancy

his side of the closet  
is vacant now  
save for a handful of white  
wire hangers left behind  
too fragile and bent  
to be useful again  
and you don't know where he went  
or where he ever really was even  
when he laid beside you in a bed  
that refuses to let go  
of his scent  
and as you take  
another sip of coffee  
by a frosted window pane  
you realize just how  
cold were the days  
and how empty those nights  
despite his constant  
presence  
in your life  
as an early morning snow  
begins to fall.

## cruising mammoth road

i imagine every town  
has that road you cruise  
with your best friend  
the tunes cranked  
loud on the radio  
heading to no-place  
in particular as telephone  
poles pass by your open  
window mile after mile  
and no other cars  
or kids or cows are seen  
for long stretches  
at a time. for us

it was mammoth road  
heading north long before  
developers cut down  
trees and planted houses  
like corn in neat rows  
where each one looks  
just like the rest  
except for maybe  
the color of minivan

parked out front  
or name painted black  
on a white mailbox  
by the road. but back

in the day it was ours  
which we drove  
and talked for hours  
on end about girls  
or plans for after high  
school while the songs  
kept rolling along  
only now he's gone  
and i've traveled  
too far from home  
to catch even a glimpse  
of mammoth road  
in my rearview mirror.

## cherry blossoms

### I

beneath a cherry  
tree soft with early buds you  
gave your love to me.

### II

you cannot hurry  
spring — cherry blossoms only  
blossom when they're due.

### III

as a crow cries out  
one single blossom petal  
reluctantly falls.

### IV

a cherry blossom  
lost on the breeze nestles a  
moment at my feet.

V

cold nights naked trees —  
only now is your absence  
intolerable.

amy says

she likes winter  
she says  
when the air is so cold  
you can see your breath  
and walking on snow  
crunches under your boots  
like a million tiny  
diamond crystals.  
she likes bunnies too  
who hide in their holes  
under a blanket  
of pure white snow  
once the air turns so cold  
you can see  
your breath.

today the late june sun  
warms her face  
as she steps barefoot  
across the driveway  
on tippi toes  
to watch this year's  
family of baby bunnies



out from their holes  
and eating clover  
by the edge  
of grass  
and pavement.

## lost southwest of cagliari

while absentmindedly  
strolling the rocky  
shore as salty waves  
bathed my feet  
i caught you unawares  
sitting in a shaded  
alcove of stones  
wanting to be alone  
as tears gracefully  
rolled down both cheeks.  
and for one heartbeat  
or two i stood transfixed  
unsure if i could pool  
with you by way  
of a steady shoulder  
or comforting arm  
wrapped securely  
around your waist  
as you cried for love  
lost or simply misplaced.  
and standing there  
as the hot august sun  
burned my face it seemed

the distance was far greater  
than crossing a mere few  
feet of sand stretched  
out between us  
so with a wistful glance  
for a whole host  
of what-might-have-beens  
i left you lost  
among the rocks  
hoping that someday  
one would come along  
to finally set you free.

## Just Like Amber

I remember you sitting  
cross-legged in a white  
low-cut cotton dress  
speckled with tiny blue  
flowers as the sweet sounds  
of happy unseen children  
playing someplace outside  
drifted into your room  
on gentle, cool summer  
breezes. Maybe it's too

much to ask from time  
for any one moment to  
remain fixed and frozen  
like a butterfly forever  
suspended in golden  
amber only surfacing  
years later from some  
subterranean tomb  
to eventually emerge  
into the light once  
again. It's certainly true  
that all of life seems

a perpetual letting go —  
whether in grand funeral  
procession style, or  
more simply still, like each  
dried autumn leaf that one  
by one drops from its tree  
to get lost with the rest  
once the wind begins  
to blow cold. So please

pardon the analogy  
if I choose to treasure  
this sole memory of mine  
snatched from the stealthy  
clutch of time like a shard  
of amber kept securely  
in pocket and held  
in ready reserve just  
for nights like these when  
the moon hangs low in  
the eastern sky casting  
long shadows across  
my mind at the end  
of another day spent  
alone in silent  
separation.

the heron's cry (for iulia mitiashova)

somewhere beneath  
the thick morning mist  
and sailing calm blue waters  
on lonesome lake  
you can hear them clearly  
but only if you listen  
closely, leaning  
into the wind  
before the world of men  
wakes another day  
with its thundering sound  
of naked triviality.

i don't know  
where they'll fly  
once the sun breaks high  
above the tree-lined  
horizon  
burning away  
the last traces of fog  
and there's  
no place left  
for herons to hide.

to a lesser god

we drove along a nondescript  
country lane  
until the bus stopped  
in a gravel parking lot  
and we all got out  
with cameras slung  
around our necks  
while the hot sardinian  
sun beat us down  
and scrambling up a rocky  
path we passed an old  
farmer plowing his plot  
of land as it had  
been done for centuries  
the simple wooden wedge  
cutting black soil  
while he and his donkey  
didn't bother  
to look  
as we made  
our way over a low hill  
to finally catch view  
of clear blue

waves crashing against  
the granite shore  
and as our guide  
led us further down  
the route  
we came to an ancient  
rock wall and through  
the narrow gate  
was a field of boulders  
scattered about clearly  
unfit for farming  
(or anything else)  
and looking around  
i spied small red  
ceramic pots  
with white rocks  
holding their lids in place  
and over the sound  
of sea waves  
doing their best  
to erase all traces  
of human history  
she shared  
how we were standing  
in a late phoenician  
cemetery where women



once sacrificed  
their first born child  
to some lesser known god  
and how each pot  
held the ashen remains  
of their eternal  
sacrifice  
and maybe it was the heat  
or the long walk  
to that spot  
but my head  
began to swim with fear  
and dread  
as i wondered  
how such a place  
could ever exist  
and how even  
the gulls shied away  
as if the ground  
itself was so obviously  
cursed  
and yet here we  
stood with cameras  
at the ready  
filled with idle curiosity  
and gawking like school

children beneath  
an unforgiving  
summer  
sun.

each thundering beat

she asked about loneliness  
and what it was all supposed to mean  
as if somehow this singular truth  
of our existence held the key  
to her freedom and by extension  
(i suppose) for the rest  
of humanity too.

but what words could i share  
to alleviate her fear  
as we sat there side by side  
while ocean waves crashed against  
the rocky shore just inches  
below our naked feet  
and a slowly setting sun  
warmed our backs at the end  
of a long sultry afternoon.

after some time and far out where sea  
and sky inevitably meet  
a slivered crescent moon  
began it's climb into the evening sky  
while i sat and wondered why  
those incommunicable depths

which lie unplumbed within  
are never enough most days  
to fill us up with  
all we ever really need  
rather than this fruitless search  
to mend a heart seemingly  
forever torn in two  
between each thundering  
beat.

morning in santo tomás

my first thought  
was that pigeons were back  
for a morning stroll atop  
the rusted roof

of this particular  
shack and my need for sleep  
such easy prey caught in their  
domesticated talons.

but it was rain  
instead, another deluge of more  
wet on wet as thick drops  
splashed with pregnant

possibilities shot  
through this hot and humid air  
hung like damp cheesecloth  
without a breeze.

by noon the nuns  
would return to clear away

the empty bottles of *cerveza*  
and lug in fresh

cases, too, and  
i wondered what their thoughts  
might be once they surveyed  
the scene of

another late night  
lost here in purgatory (or so  
it seemed) before my last day  
and ready to

leave, yet still  
hollow inside like holes in my  
mosquito net which made me a  
nightly feast for bugs.

## word upon word

puff of breath.  
energy and intention  
suspended on the gossamer  
threads of conversation.  
modulation and tone.  
thoughts honed  
to a razor's edge  
balanced on that fine  
line of literal  
and symbolic  
meaning.

vibration and passion.  
the ether moves between  
us but can you feel  
me from your side  
of this great  
divide? such dead  
air brought to life  
with fire which tugs  
at the darkness,  
word upon  
word?

## on elephant road

what hits you first is a liquid heat  
which weighs palpably down  
upon all your sensibilities  
and next comes the crush  
of strangers shouting  
how they'll carry your bag  
for only a few *taka* as they  
push for position to close  
the gap between you both  
until my wife's uncle finally  
arrives to part them like mooses  
before a flooding red sea  
and you're quickly whisked  
to a waiting car outside  
where another white-hot throng  
shoulders forward despite  
bamboo wielding policemen who  
officially dole out punishment  
with merciless precision  
to force a narrow path so you  
can finally pass through  
the wrought-iron airport gates.  
later in the day it's off



to the money-changer's  
place on elephant road  
where we're forced to hike  
along a busy sidewalk strewn

with the small brown bodies  
of huddled children no one  
seems to notice or want  
as they shiver in the shade  
their tiny prone shapes just  
so many speed-bumps to navigate  
while we talk of time-zones  
and jet-lag which seems  
insanely at odds with the scene  
and my arms aren't big enough  
to corral them all in  
and my hands aren't strong  
enough to hold them all tightly  
so i survey as many as i see  
and wrap them with love  
to place in a box and bury  
in my heart while i walk  
with the rest to mr. choudhury's  
office where tea gets served  
and exchange rates get fixed  
as if those buzzing city streets

never really mattered, as if  
nothing could be more normal  
in all of this world until  
it's time to hand over crisp cold  
dollars for crumpled colored scraps  
of paper littered with a language

i'll never understand and we  
make our way once more  
past those tiny angels lying  
in dust by the side of some road  
while tears find it impossible  
to escape the rusted-shut  
cages of these eyes.  
back here we talk of love  
as such a domesticated thing  
like some cat lounging  
in sunlight which streams  
through the windows in one  
of those brownstones lining beacon  
street and which offers us such easy  
comfort against the night  
or serves as nothing more  
than a personal rubber-stamp  
of approval for our endless  
trivial pursuits, the white noise

backdrop (if you will)  
for such empty little lives  
while elsewhere in this world  
a flood of unwanted children  
sleep side by side and unseen  
by the dusty edge  
of some congested  
city street.

a riff for ames

she sang to me  
(and to more than  
only me)  
her voice hitting notes  
reserved for  
gods  
(or in dreams),  
and those unrelenting  
waves conjured  
up phantoms  
of things better off behind  
closed doors  
like some endlessly  
rolling penny heard  
yet left  
unseen.

we never met  
(of course) but had  
she and i  
bumped each other's way  
across some back  
alley or moonlit

street  
her eyes would have caught  
mine captive,  
lost in pools  
of liquid night  
and forever  
unable to say goodbye  
or  
(wanting to) escape  
back to what i  
always already  
knew.

and if life  
is like a pipe  
then some puff  
of soul  
drifts on (how terribly  
cliché)  
within those vibes  
which keep rolling along  
criss-crossing  
both ether and web —  
but most days  
that simple truth  
isn't enough

to save  
me from dying a hundred  
times from dread  
and sliding inexorably  
back into  
black.

## checkout time

no one dreams when they're young  
of being poor  
or becoming a drunk  
standing in the checkout line  
fishing through a bag of pennies  
and counting them out  
one by one  
for the young blonde girl  
who looks nervously  
my way as you ramble on  
smelling of booze and cigarettes.  
i'll admit to stepping back  
and keeping some distance  
as you lean in  
proceeding to invite me  
into your world  
through incoherent words  
thrown about between hacking  
coughs and waiting on my  
reply which remains stuck  
in throat so all i can  
offer in return  
is non-judgmental

silence. and as you  
stumble away raving about  
the holiday i'm left wondering  
how life turned out this way  
for you (and more than you)  
while the checkout girl  
whispers an apology  
that doesn't need  
to come.



## the morning after

shaft of moon-beam,  
cold light striking  
cold tile  
floors swept clean  
of history  
(at least for now).  
he sleeps, oblivious —  
another lost night  
in town  
down at the bar  
swapping stories piled  
high like so many crushed  
beer cans  
stacked precariously  
along a dull brass rail,  
just another day  
of broken  
chances and wasted  
dreams. your bruises  
will heal  
(on the surface,  
at least)  
as tomorrow's dawn

brings along  
one more monotonous  
apology  
that always fills  
your ears  
the morning after.

## another starry night

there's no way to know  
for certain  
what he saw  
from that open window  
one solitary night when he felt  
moved enough to reach for his brushes  
once again  
so that this lone insight  
could burst into life  
through ten thousand swirls  
and strokes of blue  
upon blue punctuated  
here and there with yellow  
and white orbs of light  
shining high  
above some sleepy  
town which only existed  
in imagination.

face to face  
with his stunning expression  
of a deep longing  
to live in a world that flows

and ebbs with the rhythm  
and harmony of all that is good  
and all that aspires to be  
i'd like to think  
that somewhere  
his soul  
can finally take rest  
not so much in a fame  
as fleeting as summer rain  
but rather for doing his best  
to convey a truth  
deeper than words ever could  
which resides far beyond  
the dawning horizon.

colorful jim c

he talked about the ultimate color  
to thread thru his window on a world

and maybe you remember the jester  
who once stood on a stage so grand

but it seems now he's become electric  
as his soul burns thru both of his hands

pulling truth from the depths of spirit  
making it manifest boldly on canvas

and maybe it's all just to free him  
but if you ask it's according to plan.

## soliloquy

you don't have to pull  
as these words bleed  
out and spill  
on the page  
to soak them in meanings  
i can't yet understand.  
but if i asked for a hand  
it might simply be this —  
please don't judge  
them too harshly  
once the finish  
has  
dried.

## on huron street

on some summer afternoons  
i used to kneel as if in  
prayer by an open bedroom  
window with my gaze fixed  
on nothing in particular  
as random sounds floated  
in aboard warm breezes —  
a buzzing bee bumping  
awkwardly into the screen  
or an unseen boy shouting  
curse words in the distance  
and the occasional car  
cruising down my lane  
on its way to someplace  
grander than huron street.

occasionally i would view  
a friend biking past or  
camped on his lawn calling  
for a game of catch and yet  
i remained rooted there  
despite two painful knees —  
glued to the floorboards

of my room as if waiting  
for some sign or omen  
from god or mother mary  
that everything would turn  
out just fine in the end  
for a shy little boy  
with a head full of worries  
and heart forever worn  
on his sleeves.



## just a preference

i preferred climbing trees  
to endless games  
of tag or war  
played with silver  
toy guns reflecting glints  
of scattered summer sunlight  
on hazy afternoons —  
sitting high up near  
the top of some thin maple  
or stately oak  
and perhaps just a tiny bit  
closer to god  
as warm lazy breezes  
swayed those branches  
to and fro  
and me right along  
with them as i sat there  
perfectly perched  
and lost among the leaves  
while boys far below  
shouted out their nonsense  
to an unseen audience  
of one.

zazen

sunlight breaks above the trees.  
a time to sit (for  
only a moment).  
still the flow of images —  
breathe (your heart beats, your heart beats).

## the old masters

he spoke of the old masters while  
wind wildly whipped his silver hair

and i wondered what he found  
so alluring in their choice of muted

tones, the cherubs with rosied  
cheeks appearing chubby and much

too contented with themselves  
or the world of men to be taken

seriously. maybe it was their study  
of faces lost in reflection or serenely

composed, so many faces of those  
long since passed whose stories

we will never know, anonymous  
faces now immortalized on museum

walls which the masses pass by  
without bothering to take note.

## north slope of varnum hill

on many a lazy  
summer evening we  
took the short hike  
up to varnum cemetery  
and our favorite spot  
on the hill's north slope  
where cool green grass  
beneath the vaulted  
cathedral-like ceiling  
of sugar maples  
and soaring white oaks  
made it the perfect place  
for gazing up at those  
few bright stars  
able to peek through  
shadowy leaves swaying  
slowly in the breeze  
and for long stretches  
of time we remained  
quietly lost  
in each other's  
thoughts.

at times i wondered  
what any stray ghosts  
might think had they  
awoken from their graves  
and bothered to stay  
long enough to watch  
us mimicking a sort  
of silent repose  
lying on the slope  
or if we somehow  
disturbed their peace  
with our discussions  
on ee cummings  
or death as a new beginning  
given the eternity  
of our souls and so  
late into the night  
only a few feet above  
their final resting place  
and long after anyone  
was left in the world  
to care that they  
were buried there.

of course we both  
couldn't foresee

how ten years would pass  
before your mom  
laid you to rest  
on that very spot of grass  
when the wind blew cold  
and no leaves remained  
in the canopy above  
saying how it felt right  
without ever knowing  
about our many nights  
spent beneath the summer sky  
on such hallowed ground  
and where your granite  
stone now marks the slow  
passage of time like so  
many others accumulating  
dust while the essential  
part of you flew  
far away seeking  
a firmer foundation to  
resume the journey  
all over again.

and it passed

she raised her head  
like you raise a glass  
to make a toast  
and when our eyes met  
in that specific second  
i felt a dread  
that grabs your bones  
and shakes loose  
every last shred  
of artifice  
until nothing false  
can remain fixed  
in place  
your masks crashing  
down around you  
with a sound like  
dirty dishes smashing  
on an all-night  
diner's tiled  
floor. and maybe

now you're waiting  
for a resolution

of some sort  
or happy conclusion  
as if she would  
stand with arms  
flung open to wrap  
us both in a warm  
embrace but why  
does it only seem  
to count when  
there's this thing  
to show or hold  
rather than simply  
letting it flow  
like electric fire  
which sparked to life  
for some unknowable  
reason in the blink  
of an eye. and maybe

that's just how  
it's supposed to play  
itself out when  
in a singular moment  
frozen from the flow  
of time two souls  
connected across



a crowded bar  
as she shone  
with unpossessable  
eternal light  
burning brightly  
through the darkness  
one solitary night  
in utrecht  
and the choice  
laid so graciously  
at my feet  
was for me  
to let it pass.

a portrait of self?

it's not some photo pinned in a frame  
that hangs by the door slowly collecting dust.  
it's not found in memory from last we spoke  
when you stormed out on us.

and not this face in the mirror  
staring blankly  
back at me.

lately it feels like swimming through  
fog where all human senses are dulled.  
striving to plumb subterranean motives  
in the darkest depths of one.

despite all my searching it forever  
eludes me piece by  
subtle piece.

## all in the cards

the weight of my world  
was held in her delicate hands  
as fate got shuffled  
along with the deck  
while she spoke in a language  
easy to understand  
despite coming from someplace  
outside of time  
and as i waited anxiously  
cards began to spill out  
haphazardly  
landing on her table  
with no apparent order  
but she only smiled sweetly  
and picked them up  
one by one  
to arrange in a pattern  
that told a story  
as if reading my mind  
as if seeing my soul  
with crystalline truth  
exposing each facet  
to the light of day

and when she was through  
it was all i could do  
to hold those pieces  
together.

breathless

the soul of a flute  
is found in notes  
that float on a tempered breath  
while the soul of a guitar  
consists of finely tuned strings  
which sing  
when strummed  
or picked  
by two talented hands.  
the soul of a song  
i suppose  
is best expressed by written  
notes that scale  
across a score when played  
while the soul of a book  
can be found  
lying beneath those  
printed words on the page  
which are only  
brought to life  
in the blink of an eye  
by a mind  
eager to look

below the literal  
surface of everyday things.  
and what of a human soul?  
if such truly does exist  
then perhaps it can be felt  
in moments  
that make us  
breathless.

it strikes a cord (for noémie lorzema)

the notes of her song  
echo across  
so much unfeeling air  
between us  
and maybe you'll  
say it's just a vibration  
of molecules  
moving this way  
or that  
but what i feel  
is some invisible finger plucking  
silver strings  
deep within stroking  
cords lying dormant  
from lack of use  
perhaps  
or simply forgotten  
like some priceless  
stradivarius cast aside  
in the corner  
collecting  
dust.

...

as tears stream  
down these stubbled grey  
cheeks i recall  
the words of my dad  
who taught me  
at an early age  
that boys don't cry  
as if somehow  
our collective humanity  
comes at a much  
steeper  
cost for  
holding it all  
within.

with the voice  
of an angel  
she finishes her song  
which lifts me up  
and what bubbles  
to the surface  
is a secret longing for a home  
i've never seen  
so far removed from  
this place, and  
if you'll kindly pardon



this momentary lapse  
of weakness  
don't take it personally  
when i confess  
(with abject humility)  
how i'd rather be  
planted there than  
lost in this  
space.

by a window, waiting

by a window —  
she waits.  
the sky slowly bleeds  
from wine  
to blackest ink.  
lit by the cool  
incandescent glow  
of her phone —  
she waits.  
the city skyline  
sparks to life  
as apartment lights  
flicker like  
a swarm of fireflies  
on a warm summer's night.  
she turns  
from the screen  
and unfurls her thick  
raven hair  
which splashes on bare  
pearl-white shoulders,  
and with a long deep  
sigh for another

sleepless night  
she waits.

## time zone

i catch the clock  
on the wall mocking  
me with each incessant  
tickety tock  
as the second hand  
marches onward  
step by determined step  
and i do the mental  
math to calculate  
what time it must be  
in your distant city  
and imagine you walking  
busy cobble-stoned streets  
on your way  
to some shop or café  
sitting with unnamed  
friends and sipping a drink  
while i wait ever faithful  
for a call or a text  
that's sure to never  
come.

## Acknowledgments

Admittedly this is a hard page to write, mainly because it's inevitable that some people will inadvertently get left off the list. So, in no particular order, here we go...

A big "thank you" to my dear friend Mark Shepard who constantly supported and encouraged me to keep writing even when, at times, it felt that these words (and feelings) might never find their true home. To the folks at [rattle.com](http://rattle.com) a "tip of the hat" for their monthly Ekphrastic Challenge which provided a source of inspiration for a few poems found here, most especially "cruising mammoth road." A big thank you to all those wonderful people who bought a copy of my first book of poems and especially those kind souls who shared a comment about what those words meant to them. A heart-felt thank you to my "soul sisters" Ali and Natalie who both encouraged and supported me along the journey. And finally, a big "thank you" (with kisses) to my incredibly sweet and wonderful wife and two children who continue to love me in ways that humble me to my core.

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“Love is something that is new, fresh, alive. It has no yesterday and no tomorrow. It is beyond the turmoil of thought. It is only the innocent mind which knows what love is, and the innocent mind can live in the world which is not innocent. To find this extraordinary thing which man has sought endlessly through sacrifice, through worship, through relationship, through sex, through every form of pleasure and pain, is only possible when thought comes to understand itself and comes naturally to an end. Then love has no opposite, then love has no conflict.”

J Krishnamurti,  
*Freedom from the Known*

## 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 capacities both in St. Louis, MO and Queens, NY.

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

His first book of poetry *Ghosts, Flames & Ashes* was published in 2016, and he is currently working on a collection of essays titled *An Awakening Heart* along with working on his first novel, *A Road Less Traveled*.

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

To invite Michael to speak at your next event, ask him a question, share a comment, sign up to receive announcements regarding his forthcoming books or to simply say "hello" please visit [www.becauseitsart.com](http://www.becauseitsart.com).