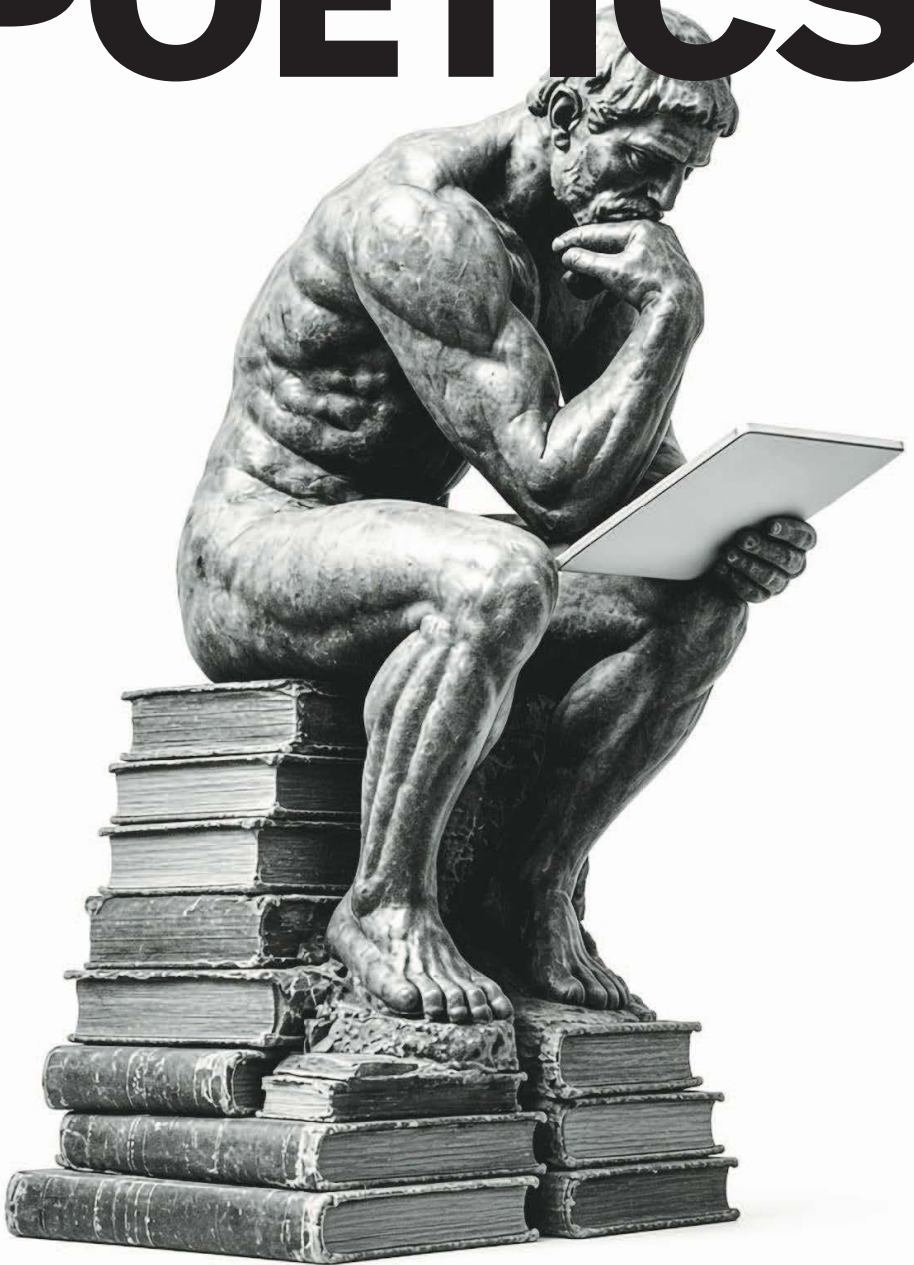


POETICS



The Post-Literate Era

BACK TO SCHOOL 2026

As summer wanes and the school year begins, we reflect on an ever-changing environment of literacy. There are more books being published every day than ever before and there are more literate persons on this earth than ever, and yet the act of reading a book is declining. The reason why is obvious to all, there is easily consumed media all around us that provides the dopamine satisfaction of having done something every n-seconds. Taking the time and energy to read a book isn't nearly so biochemically alluring.

Since the advent of radio and TV there has been growing fears that books, and more importantly critical thinking, were being replaced by mindless, indulgent, immediate forms of self-gratification. In 1985 Neil Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death* in which he argued that the true dystopian future wasn't one in which authoritarian regimes destroyed books but rather a world in which no one wanted to read them. Mike Judge's 2006 *Idiocracy* takes on an increasingly prophetic tone every passing year.

The power of the book is to connect one mind to another in a way no other medium can. The book doesn't show you a thing, it places you in the mind and body of another, transcending space and time. In so doing we realize that all humanity has shared experiences and feelings, and it allows you the time to think, observe, reflect, and connect your experiences to theirs. We are not all the same, we are individuals, but our individual experiences have shared elements that allow us to empathize with each other.

In this issue we invite you to connect with persons across time and space and to realize that we are all part of a shared experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben & Tamarah". The script is fluid and cursive, with the ampersand being a simple, stylized loop.

Ben & Tamarah Rockwood
Bainbridge Island Press
Sept, 2026

THE ESSAYS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

Excerpt from Book 3, Chapter 13 (1588)

Though I have been brought up, as much as was possible, to liberty and independence, yet so it is that, growing old, and having by indifference more settled upon certain forms (my age is now past instruction, and has henceforward nothing to do but to keep itself up as well as it can), custom has already, ere I was aware, so imprinted its character in me in certain things, that I look upon it as a kind of excess to leave them off; and, without a force upon myself, cannot sleep in the day-time, nor eat between meals, nor breakfast, nor go to bed, without a great interval betwixt eating and sleeping, as of three hours after supper; nor get children but before I sleep, or standing upon my feet; nor endure my own sweat; nor quench my thirst either with pure water or pure wine; nor keep my head long bare, nor cut my hair after dinner; and I should be as uneasy without my gloves as without my shirt, or without washing when I rise from table or out of my bed; and I could not lie without a canopy and curtains, as if they were essential things. **I could dine without a tablecloth, but without a clean napkin, after the German fashion, very incommodiously; I foul them more than the Germans or Italians do, and make but little use either of spoon or fork. I am sorry they did not keep up the fashion, begun after the example of kings, to change our napkins at every service, as they do our plates.** We are told of that laborious soldier Marius, that growing old, he became nice in his drink, and never drank but out of a particular cup of his own: I, in like manner, have suffered myself to fancy a certain form of glasses, and not willingly to drink in common glasses, no more than from a strange common hand: all metal offends me in comparison of a clear and transparent matter: let my eyes taste too, according to their capacity.



Editor's Note: Montaigne is the father of the essay, simply a letter addressed to no one in particular. It's been more than 400 years and we still don't get a fresh napkin with each course. The time has come!



PENGUIN CLASSICS

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

THE TRASH MEN

Charles Bukowski

here they come
these guys
grey truck
radio playing

they are in a hurry

it's quite exciting:
shirt open
bellies hanging out

they run out the trash bins
roll them out to the fork lift
and then the truck grinds it upward
with far too much sound . . .

they had to fill out application forms
to get these jobs
they are paying for homes and
drive late model cars

they get drunk on Saturday night

now in the Los Angeles sunshine
they run back and forth with their trash bins

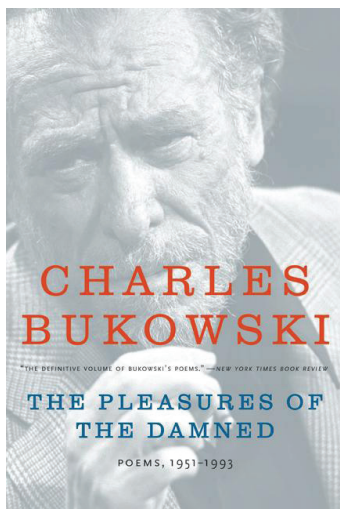
all that trash goes somewhere

and they shout to each other

then they are all up in the truck
driving west toward the sea

none of them know
that I am alive

REX DISPOSAL CO.



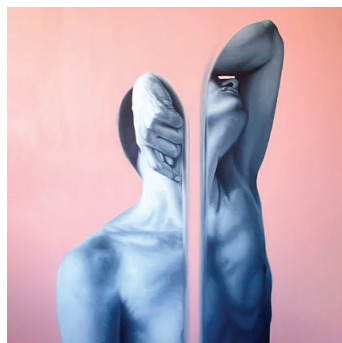
VI

Catullus (Roman Poet, 84-54 BC)

Flavius, you'd tell Catullus
All about your love-affairs
If they weren't so crude and vulgar—
Still, you blurt out the who's and where's
Because you can't shut up; in fact,
You worship some hot whore or other,
And she herself is too ashamed
To talk about it with another.
Your bed, perfumed with Syrian oil
And garlands, shouts out its report:
You never sleep alone at night.
(Who cares if it can't talk?) Your sport
Has wrinkled up the pillow and the sheets;
Thrusts and wiggles have trammed it.
No lust is ever secret. Why?
You wouldn't look so drained-admit!—
Unless you'd screwed around a bit.
So tell me what you're up to now,
Whether it's been all right or wrong;
I'll praise you and your little loves
To the heavens in delightful song.



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PENGUIN CLASSICS

GAIUS VALERIUS CATULLUS

THE POEMS OF CATULLUS
A DUAL-LANGUAGE EDITION WITH PARALLEL TEXT

TRANSLATED BY STEPHANIE MC CARTER

MY MOTHER MULE

Carla Sarett

I can still see my mother laughing,
as she read me from *Three Tall Tales*
about the lazy donkey who refused
to work and couldn't be trained
and she laughed and laughed
until we were both laughing
ourselves into a sort of frenzy—
only she could laugh that way,

My mother never learned to drive
and no one could teach her,
She never learned to ride a bike
and no one could teach her,
She never learned to swim
and no one could teach her.
She never could follow a recipe
and no one could make her
do much of anything really.

No one would train a mother like that.



Featured XPRESS Chapbook: *Any Excuse for a Party* (Bainbridge Island Press, 2025)

THE PEOPLE INSIDE ME:

Tim Mayo

my Mediterranean, foster sister (still alive)
her face hardened like sun-dried tomatoes
before my eyes as her mother softened
into French toast and tears when I left;

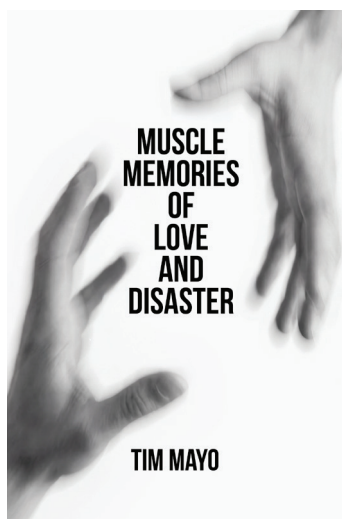
my adoptive mother, whose husband slipped
behind the Iron Curtain as she knelt by my bed
as if in prayer for her nightly confession, drunk
on the connectivity of her disconnection;

my own mother, years later, asking me about
military school, as she uncrossed her leg, and I,
ever the red-blooded cadet, maneuvered to peek
up her skirt, not knowing she was my mother;

my father, whom I don't remember, whose face
I now wear like a hand-me-down, the bright
troth on his wedding finger for someone else
winking back in the one photo we're both in;

my stepfather, whose boyishness belied adulthood
as we snuck down to the basement to shoot his guns,
and that one bullet which missed the phone book
and ricocheted back between us as we laughed;

and finally, my old friend, John, who each year
walked slower and slower always looking
about himself as if to make note of the air
one last time before he turned to dust.



**Featured in Muscle Memories of Love & Disaster (Bainbridge Island Press, 2026).
Nominated for the National Book Award & Pulitzer Prize.**

“WHILE THE TRUNCHEON MAY BE USED IN LIEU OF CONVERSATION,
WORDS WILL ALWAYS RETAIN THEIR POWER.

**WORDS OFFER THE MEANS TO MEANING,
AND FOR THOSE WHO WILL LISTEN,
THE ENUNCIATION OF TRUTH.”**

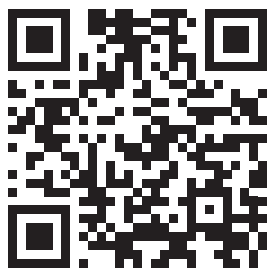
- V FOR VENDETTA (2005)

S U P P O R T E X P R E S S I O N

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publishers, printers, and independent bookstores.

POETICS: The Zine (Vol. 9.26)

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Bainbridge Island, WA