



Ezra Lovecroft, Poet

Recipient of the 2020 Connecticut Arts Hero Award



Ezra Lovecroft writes poems for people who think they don't like poetry. His poems are journeys into extraordinary situations from everyday occurrences. Words and phrases are psychological studies that become woven on a loom as we read them. They manifest into audible textiles; colorful, visual, and visceral. They reference silk threads stitched on torn, ragged linen, strips of an old flannel shirt combine with vegetable dyed tapestry.

His poems become blankets we wrap ourselves in as we venture out into the lands of the tales we are told. Like burrs, his words stick to us, we pick at them, remember them, think about them like old acquaintances. As readers, we become witnesses to something both familiar and alien that draws us into a room, his room. Suddenly a gust blows, the door slams, and the candles blow out; we have been captured. It's a room however, that we are privileged to enter. It's a treasury and we are its newest possession.

A sustaining member of the Academy of American Poets, *As Above, So Below* is the first published book of poems from Ezra Lovecroft.



INTERVIEW WITH EZRA

Sally: **When did you start writing poetry, and what drew you to it?**

Ezra: That's such a great question- thank you.

Here goes the wildest tale you may ever hear.

Four years ago in December, I had a profound experience. I was in Manhattan going to MOMA with a friend. As a person with a disability, I often use a scooter to travel long distances. As we were going down the sidewalk, I accidentally hit a curb that was hidden by water at the crosswalk and ended up falling sideways, scooter and all, into a rather deep, icy puddle. Feeling cold water run down my sleeves and pant leg, I knew I was in a rather helpless predicament as I had fallen on my weaker side. My panic was soon calmed by what I can only describe as a miraculous heavenly intervention.

A tall, slender man with a cloud of white hair and near glowing cobalt-blue eyes rescued me. He was attended by a smaller, boy-sized man topped with blond ringlets. I have no memory of getting up and out of the puddle. There was no speaking that I remember; everything I understood was "known" in my head. As fast as the fall, so was their appearance and rescue. I was suddenly back on the corner, perfectly dry, just staring at my friend. Then they vanished.

When I asked her where they went she exclaimed, "It was a miracle! It was a Christmas miracle!" This had happened in the middle of the day on Fifth Avenue near the Plaza hotel, and yet no one else was around to offer help or witness this event. Strange, yes, but it got even weirder.

This “miracle” continued: over the course of a year, I felt connected to these entities (the man and the small man). At night, they would “speak” to my subconscious while I lay sleeping. Each morning or in the middle of the night, I would jot down what I had been “told”. These writings eventually became the poems that comprise my first published book, “*As Above, So Below*”.

I told you this was going to be a strange story! However, not only did this happen to me but since sharing the story with others, I am amazed at how many other people have had such similar experiences.

Sally: Who were your early influences, and from which poets’ work do you currently derive the most enjoyment? Why?

Ezra: Thanks to my mom who shared her textbook readings with me when she returned to college later in life to become an R.N., as well as my teachers from elementary school on, I was introduced to Edgar Alan Poe, Walt Whitman, Joyce Kilmer and even Sylvia Plath. Their “voices” were definitely an influence on my imaginative thinking. I know their “storytelling” is still a huge influence on my own writing. Currently, my favorite poets are Billy Collins, Mark Strand, Richard Blanco, Maya Angelou (of course) and Natasha Trethewey. I enjoy their way of imaging and storytelling.

I enjoy *Vallum* magazine, and the Academy of American Poets, because they print great journals that give exposure to new poets. Lastly, my contemporary poet friends Elizabeth O’Rourke, Anastasia Guadron, Larry Jabbonski and Anthony Murphy—all of whom share their poems at open mics with me—are incredibly powerful poets who expose me to new situations that reveal our common connections in the human experience.

Sally: Would you say your work explores a certain theme, and what are your “preoccupations” as poet? Do certain themes keep popping up?

Ezra: I’d have to say that although I might have many themes, they are united by the contemplation of the subjects I put into these themes. There is a fascination, yes, a preoccupation with sky/air/stars, clouds/water, the sea and things in it and hidden by it, gravity/falling, lost items/wreckage, plants/growth/decay. I am obsessed with the passing of time and its effect on things. I gravitate to art history, archeology, museums, and pretty much anything found within them. My themes seem to be a sort of museum program on civilization, and what happens when one falls and another rises. I’m fascinated by what’s left behind, and the attempt to find meaning in it.

Sally: Do you believe what Robert Frost said: “No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader?”

Ezra: Ah! That’s a great quote! Yes, I think that our best writing comes from an authenticity of experience. We bring our readers along with our thoughts and emotions and words, some, cut like diamonds, and others polished like emerald cabochons to bring out the best highlights. If we are writing about something personal or a first-hand

experience, we are resourcing details from that memory, and our own detailed visual, physical, emotional, psychological, even spiritual “tool boxes”. We aren’t just writing about a room or furniture in a room, but the shadows the furniture makes, the stains found or marks that were hidden and are now exposed because the furniture is removed. There may be a doorknob, but we are writing about the patina, the wear, a scratch on the doorknob—is it glass or brass? If it’s important to me, I must make it important to you, my reader. Poems merely put light in the shadows.

Sally: Do you write formal or free verse? Why?

Ezra: I write in a salad bowl mix of formal and free-verse styles. It’s important to know the rules, but the writer’s goal is to relate the soul of the poem in the most comfortable, understandable way possible in order to reveal his authentic voice. It’s also important to get it out on paper; to, hopefully, find the ambergris on the beach of it, shall I say, before making perfume of the poem. I enjoy repetition of sounds, letters, visual descriptions, and words that texture the poem. Rhyme has its place, but you can’t wander in a meadow with too many fences.

Free-style allows a lot of freedom, but it also requires more boiling down and editing essential for the final flow. The delivery in the tone is also paramount.

Something formal, like haiku, uses words that have already been boiled; the rules are exact and contained. In some ways, a formal style has a finish line. Free style has a lovely starting gate.

Sally: Can you tell us a little about the award you just won?

Ezra: The **Connecticut Arts Hero Award** is awarded to only nine people in the state each year for their work in helping to keep the arts alive.

*“The award honors individuals doing extraordinary things in the arts, for the arts, and through the arts. **The Hero Awards** are presented to celebrate these extraordinary individuals and to reaffirm the significant role the arts play in Connecticut.”*

It is awarded, through nomination, by the COA (Connecticut Office of the Arts). I’m very glad to be recognized for creating poetry readings, and writing and learning events. Some of them are for children, but my last presentation was at Brookdale Assisted Living in Wilton where most of the participants were over 90 with the oldest being 103 years old. I also host my *Ezra Lovecraft Presents* ... open Poetry Mic events at assorted business venues in CT—soon to be at the Norwalk Public Library!

Sally: Finally, why do you write under a pseudonym?

Ezra: I created the nom de plume of *Ezra Lovecraft* because of the strange energy that first inspired my writing: the poems didn’t feel as though they were authentically from

me. I felt like the entity that was writing them was another spirit or consciousness within me. Ezra was a name on a headstone I often passed in the graveyard at St Paul's Church in Norwalk. The name held an identity that I felt the event—what happened to me that day in New York City—connected with. This was a mystical happening, not a dark or questionable supernatural thing like witchcraft. This was a blessed, love-in-its-purest form based event. I crossed paths with beautiful otherworldly beings. I was “love crossed.” From that experience, Ezra Lovecroft was created. The “E” and “L” also coincide with my real name initials.



Lost and Found

There is something behind the eyes

that can only be seen by those who have lived many lives.

It's the memory of loss, the joy of discovery that combine

to color the iris

and give it a spin like marbled glass

broken up by spaces in a spider's web.

You can see it sometimes in the ancient eyes of old souls

or Roman bronzes.

Full figures and busts that clung to darkness below the sea

in sunken wreckage, where they lay staring, staring out from the muck,

out from mucky haze on the ocean floor for millennia.

Now perched atop

a fitting, granite pedestal with polished ogee edge, intaglio place card,

cool with air-conditioning, bright man-made stars above,

he has come to stand in the light beams

and softly painted walls

with even softer echoes.

Schools of fish,

now leagues of scholars and school children,

stare back at you,

swarm around your ankles.



Dusk

Dusk is a pool

I swim in each day.

When the sun sets,

it often clogs the drain.

Overflowing,

a flood tide rises

above my windows,

and once submerged,

each one

becomes an aquarium

of ocean blue.

I'd drown, if should break out.
Safer to swim up the chimney,
risk a soft, chlorine mouthful
to spit up at the moon.
Its reflection bursting
into fragments
that stab and smash about me
as I surface.

Bold leviathan with fins waving,
I soar and splash
toward a starry net of air.
A navy shimmer below
persuades me to stay wet, return home.
A flood light comes on.

Countless gnats swarm,
tempting me
to surface again.

I open my mouth wide
to feast on them.
Too many to hold,
I swim toward a new constellation.



The Last World War

The siren went off three times last night.

Blankets from feet to chin were stretched beyond tight.

In the end, it won't matter if you had the French fries

with too much ketchup

or if you had vanilla ice cream before bed,

if the weeds grow between the walk

or the garden's edge wasn't straight.

You can wear a shirt for three days, wear your socks twice,

forget to shave or comb your hair. People in war do it all the time.

They read the smoke in fires instead of books.

Distant shots are birds chirping,

windows are just thick, open squares where glass once took place.

The wars are brought back on the dusty soles of its fighters.

Memories, ashes stuck to a wet heart.

The tomato plants never got planted that year. They dried and died

in the egg cartons where they started. We were too sad to talk.

Words became jagged and sharp things that stuck through our lungs and ribs.

I thought I knew so much about you, but after it was over,

I knew that I knew so little.

Walking back into the house, your cane, your cap still in place

with all the other crap

of last week's existence.

Eventually, it will fill a black plastic bag and be taken away

by a grinding, squealing truck. And all that will be left

is the dust in my eye

or that now is stuck on my heart. The war is over.

Your time here

has ended.

EZRA'S BIO



Born on Long Island, NY, Ezra attended Nazareth College for Art Education, St. John Fisher for psychology and R.I.T. for ceramics, graduating with a B.S. degree in art education from Nazareth College. After teaching high school for several years at Nazareth Academy, Ezra returned to a career in Visual Merchandising, eventually moving on from the Rochester based luxury retailer B. Forman & Co. to an executive sales position with Dallas based Visual manufacturer Susan Crane, Inc.. He headed up their Manhattan based showroom, overseeing East Coast sales from Toronto to Puerto Rico. Several years later, Ezra joined the Noritake China Co. for an illustrious career as Visual Director, overseeing showrooms in NYC, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago, Toronto, Los Angeles, as well as those in Germany, Japan and South America. In 2009, he began a visual merchandising/product development position with the Vermont based glass and pottery manufacturer, Simon Peace.

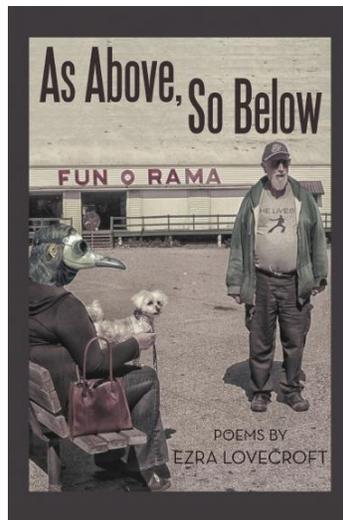
In 2012, he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and shortly after needed to retire. Returning back to his home in Norwalk, Ezra hosted an M.S. support group, volunteered at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, and started fundraising events using his tabletop and merchandising skills. Most notably, he brought his entertaining and tabletop skills to host a highly successful event at the Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum.

As his disability progressed, Ezra had to back away from those programs that required such physical demands, and he began to enjoy his hobbies of art history and art appreciation. Meeting friends for museum tours and lunch in New York was a constant agenda.

It was from a somewhat catastrophic event—followed by a miraculous experience—that led to Ezra start writing poetry, publish a book, and create his new-found passion.

Ezra hosts “Ezra Lovecraft Presents... the unexpected poet”, which are open mic events providing a platform from which poets, artists, musicians and singers perform their work. He has hosted these events most recently at Sono 1420, Harbor Harvest in Norwalk and Millstone Farm in Wilton. He has done several poetry events at Brookdale Assisted Living in Wilton, CT, which he enjoys. He has teamed up with artist Vernice Homes to cohost an “Art and Poetry” event at the Sono Collection Mall where students painted or drew their interpretations as he read his poems. A writers’ workshop was scheduled in March, as were events with Millstone Farm and the Norwalk Public Library, but have been put on hold due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In 2018 Ezra was nominated for the Connecticut Poet Laureate position, and was shortlisted for the 2018 *Vallum* Chapbook Award (<http://www.vallummag.com/chapbookcontest2018.html>).



Cover photograph by Lodiza Lepore

Ezra’s book can be purchased at:

<https://www.lulu.com/shop/ezra-lovecroft/as-above-so-below/paperback/product-23650050.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/As-Above-Below-Ezra-Lovecraft/dp/148348467X>

Dear Poets, and Appreciators of Poetry,

I hope you've enjoyed our visit with poet, Ezra Lovecroft. I certainly have! If you'd like an autographed copy of his book, or simply have a question to ask Ezra, let me know—I will make sure he receives your message!

Also, please make sure—as always—to stop by *Poems to a Listener!*:

<https://poemstoalistener.org/>



Poet Linda Gregg, with interviewer Henry Lyman

Happy reading, and writing! And take good care.

Best,

Sally

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