

# College lit. journal celebrates 20 years

BY KRISTEN WOHLERS

The cover design. The texture. The author. The smell of the pages. Those are the things that make me pick up a book. But it's the words inside that determine if I devour it all the way through. The latest Clackamas Literary Review was a front to backer.

CLR is a literary magazine that accepts submissions from Sept. 1–Dec. 31. Editors select the best from the batch to publish in the book, which is produced annually. Instructor Matthew Warren is the managing editor. Along with associate editors, Clackamas Community College students who are enrolled in WR-246, Advanced Creative Writing, participate as assistant editors and designers.

Released on May 1, CLR's "20th Anniversary Issue" (published in 2017, though the year is nowhere to be found) is packed full of short prose and poetry, some of it published for the first time and others republished from previous years in honor of the anniversary.

The cover design is nice enough, but it's the feel of it that really wins the book lover. The pages, to my dismay, have little scent. I can overlook this detail, though, because the words that fill them appetize me enough.

Mostly as a reader, I was eating up stories; as a writer, I was drooling over phrases. But the book has highs and lows. As I read, the lack of genre headings tripped me up. "Is this fiction or non?" I asked myself on several occasions. The table of contents in the beginning only lists the pieces as poetry or prose. Overall, the issue has a melancholy tone, which is fine by me, but it could use more humor to break it up.

Here are some of the highs.

The poem "Fragile Things" by Darius Atefat-Peckham, which says but doesn't say that the speaker's mother is gone, is so beautiful. "It strikes me, then, how easily the fragile bowl had broken," the speaker says. Like her art that remains, the speaker's mother was fragile.

CLR published three of Atefat-Peckham's poems, which are strewn throughout the issue, almost like a story that we get to revisit after others are told in between.

The short story "What We Knew" by Heather Anne Charton is the tale of Mrs. Gockley and the "we" who knew things. The story is serious and entertaining at once; and it includes one of the book's few tastes of humor, like the mention of "the diner that served early bird specials all day long."

"The Queen is Dead" by Miranda Schmidt is an easy and worthwhile read about kids and their dad and mentally ill mom who are like ants and their queen.

I absolutely love "Jotted on the Underside" by



photo by Sabrina Stout

*The book is a feast of variety that I don't suggest digesting all at once; rather, it's one nibble and savor over time.*

Paulann Petersen, a poem about an inscription that the speaker's late Nana has left on the back of a photo.

Other notables include "Back" by Harry Newman, "Possible Side Effects" by Matthew Roberson, "Second Messenger" by Lauren Smith, "My Name is Benjamin Wilkes—15,111!!!" by Tyler Wilborn and "What People Do" by Joe Ballard.

The issue closes, fittingly, with a previously published poem by Petersen, "In Motion," in which the speaker wonders at not knowing how to create a story and so resigns to write poetry (as if that's easier). It leaves the reader with the sentiment, that really, none of us know how to make a story or poetry. We do it anyway.

The book is a feast of variety that I don't suggest digesting all at once; rather, it's one to nibble and savor over time. The anniversary issue is available at CCC's bookstore, at Powell's and in other stores throughout Portland.

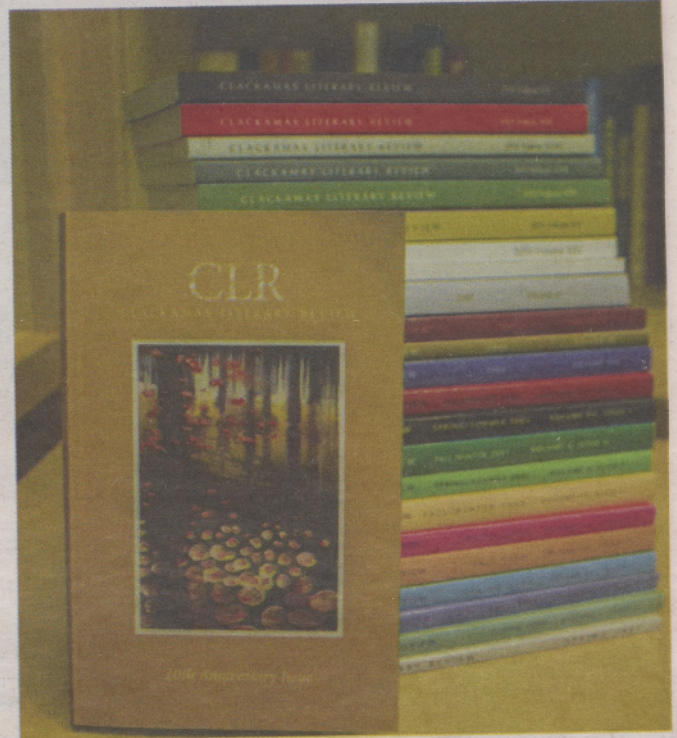


photo by Victoria Tinker

Top: Lee Shaw, left, and Linda Rodgers package books to be shipped. Bottom: Copies of the CLR are collected in Roger Rook 220.