

THE COMMON SKY

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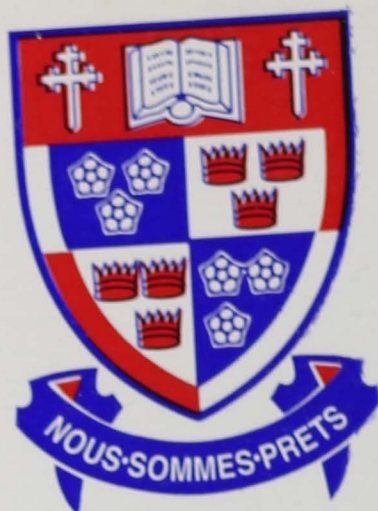
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CANADIAN WRITERS
AGAINST THE WAR

FOREWORD by ALISTAIR MACLEOD

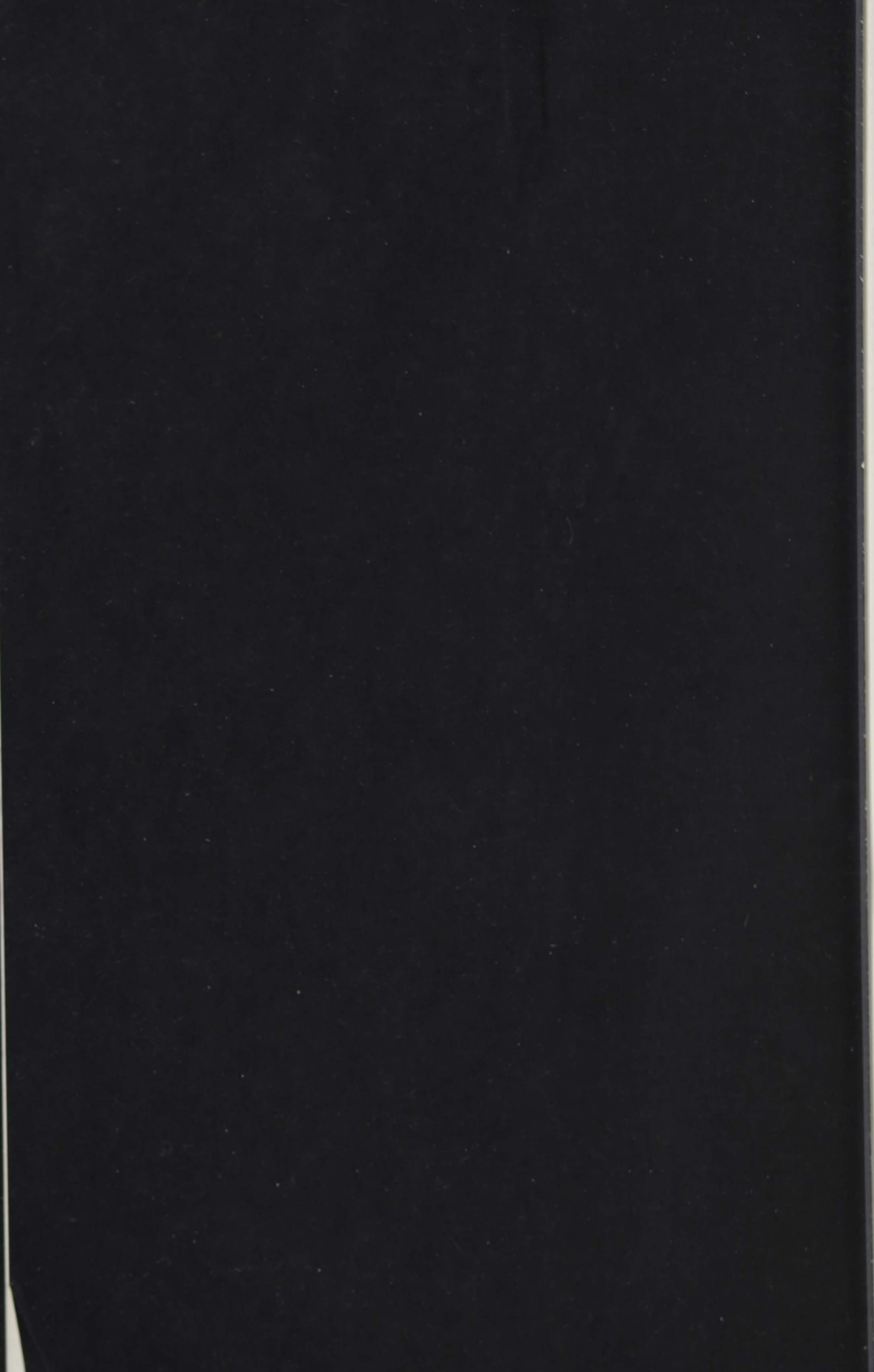


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The Common Sky

CANADIAN WRITERS AGAINST THE WAR

*What, then, was war? No mere discord of flags
But an infection of the common sky*
—Robert Graves, "Recalling War"

THREE



SQUARES

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Fred Wah

EXCERPTS FROM *All Americans*

We are all americans.

We met on the prairie. We hunt.

The point is, we must send a clear and unambiguous message to the world. Almost every day, three or four weeks previous to the outbreak, we could see squaws wandering over the prairie in search of the pomme de terre.

We have shut the doors after letting the horses out. Then we all walked out by the back door, leaving everything behind.

Now we watch from the tops of hills, between the grass and trees.

Philander heard some sort of explosion and saw white smoke and then we lost contact with him.

Most of all we were hungry. "That makes us a big stumbling block to Rife's plan."

First we said to everybody to remain calm.

Afterwards, these are acts that we as a species have always been capable of and we as a species have carried out.

Little did we think how soon we should pass through the terrible ordeal that awaited us, this calling card of a global culture.

After all, we had settled in our new home when those who lived near us began to be uneasy.

And so we hunt. We should not be second-guessing.

Someone shouted "We are being hijacked, we are being hijacked!"

How pleased we were that so far we had been spared not only from death, but, worse than that, the lust in which fame and infamy are closely coupled. We were shocked.

We never thought of ourselves as the enemy.

We had had no breakfast, not even a cup of tea before starting.

Despite the crooked deal, we decided to make no mistakes.

We would show the world that we could pass this test.

We reached Shakopee about sunset and drove to a hotel.

Long ago we decided to hunt down the folks a) who committed this act, b) who owe us money, and c) who are hoodwinked on difference.

So that is why we were compelled to make our way as best we could through grape vines, prickly ash, gooseberry bushes, and trees.

We have always done this.

rs

You, too.
You see yourself rocking, boat/cradle, cave to swim into.
You've never thought about it.
You and your disaster.
You arrived in America when?
Did you check their ID's?
You as the lubricant of your own architexture.
You grass.
You were asking about that pizza car?
You and your panorama.
You'd better watch where you're going.
You will not stutter for lack of stories.
You represent the day before.
You mean well.
You, here, look at this, just look at this, will you see me, to see you.
You hold the blankets that hold you.
You are here.
You disguise yourself too readily.
You turn the story to the smell of kerosene.
You burn for friendship.
You can be a cruel word.
"Nobody will fuck with you," Raven says.
You take it from anyone on the hill don't be pushed say it first.
You can be between children.
You hear explosions.
You might never remember enough.
You have decided to be a cowboy or an Indian, not a farmer..
You could be a witness.
You still haven't found the needle, let alone the haystack.
You, too, can be collected.
Your name is my name and my name is bones.
You here means I here.
You got a couple ways in there and a face, me no face.
You have to be the hole in the picture.
"You guys are dead," she says.
You are on the last untouched prairie berm.
You may never have to fight a war.
You should report for duty.
You, too.
Your heart will always want the last notation.
You are all americans.

Contributors and permissions

Sandra Alland is a writer, performer, photographer, and activist. She lives in Toronto and is the author of two chapbooks, *The Mathematics of Love* and *Partings*. Her work has appeared in *dig*, *Fireweed*, *Tessera*, *Prism*, and *Kiss Machine*. (52)

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Stephen Pender's work has appeared in *Exile*, *Canadian Literature*, and *The Fiddlehead*; he is at work on his first collection of verse, *Histologies*. (63)

Vincent Ponka is a Toronto poet with a fondness for found poetry. He has several self-published chapbooks and is an award-winning scriptwriter. His poem "OM" was recently chosen as poem of the week at the e-zine *Deep Cleveland*. He currently works in the film industry. (79)

Robert Priest is a poet/songwriter and journalist living in Toronto. "Are There Children" is from his most recent book, *Blue Pyramids: New and Selected Poems* (ECW 2002). (109)

The Prize Budget for Boys collective formed soon after Tristan Parish, Ellsworth LeRoy, and Percival Peabody found themselves amongst the disgruntled dissidents leaving the notoriously fascist Panda House Academic Art-Op. www.prizebudgetforboys.com (94)

Heather Pyczk has three collections of poetry, published by Gaspereau Press: *Viaticum* (2002), *Nights on Prospect Street* (1999), and *Town Limits* (1997). Her poems have been featured on CBC, the National Gallery's autoguide, and Poetry Along the Way. She lives in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. (42)

Marion Quednau has had poems published in *Prairie Fire* and the *Vintage Anthology*, and won the League of Canadian Poets' National Chapbook Award in 1999 for *Kissing: Selected Chronicles*. Her first novel, *The Butterfly Chair*, won the Smithbooks-Books in Canada First Novel Award in 1988. She is currently completing a second novel, *Broken Entries*, for Thomas Allen. She lives in Mission, B.C. (127)

a.rawlings Lexiconjury Reading Series Scream in High Park The Mercury Press rabble.ca commutiny.net argentine tango (55)

Michael Redhill's most recent book is the novel *Martin Sloane* (Doubleday 2001) which was nominated for the 2001 Giller Prize and won both the Books in Canada/Amazon.com Best First Novel Prize 2002 and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book, Canada/Caribbean 2001. *Light-crossing*, a collection of poetry from House of Anansi, was published in 2001. Michael lives in Toronto with his partner and two sons. (106)

Diane Reid is a teacher and activist in Fredericton, New Brunswick. She has twice been awarded the University of New Brunswick's Bliss Carman Award. Her poetry has appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, and *Our Times*, as well as on CBC Radio. (154)

Jamie Reid was a founding member of the germinal *TISH* magazine editorial board. He has published three volumes of verse: *The Man Whose Path Was on Fire* (Talonbooks 1968), *Prez: Homage to Lester Young* (Oolichan 1993), and *Mad Boys* (Coach House 1997). "State of the Union" appeared in *The East Village Poetry Web*, Volume Four, in 1998. (36)

Stan Rogal has published six books of poetry, two novels, and three short story collections. His most recent poetry collections include *Geometry of the Odd* (Wolsak & Wynn 1999) and *sub rosa* (Wolsak & Wynn 2003). His latest short story collection is *Tell Him You're Married* (Insomniac 2002). He lives in Toronto. (54)

Julie Roorda's first collection of poetry, *Eleventh Toe*, was published in 2001 by Guernica Editions. A collection of her short fiction is forthcoming in 2003. She is poetry editor of *Pagitica* and lives in Toronto. (157)

Terry Sherbino is a professional actor and writer who resides in Vancouver, after a short stint in Montréal. His work "The New Normal" was published in *StreetEaters—Best of!* (90)

Gerry Shikatani's work includes poetry, *Aqueduct* (1996), fiction, *Lake and Other Stories* (Mercury 1996), gastronomy, *A Passion for Food: Conversations with Canadian Chefs* (Mercury 1999), text-sound performance, and experimental film. He is currently based in Ontario. The selections here are from a complete work to be published in May 2003 as a special issue of *The Capilano Review*. (72)

Zaid Shlah is a Calgary writer, currently working on his first book of poetry. (64)

Adam Sol's first book, *Jonah's Promise*, won the First Series Award for Poetry and was published in 2000 by Mid-List Press. His second book, *Crowd of Sounds*, is about to be published by Anansi. He lives in Toronto with his wife and son. "Our Business is Rejoicing" appeared in *ARC* (No. 42, Spring 1999) and in *Jonah's Promise: Poems by Adam Sol*, © 2000 by Adam Sol. Published by Mid-List Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Reprinted by permission. (17)

J.J. Steinfeld is a fiction writer and playwright. He lives in Charlottetown, PEI, and has published a novel and eight short story collections. A new collection of his stories, *Would You Hide Me?* will be published in Spring 2003 by Gaspereau Press. His play, *The Golden Age of Monsters*, will be produced by Pinking Shears Productions at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2003. (61)

Nathalie Stephens writes in English and French. Her most recent works include *Je Nathanaël* (l'Hexagone 2003) and the forthcoming *Paper City* (Coach House 2003). She shares her time between Guelph and Montréal. (18)

Carl Svoboda is a retired petroleum engineer and part-time university student. He is an active member of the Alexandra Writers' Centre Society in Calgary, where he lives. His work has appeared in *Free Fall* and *Whetstone*. (160)

Todd Swift is a poet, anthologist, screenwriter, and peace activist. His most recent collection of poems is *Café Alibi* (DC Books 2002) and his CD, *The Envelope, Please* was released by Wired on Words in 2002. Todd edited the anthology, *100 Poets Against The War* (Salt 2003) and he is contributing editor of *Matrix* and poetry editor of www.nthposition.com. He lives in Paris. (137)

Chris Turnbull has been published most recently in *dANdelion* and *Queen Street Quarterly*. She lives in Smiths Falls, Ontario, where she publishes the magazine *route/e* and chapbooks (*hawkweed press*). (147)

Michael Tweed has written a number books, many published in small fine editions by Pensum Press. His most recent titles include *The Inconsolable*, *Tears of Splendour*, and *Each an Altar*. Michael also translates French literature and works as an editor specializing in Tibetan Buddhist texts. (134)

Joanne Valin is pursuing a Ph.D. in American literature and the history of medicine. Originally from North Bay, Ontario, she now lives in Winnipeg. (161)

RM Vaughan is a Toronto-based author and video artist. His second novel, *Spells*, will be published in the fall of 2003. (98)

Steven Venright is a visual artist, producer, and author who has worked with the Toronto small press community since the early 1980s. His most recent book of poetry is *Spiral Agitator* (Coach House 2000). He is the founder of Torpor Vigil Industries: www.torporvigil.com. "Border Dissolution" is from *Strange Wonder* (Tortoiseshell & Black 1996). It also appeared in the anthology *Burning Ambitions* (Rush Hour Revisions). (93)

Janet Vickers is a mother of three, mother-in-law to one, and a student of adult education at the University College of the Fraser Valley. She lives in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Her poems have appeared in *subTerrain* and *Scarborough Fair*. (39)

Nicola Vulpe lives in Ottawa. His publications include *Epitaph for a Good Canada: a Poem from the Nasty Nineties* (1998), *When the Mongols Return* (Mosaic 1994), and *Sealed in Struggle* (1995), an anthology of Canadian poetry from and about the Spanish Civil War. "When the Mongols Return" was first published in *Bywords* (Ottawa) and was included in *When the Mongols Return* (Mosaic 1994). (156)

Fred Wah's book of prose-poems, *Waiting For Saskatchewan* (Turnstone 1985), received the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1996. Besides poetry, his recent writing includes the biofiction *Diamond Grill* (NeWest 1996) and *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity* (NeWest 2000), a collection of critical writing. Talonbooks will soon bring out *String*, a new collection of poems. He lives in Calgary, where he teaches creative writing and poetics at the University of Calgary. "All Americans" was published as a limited edition chapbook by housepress and is to be included in a forthcoming publication from the Art Gallery of Calgary. (40)

Patience Wheatley has published two books of poetry, *A Hinge of Spring* (1986) and *Goodbye to the Sugar Refinery* (1990), both from Goose Lane Editions. Her work has appeared recently in *Descant*, *University of Windsor Review*, *Vallum*, and *Canadian Woman Studies*. She lives in Kingston, Ontario. (66)

Darryl Whetter is a professor of Creative Writing at the University of Windsor. *A Short Tooth in the Fur*, his first book of stories, will be released in May 2003. He reviews periodically for *The Globe and Mail* and is currently at work on a novel. (166)

Rita Wong lives in Vancouver and is the author of a book of poems, *monkey-puzzle* (Press Gang 1998). (122)

Maria Worton lives and writes in Montréal. She helps edit and contributes to the literary/progressive e-mag *Montreal Serai*. She writes monologues for performance, creative non-fiction, commentary, stories, and poetry. (85)

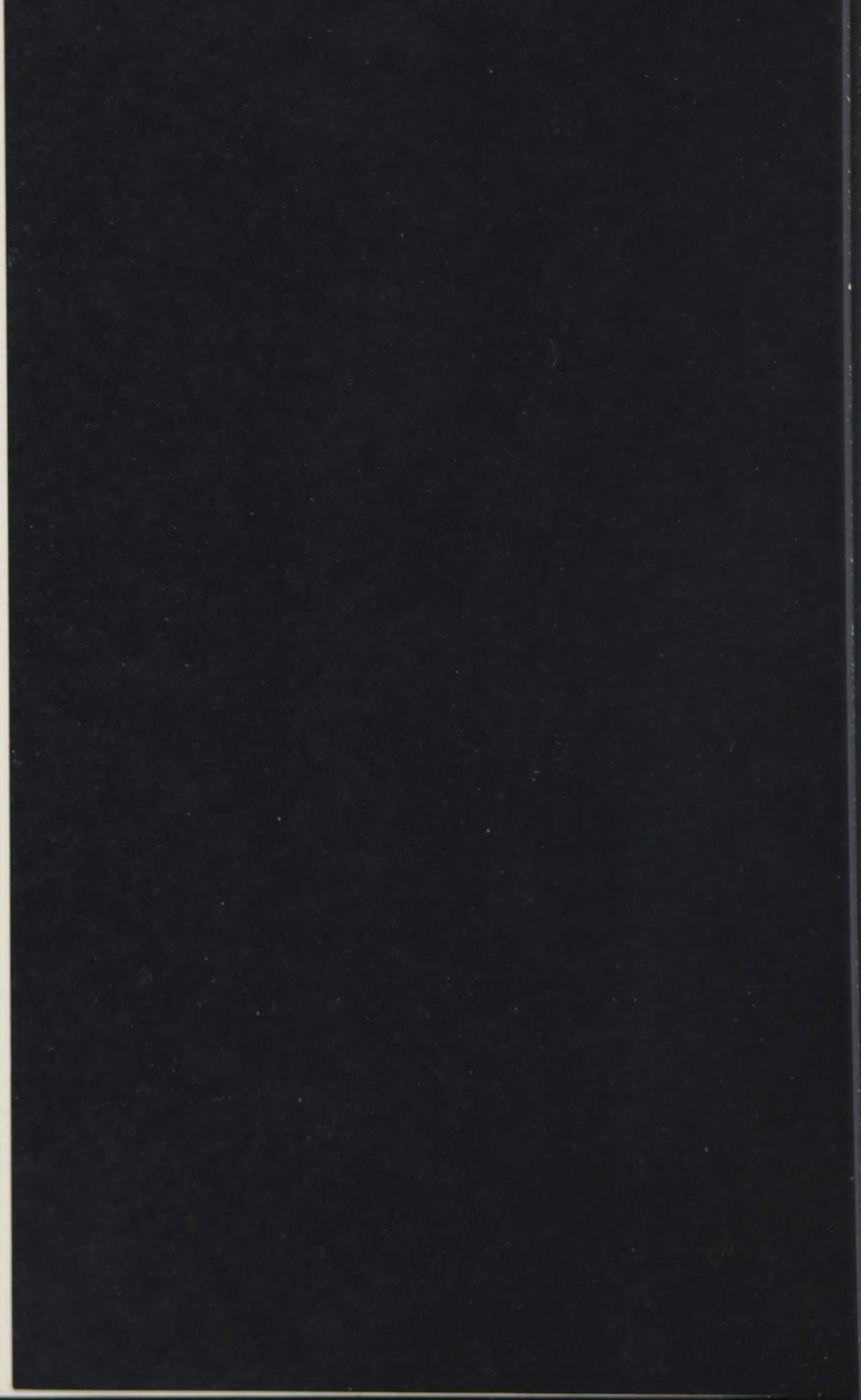
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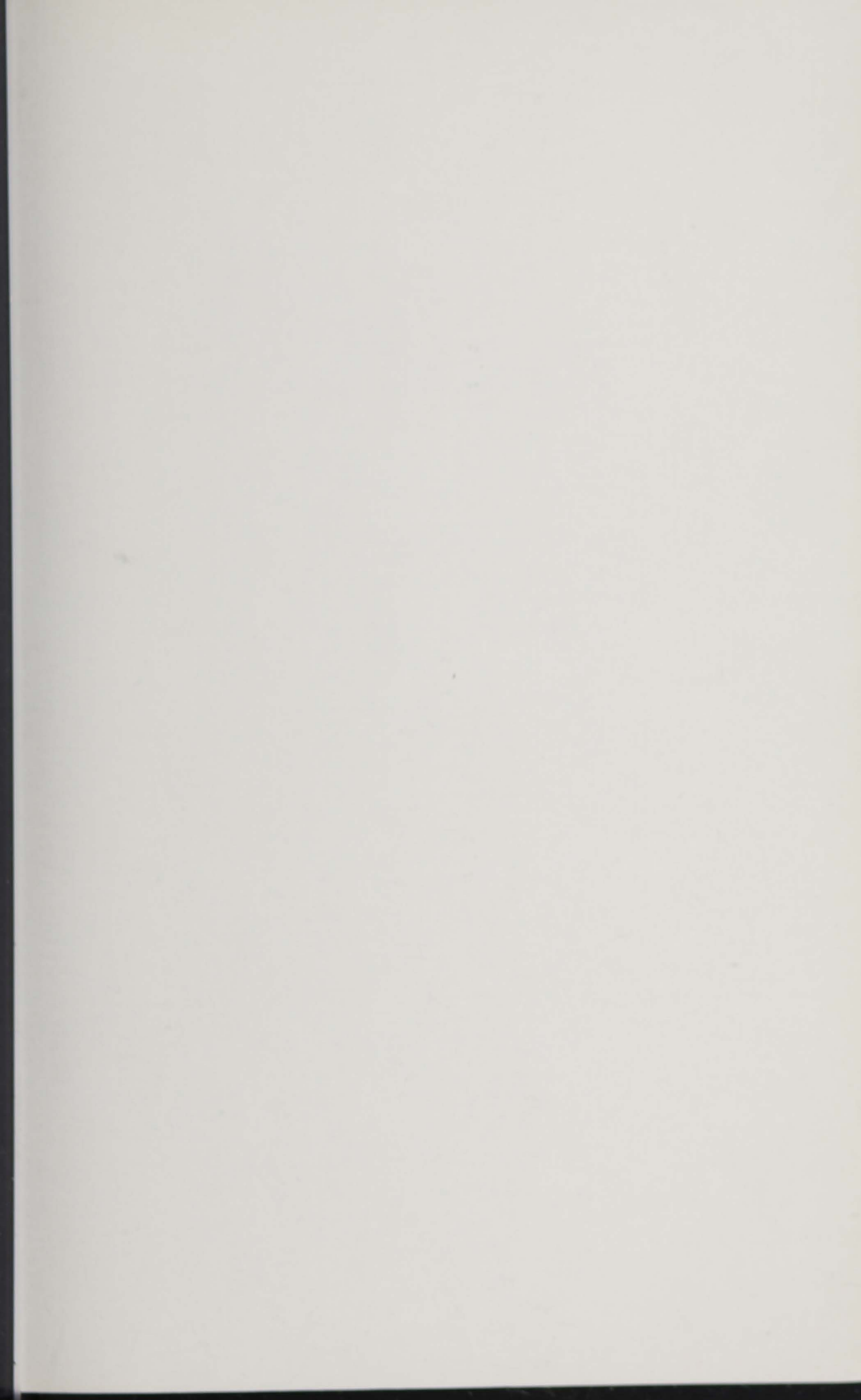
Stephen Pender teaches early modern literature, intellectual history, creative writing, and literary theory at the University of Windsor. In addition to verse and reviews, he has published on the history of rhetoric, early modern medicine, and human exhibition in seventeenth-century England. He is currently at work on a monograph which explores emotion in early modern Europe.

Mark Higgins is a writer and editor, and the publisher of Three Squares Press. He is currently working on his first novel.

A former editor at Coach House Books, Darren Wershler-Henry is a writer, critic, and the author of two books of poetry, *NICHOLODEON: a book of lower-glyphs*, and the *tapeworm foundry*, which was shortlisted for the Trillium Prize. Darren is also the author or co-author of five books about technology and culture, including *FREE as in speech and beer* and *Commonspace: Beyond Virtual Community* (with Mark Surman). His most recent book is *The Original Canadian City Dweller's Almanac* (with Hal Niedzviecki).







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