

## FOREWORD

### ROOF<sup>1</sup>

**Ralph James Savarese**  
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*One Nation under God, indivisible...*

**A**s if under could protect us.  
As if under were just small harms and huzzah.  
As if under could return the years  
For a blouse less fitting, less frumpy.  
Now, where is that gift receipt?  
As if under were some coal in a stocking,  
A minor dig at your brother.  
Did he really vote for Trump?  
Did he really travel to Washington?  
As if loved ones never went roof, then chimney.  
As if under let you make out  
Like a band-aid, not like a Banshee.  
Your eyes are red from keening.  
Hell—let us go there in a heartbasket.

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph James Savarese is the author of *When This is Over. Pandemic Poems* (2020)—a collection of poems he wrote during the first Covid-19 lockdown in the Spring 2020. “Roof” is a previously unpublished poem. As editors, we are grateful to Savarese for letting us publish it for the first time.

Let us hurry to the cough-in theatre.

*OkCOVID:*

A new dating app for schemers.

As if one were a number that could hold us

Or scold us when necessary.

As if hunters climbed up into dear stands

And surgeons spoke kindly

To their scalpels.

Politics—beware this bloodborne disease.

As if under said bridge, said troll,

Said to a tee.

As if hospitals made snow for skiing

And love were a Black Diamond.

Holy Mary, Mother of White,

A brother is dying.

As if to bury were to be.

As if *ava* were *ave* and *lanche* were *launch*—

His bed's a bead.

Under means over, not yet, not yet, please!

As if a house, your house, suddenly

asked how.

Under—are there any takers?

Winner of the Herman Melville Society's Hennig Cohen Prize, **Ralph James Savarese** is the author of two books of prose, including *See It Feelingly: Classic Novels, Autistic Readers, and the Schooling of a No-Good English Professor* (Duke UP 2018), and three books of poetry, including *When This Is Over* (Ice Cube Press 2020). He is also the co-editor of three collections, including the first on the concept of neurodiversity. A fourth co-edited collection, *The Futures of Neurodiversity*, is forthcoming with the MLA. With Pilar Martínez Benedí, he is writing a monograph, under contract with Bloomsbury Academic, titled *Neurological Melville: Modeling Interdisciplinary Research in the Humanities and Sciences*. In 2012-2013, he was a fellow at Duke University's Institute for Brain Sciences. He teaches at Grinnell College in Iowa.