

# echolocations



SARAH BUSSE

SHOSHAUNA SHY

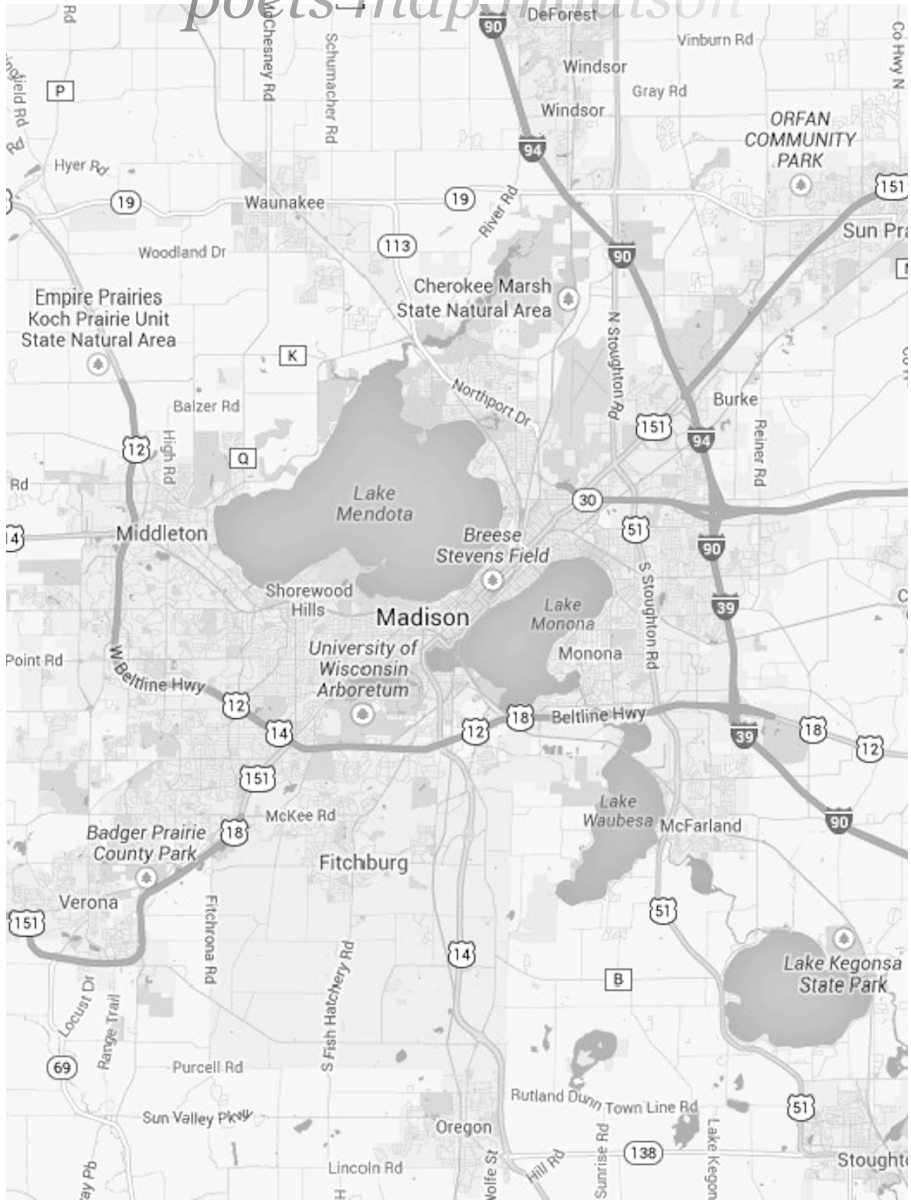
WENDY VARDAMAN

EDITORS

poets map madison

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EDITED BY SARAH BUSSE / SHOSHAUNA SHY / WENDY VARDAMAN



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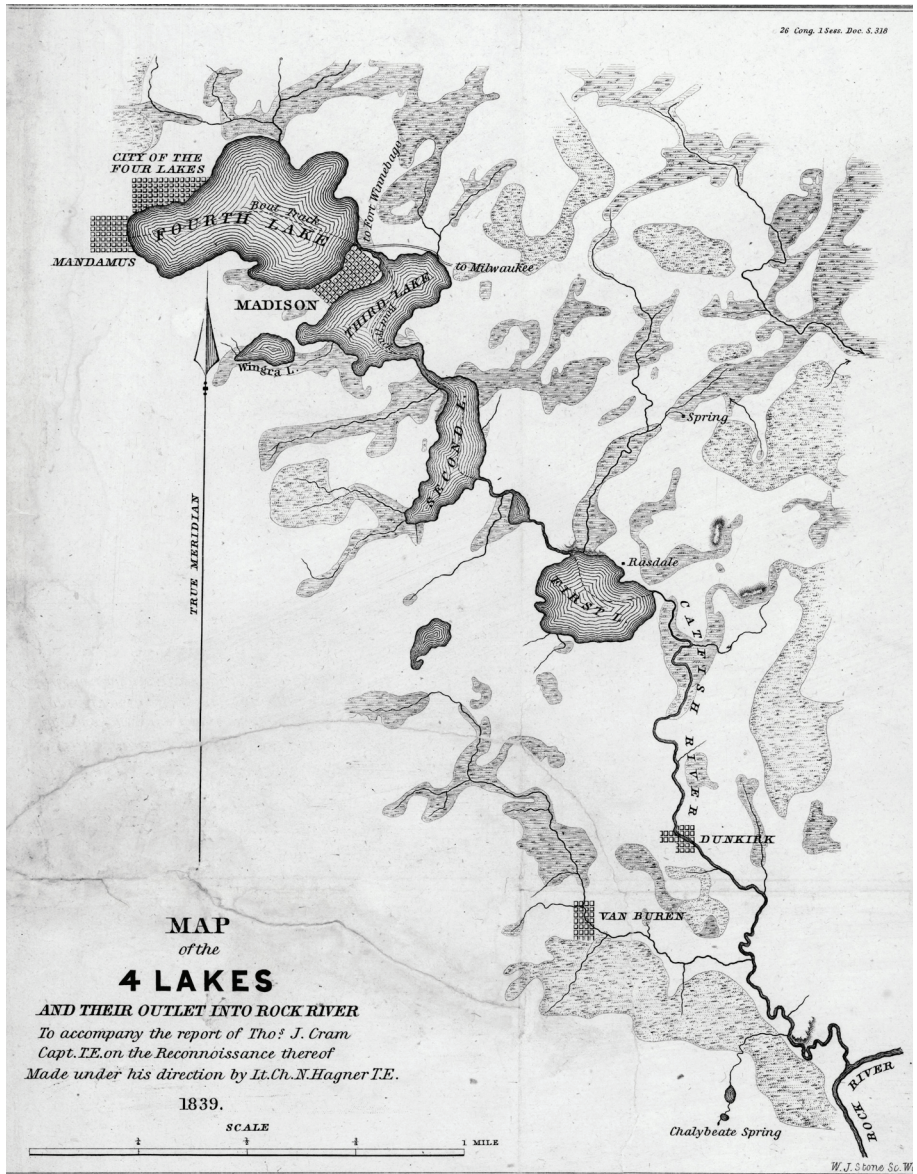
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*“Four Lakes”: Map of the 4 lakes and their outlet into Rock River (1839): to accompany the report of Thos. J. Cram Capt. T.E. on the reconnoissance thereof. Used by permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID 10584. Numerous other historical maps of Madison are available for viewing online at [www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps/](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps/) as well as at the Wisconsin Historical Museum.*

## CONTENTS

### *Flash Forewords... 11*

BY CYNTHIA LIN | GEOFF GILPIN | MARIO GARCIA SIERRA

### *Nothing Rhymes with Isthmus, or Notes from the Flyover... 15*

BY SARAH BUSSE & WENDY VARDAMAN

- ROSEMARY ZURLO-CUVA *Arboretum Walk... 27*  
*State Street, Late November... 28*
- FRANNIE ZELLMAN *Waiting for the Tornado... 29*  
*Orange Custard Chocolate Chip... 30*
- MARILYN ZELKE-WINDAU *Before Thumbin' to Madison... 31*
- TIMOTHY YU *Chinese Silence No. 19... 32*
- MARY WEHNER *1970 Bipolar... 34*
- TIMOTHY WALSH *The Park, March Thaw... 35*  
*The Wild Swans at Wingra Creek... 36*  
*At the Asian IGA by Monona Bay... 38*
- RONALD WALLACE *"You Can't Write a Poem About McDonald's"... 39*  
*Early Brass... 40*
- ANGELA VORAS-HILLS *Alarm... 41*  
*Water, Water Everywhere... 42*
- MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO *Razones en el Invierno / Reasons in the Winter... 44*  
BARRAS *Madison / Madison... 46*
- LISA VIHOS *Saturday Farm Market... 48*
- ANGELA TRUDELL VASQUEZ *Fair Oaks Ave.: August, 2009... 49*
- WENDY VARDAMAN *Black & White (1966)—an unnumbered auto-historical series... 50*  
*Ode to the Crossing Guard... 52*
- JOHN TUSCHEN *The Search... 53*
- ALISON TOWNSEND *Persephone at the Mall... 54*  
*Persephone, Pretending... 56*
- ROBERT G. TOOMEY *The Library at Midterm... 57*
- STEVE TOMASKO *Listening to Blues at the Barrymore... 58*
- JEANIE TOMASKO *Poem Starting at a Bubbler in James Madison Memorial*  
*High School in the Seventies... 59*
- MARILYN L. TAYLOR *I Know a Bank Where the Wild Thyme Blows... 60*  
*Explication of a True Story... 61*
- JANET TALIAFERRO *The Ghost on Johnson Street... 62*
- KATRIN TALBOT *Mornings at Resurrection Cemetery... 63*
- DENISE SWEET *Cahoots: Wisconsin Makes a House Call... 64*
- HEATHER SWAN *Early Morning on Lake Wingra... 65*
- JUDITH STRASSER *Life List... 66*  
*Spring... 67*  
*Last Poem... 68*
- MATTHEW STOLTE *MadPo (2 Visual Poems)... 69*
- JIM STEVENS *A Map for the Day of the Spider... 71*

DAVID STEINGASS	<i>Animal Effigy Mounds...</i> 72 <i>Girl Walking Her Dog in Vilas Park at Dawn...</i> 73 <i>The 2011 Winter Revolt...</i> 74
SANDY STARK	<i>Out of Thin Air...</i> 75
THOMAS R. SMITH	<i>Always, In Dreams...</i> 76 <i>Real Middle Class...</i> 77
DANEZ SMITH	<i>African-American...</i> 78 <i>from my window...</i> 79 <i>fade...</i> 80
SHOSHAUNA SHY	<i>Curiose Discarded from Grade School Curriculum...</i> 81 <i>You Know You're Hungry When the Meow Mix Smells Good...</i> 82
JO SCHEDER	<i>Crossing Tracks, Fordham and Commercial...</i> 84
MARGARET ROZGA	<i>Celebrating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King...</i> 85
MARY C. ROWIN	<i>The State Office Building, One West Wilson...</i> 87
RICHARD ROE	<i>Salsa and Dance at the Jazz Fest, Union Terrace...</i> 88
JULIA RICE	<i>When I Wrote My Novel I Borrowed Madison...</i> 89
CARL J. RASMUSSEN	<i>Christmas Night Outside Temple Beth El...</i> 90
FRAN RALL	<i>Alexa...</i> 91 <i>Wisconsiniana...</i> 91
BRIAN POWERS	<i>The Run to Picnic Point...</i> 92
ANDREA POTOS	<i>First Fall Semester...</i> 93
JAMES POLLOCK	<i>Excerpt from "Quarry Park"...</i> 94
DARRELL PETSKA	<i>Before East Towne Mall...</i> 96
MICHAEL PENN II	<i>For Rudolf...</i> 97
SARA PARRELL	<i>March in Wisconsin, 2011...</i> 98 <i>Frautschi Point, December...</i> 99
HELEN PADWAY	<i>Flowers Keep Company...</i> 100 <i>Times Change...</i> 101
ANDREA O'BRIEN	<i>The Majestic...</i> 102 <i>The Orpheum...</i> 103
JAY NUNNERY	<i>An October Night on the Beltline...</i> 104
GILLIAN NEVERS	<i>It Didn't Feel Dangerous...</i> 105
ANDREA MUSER	<i>Aerial Choreography...</i> 106
RALPH MURRE	<i>It was already clear...</i> 107
CJ MUCHHALA	<i>Artistic License...</i> 108 <i>Georgia's Inheritance...</i> 109
PATRICIA MONAGHAN	<i>Dancing with Liberty...</i> 110
OSCAR MIRELES	<i>The Almost 9 Minute Car Ride to Madison, Wisconsin...</i> 112
RICHARD MERELMAN	<i>At the Mesh Fence...</i> 115
TIM MCLAFFERTY	<i>Too Bad He Wuzn't a Whale...</i> 116
JERI MCCORMICK	<i>One by One by One...</i> 117
ART MADSON	<i>Taking Off...</i> 118
JOHN LEHMAN	<i>Me and Ted Kooser at the Wisconsin Book Festival...</i> 119
NORMAN LEER	<i>The Angelic Brewing Company Closes Its Doors...</i> 120
ESTELLA LAUTER	<i>Maya Angelou at the Union Theater, 1990...</i> 121
JON K. LAUCK	<i>Proud Son in the Stacks...</i> 122



PEG LAUBER	<i>Old House on Lake Monona—The Near End of Jenifer St...</i> 123
DANIEL KUNENE	<i>They hang people, don't they?...124</i>
JOHN KRUMBERGER	<i>On First Reading Look Homeward, Angel...</i> 125
MARK KRAUSHAAR	<i>1-900-CHAT...</i> 126
JOHN KOETHE	<i>Self-Portrait on YouTube...</i> 127
JESSE LEE KERCHEVAL	<i>Blue Plate...</i> 128
DASHA KELLY	<i>Strangers...</i> 130
MARTHA KAPLAN	<i>Ancient Rites...</i> 133
	<i>Voicing the city strange...</i> 134
	<i>Winslow Lane Neighbor...</i> 136
JOAN WIESE JOHANNES	<i>Midlife CPR Winslow Lane Neighbor...</i> 137
	<i>Becoming Legend...</i> 138
CATHERINE JAGOE	<i>Epitaphs...</i> 139
LOWELL JAEGER	<i>The War at Home...</i> 140
RONNIE HESS	<i>Thanksgiving Owls...</i> 142
	<i>Dinner at the Shish Café...</i> 143
ROB HARRINGTON	<i>The Farmers' Market...</i> 144
ALEX GUBBINS	<i>Madison Summer, 2005...</i> 145
ANDY GRICEVICH	<i>Excised Poem...</i> 146
BRENT GOODMAN	<i>Winter Kill...</i> 148
	<i>Precision...</i> 149
	<i>Steam...</i> 150
MAX GARLAND	<i>A Night at St. Mary's...</i> 151
	<i>The Loon...</i> 152
FABU	<i>Macajá Revels Camped at a Stream of Water...</i> 153
	<i>Mr. James Braxton: A Memory Poem...</i> 154
MARTÍN ESPADA	<i>The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp...</i> 155
	<i>The Bouncer's Confession...</i> 156
R. VIRGIL ELLIS	<i>Flying with Two Bills...</i> 158
KARL ELDER	<i>Air Lock...</i> 160
SUSAN ELBE	<i>Every Spring Grows Deeper...</i> 162
	<i>[The morning someone torched Saint Raphael's Cathedral]...</i> 163
JORDAN DUNN	<i>Form 15: After bpNichol's "Journal 3"...</i> 164
SADIE DUCET	<i>Faith Will Emphasize the Second Syllable...</i> 167
GREER DUBOIS	<i>At the Young Shakespeare Players...</i> 168
MARNIE BULLOCK DRESSER	<i>The Gentlest Excavation...</i> 169
	<i>Aubade on Route 51, Late April...</i> 171
CX DILLHUNT	<i>The Husband Confesses...</i> 172
	<i>What I Meant to Say...</i> 173
BRUCE DETHLEFSEN	<i>Gone to Ground...</i> 174
	<i>Anniversary...</i> 175
ALICE D'ALESSIO	<i>Still Here...</i> 176
RON CZERWIEN & SUSAN ELBE	<i>Why No One Saw It Coming...</i> 178
AMELIA COOK FONTELLA	<i>the wi film festival...</i> 179
JAN CHRONISTER	<i>Tree on Johnson Street...</i> 180

SUE BUSSEY CHENETTE	<i>For Tait Sanford Barrows, 1913-1995...181</i>
CHING-IN CHEN	<i>Confessional: Hijacked...182</i>
ROBIN CHAPMAN	<i>Teaching My Son to Drive...186</i> <i>This Was a Great Day...187</i>
SARAH BUSSE	<i>Dialogues...188</i>
JOSEPH BRIGGS	<i>Exposure...189</i>
FAUSTINA BOHLING	<i>My side of town...190</i>
KIMBERLY BLAESER	<i>Exit #135...192</i> <i>Surveyor, 1849...194</i>
F. J. BERGMANN	<i>Cheap at Any Price...195</i>
OLIVER BENDORF	<i>Self-Portrait As More Than The Sum Of My Parts...196</i> <i>Thanks For Everything, Leland Cooper...197</i>
MARGARET BENBOW	<i>July: Storm Coming...198</i>
DONNA BARKMAN	<i>Freewheeling...199</i>
LINDA ASCHBRENNER	<i>Undergrad...200</i>
MARILYN ANNUCCI	<i>Aubade...201</i> <i>Whole Foods...202</i> <i>The Night of the Meteorite's Landing...203</i>
<i>Backstories &amp; Comments...204</i>	
<i>Local Conversations, Local Prompts...213</i>	
<i>Acknowledgments...214</i>	
<i>Contributors...216</i>	



## FLASH FOREWORDS

---

I am not a poet. But as I read these Madison poems from another city that I am borrowing as home, filled with longing for the places I miss and the people I love, I believe suddenly that I can be a poet.

These poems give name and shape to where we are broken, the ways we are barely put back together, and how we struggle for wholeness. I suppose that's always been what poetry is for, but there is something to the way these offerings are layered through a particular place....Even in the gaps among them, they suggest the possibility and indeed the necessity to excavate what makes us, and how we make a place.

This is why I need to remember: Madison is an occupied territory. Between the Laurentide Ice Sheet and the people, activities, artifacts, and stories that populate these poems, what we know as Madison was stolen from indigenous communities who still presently are fighting for sovereignty. I could say that with a certain righteous effrontery to be one to point this violence out. Hell, I almost did. But instead I do so tremulously, testing my courage and my own responsibility for solidarity.

Our bodies are occupied territories. In “5 for my skin & 1 for me” [“African-American,” included here, is one part of this longer poem], Danez Smith writes, “I told my fairy Godmother to send me home, she took me to Mississippi, wrapped me in cotton, told me to run until my feet turned mush. I told her I meant Africa, but when she dropped me off, I stood lost, couldn’t even ask for directions in the right language.” In Alison Townsend’s “Persephone at the Mall,” there is a latent violence in the way a young woman is watched as she walks—she’s sleepwalking—inhabiting her body at the West Towne Mall.

Our minds, our loves, our government, our travels, our needs, our desires, are all in some ways, through the sedimentation of history, occupied territories. It is important, then, that in this collection we find as well an epistemology of struggle. Lowell Jaeger’s “The War at Home,” Ching-In Chen’s “Confessional: Hijacked,” and so many other poems document the affective experiences, the lived theories, and the contradictions of protest and resistance. They give us grounds for making sense of the political moments we are in collectively and their connections to history, and they surface some deep questions perhaps otherwise much more difficult to access.

In the spirit of this epistemology, I appreciate the words of Moisés Villavicencio Barras: “I write so that together we are amazed.”

Echolocation poets, thank you for amazing me. (And somebody, quick, please teach me how to write a poem.)

*Cynthia Lin*  
*Portland, OR (for now)*

---

When I moved to Madison in the 1980s, I was fresh out of Appleton in the Fox Valley, home of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the John Birch Society. When they tell the old joke up there—the one where Madison is some flexible number of square miles “surrounded by the real world”—they mean it as a warning. I took it as a promise, however, and when I moved here I found out that it’s true, thank heavens! Madison gave me a terrific buzz when I was young and eager for strange sights and

sophisticated company. As the decades passed, however, the excitement faded and the square miles shrank as the real world and its predictable routines covered the land. My city and I turned gray together.

That's why I'm so delighted to have *Echolocations, Poets Map Madison*. Reading this wonderful collection makes me feel like I'm new in town. The places that appear in the poems may be familiar—Lake Mendota, Picnic Point, Vilas Park, the Barrymore Theatre—but the imagination of the writers compels us to view them in a fresh way. For instance, here's Darrell Petska on East Towne Mall:

Tractors once crossed the expanse  
between JCPenney and Sears.  
Before that humans and beasts  
in tandem tilled and harvested  
the land. And before that,  
natives profitably hunted here.

I've been to the mall a zillion times, but this poem makes me want to get in the car and go there just to look at Sears and imagine a field with woolly mammoths lolling in the sun.

Other revelations include Fabu uncovering the hidden history of African American settlers and Brent Goodman imagining dark deeds in the secret tunnel under the Capitol building.

Long-time Madisonians will rediscover many familiar pleasures in this book. Newcomers will get a sense of the depth and uniqueness of their new home. All of us can be grateful to the talented poets in *Echolocations* for the gift of our own city seen through new eyes.

**Geoff Gilpin**  
**DeForest, WI**

---

It is an honor and a pleasure to read the voices of many poets who inspired by Madison, WI, the place we call home, use poetry as a lens to analyze life experiences in this metropolis. Their work is a reaction of a reality that is constantly changing, thus inspiring poetry to change as well. It is a never ending cycle. I believe poetry is a powerful tool that allows us to connect as human beings, build community, and create social consciousness. I developed a deep respect for poetry as a teenager, growing up in Guatemala City at a time when the country was finding its way out of a bloody civil war; poetry was like bread for thousands of teenagers like me who dreamt about an inclusive democracy and equality.

Since 2003, Madison has been my home; it has been a comfortable place, yet it has been a painful place. I quickly learned how to be an effective outsider and insider at the same time. Still, poetry is like bread, and I still dream about an inclusive democracy and equality. An inclusive and just Madison.

The stories proposed in this work are about my story but are not about my story. Nor are they the story of other immigrants whose contributions go almost unnoticed on a daily basis, those who cook, clean, and milk cows far away from home in their new home; their work makes our lives convenient so we can carry out our daily activities. The poets remind us of the beauty of autumn and the freshness of spring, they contemplate the day and night, they scream about the imperial invasion of countries while they attempt to dream about a peaceful society. The poets drink beer and eat

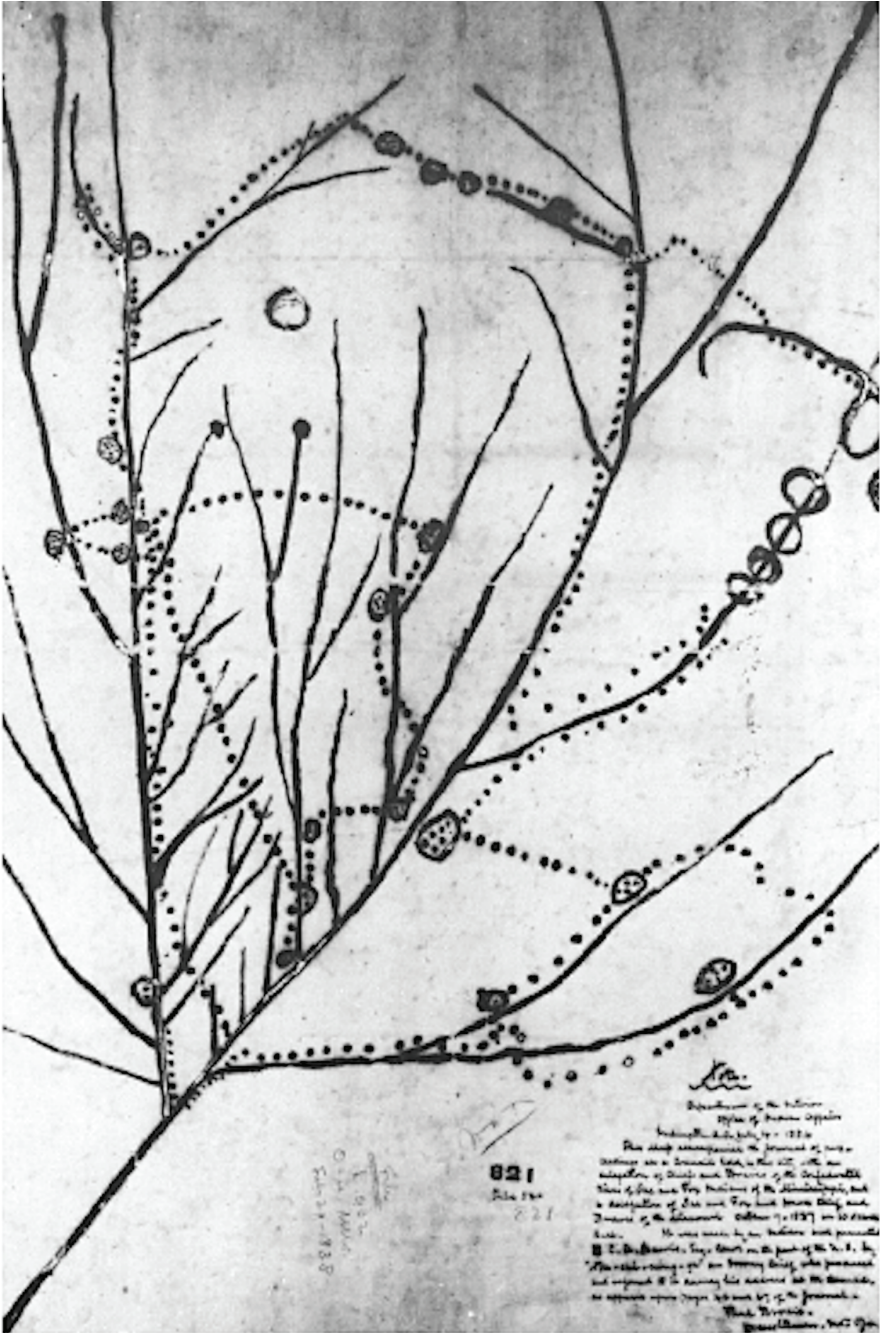
cheese, walk around State Street and Monroe Street, and, like me, they enjoy the Arboretum on a bike or on a walk. The poets remind me that we claim our home on other peoples' land and that Madison has not always been Madison.

*Echolocations, Poets Map Madison* spoke to me. It gave me nostalgia about my years in this city, the neighborhoods I have lived in, the people I have met, the coffee shops and the libraries where I spent countless hours studying, and the beers I have tried. I leave you with a fragment of the poem "Holocausto del Abrazo" by Otto Rene Castillo:

And for the poets of vigorous swords  
plant in their chest  
the biggest and most beautiful rose  
so they won't pass through the world  
with blind eye  
and crippled tenderness  
and will know to love life  
where it rises  
with its flaming face.  
And understand everyone  
and say to them all: live,  
because life  
is the highest poetry.

***Mario Garcia Sierra,  
Madison, WI***

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Non-Chi-Ning-Ga's manuscript map on paper of the migration of his ancestors in the upper Mississippi and Missouri watershed, 1837. RG 75, Map 821, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, National Archive, Washington, D.C. The Ioway map depicts, among other things, Madison as Four Lakes connected to the Rock River. The Four Lakes appear as four closely spaced circles on the right. A copy of this image is available to view at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

NOTHING RHYMES WITH ISTHMUS, OR NOTES FROM THE FLYOVER

*from Wendy, February 27, 2013*

It's always best to begin where you are; as a 50-year-old who has never owned a car, I know that. And where I am right now is a Monroe Street coffee shop near the end of February near my house in Madison. The 27<sup>th</sup> to be exact, my oldest son's 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, and my second cup of coffee, and it's snowing. Bob from across the street—he works at Trader Joe's—just walked in. He says *hello, Wendy*. I say, *hello, Bob*. He gets his coffee from Erin at the counter who works for Cait. They chat. Before arriving I mailed a book at Neuhauser Pharmacy, which also serves as a Post Office. Laurie waited on me. We used to be in a mother-daughter book group together. Walking home, I will pass Russell, the crossing guard stationed at a particularly difficult intersection where cars whiz by too fast, and children, bicyclists and pedestrians are often targets, rather than people.

Madison isn't a small town, but it's not a big city. It's somewhere in the middle, sometimes one or the other. Sometimes both. Sometimes neither. A few days ago I traveled back to Madison from my mom's in Quincy, Illinois, via Chicago by Amtrak and Van Galder bus. Whenever I return I always notice and am struck again by how Madison, or at least my slice of it, is a city of people who play outside, winter and summer.

I've been leaving Madison and coming back for almost 13 years now. Longer than anywhere else I've lived: California, the South, the Ozarks, upstate New York, the Northwest, New England, West Philadelphia, Tuscany, Finland, Scandinavia. Big cities and tiny towns. Apartment buildings and old houses. Rundown Victorian mansions and molding villas. Busy streets and places where we'd pretend the highway noise was ocean.

What, I wonder, looking out the window of Crescendo after a snowstorm and watching a bicyclist making his way to Trader Joe's, our "local" neighborhood store across the street, does this group of poems, this city, have to contribute to conversations about people, local environment, culture?

---

The power of spaces—the *same spaces*—to mean different things to different people, historically and culturally, and without respect to their actual physical dimensions or social "importance," should be clear to anyone who has a passing interest in metaphor. The "flyover zone" isn't metaphor: it's a reality of bodies moving quickly, too quickly, coast-to-coast on airplanes. If those bodies have no ground time—no acquaintance, no familiarity, with the cultural diversity of the region, with the artistic variety, vitality and innovation that is central to its city and town life—then they do not know us. It's our hope that this sort of anthology project, transferable to other spaces, urban and rural, part poetry, part prose, part imaginative, part ethnographic, built on or responding to local knowledges, *plural*, could be a means for poets and other writers to collect that knowledge and share it with those who want to know more, whether or not they live in or have been connected to Madison, creating, in the process, conversation about what we think we know and what we don't know. Filling in the gaps, and deepening our understanding of the places we live, love, and sometimes want to transform.



That's our hope. It took us a number of months to articulate this rationale, and it's interesting to trace, here at the start, how we arrived. We begin at the beginning, with the title: *Echolocations, Poets Map Madison*. There's an echo of *eco* in *echolocation*. The repeated long o—*eco-lo-po*—suggests something of the open culture—round lakes, round-aboutness of streets, navigation from a 10-block-thin Isthmus at the city's center outward to newer development, to sprawl, to apartment buildings and hotels rimming the belt line and the airport, to enormous McMansions dotting the Monona shore and what was once farmland south of the city. Where the city's edges blur and curl like coastline, city and farm lacing together like fingers of two hands. The one, the other. And there is rhyme: of shun/ of son/ sun.

Madison has been called many things: Four Lakes (City). The People's Republic of Madison. Berkeley of the Midwest. 77 square miles surrounded by reality. Madtown.

Appropriately enough for our project here, though strange to consider, *Madison* began as an idea on paper: a map of 39 streets, one for each signer of the US Constitution. President James Madison, newly deceased, provided the name, and the city was built on land owned by a former federal judge and land speculator, later territorial governor, then congressional representative. James Duane Doty lobbied for his imagined, paper Madison to become Wisconsin's capital, and the legislature made it so in 1836. The university began in 1849, a year after statehood. During the Civil War, Camp Randall, now the grounds of the UW's football stadium, was a military hospital and prison for Confederate soldiers.

The names of the lakes tell another story: Mendota/ Monona/ Waubesa/ Kegonsa/ Wingra. These are native words from various languages, sometimes corrupted and misapplied, that 19<sup>th</sup> c. white surveyors and settlers attached to them, as they re-mapped and re-named what local people already had mapped and named.

Madison has an association with countercultural and progressive values, but how far back does "counterculture" go? To the 1960s? the 1860s? The 12,000 years of indigenous peoples who lived here prior to the establishment of *Madison* in 1837? In 1830 Federal Judge James Duane Doty, later the founder of Madison and the Territorial Governor, heard the first jury case in Wisconsin history, depicted in "The Trial of Chief Oshkosh by Judge Doty," a mural in the Supreme Court chamber at the Capitol. Oshkosh, who belonged to the nation of Mamaceqtaw, or Menominee, is on trial for the murder of a Pawnee. While the jury found Oshkosh guilty, Doty, in what may be the first recorded incident of white Madisonian cultural liberalism, prior even to the existence of the city, overturns the verdict, ruling that tribal law supersedes territorial law. That Oshkosh is on trial at all—by whose authority? what's the story preceding this moment in the painting? why is he cooperating if he is? what happened after?—none of that figures in the painting's story or the story told about the painting in tours of the Capitol. Memory is short. We recently encountered a young college-aged woman in Milwaukee, who hadn't heard about the protests in 2011. What, then, of the Sterling Hall bombing in 1970, or the protest of Dow Chemical in 1967? Protests of 2011, still fresh in the minds of many Madison poets, and, for many, a reaffirmation of the Madison's progressive political identity, figure heavily in this anthology, as do those of the 1960s and 70s, but what of other political identities and occasions?

Capital of a state with radically divergent political movements and firsts, as well as some interesting, lesser known poetic firsts—the beginning of haiku in the US, the founding of one of the oldest poetry magazines (*American Poetry Magazine*, 1919) and one of the oldest state poetry societies, Madison's literary fame may sit, like the Capitol itself, at the narrow intersection of the political and the poetic: in the publication of innovative magazines like *The Progressive*, founded by Bob LaFollette in 1909, which includes a poem each month next to investigative pieces and commentary, and like *The Onion*, founded 1988, and, as

far as we can tell, a pioneer of the prose poem genre-equivalent of mockumentary film; in the creative, poetic language of buttons and signs employed in the 2011 protests; in the Solidarity Sing Along, which has kept up a playful, poetic protest vigil every noon hour since March 11, 2011, at the Capitol.

Because Madison doesn't just play. It is playful. The pink flamingo is the official city bird, and festivals despite, maybe because of, a long, severe winter, occur all year in a city of outdoor parks and parties, events, and scenes: Farmer's Market, Freak Fest, Rhythm & Booms, Mifflin Street Block Party, World Music Fest, Isthmus Jazz Fest, Juneteenth, Sugar Maple Traditional Music Fest, year-round bike trails, *public* golf courses, cross country ski trails, kayaking, crewing, sailing, outdoor ice skating, ice fishing, Art on the Square, Concerts on the Square, Opera in the Park, fall tailgates, Kites on Ice, Brat Fest, MSCR's traveling Art Cart. Capitol Square, Memorial Terrace, Camp Randall, Olbrich Gardens, the stage outside the internationally awarded Children's Museum, the Monona Terrace roof, the free Henry Vilas Zoo, Bascom Hill and Library Mall at the UW, the pedestrian blocks of State Street from university to capitol, and 50 *major* city parks provide outdoor gathering spaces with which a city of any size could amaze and entertain itself. The Capitol Rotunda, likewise, was intended by its builders as a public gathering space.

Although many interesting and thorough books have been written about Madison's history, including recent ones by Stuart Levitan, Doug Moe, Dr. Richard Harris, and Erika Janik, there hasn't been any attempt, as far as we can find, to catch the city in a full-length book of poetry. Poems set in Madison date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1876 piece, "The Four Lakes of Madison," written at the request of his son-in-law's mother:

Fair lakes, serene and full of light,  
Fair town, arrayed in robes of white,  
How visionary ye appear!

The famous poem "Solitude," by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, was inspired by a train trip to the Governor's Inaugural Ball in 1883. Having comforted a crying widow all the way to Madison, Wilcox was surprised by the appearance of her own sad face in the mirror at the mansion:

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;  
Weep, and you weep alone.  
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth  
But has trouble enough of its own

And Lorine Niedecker, who lived and worked in Madison for a few years, wrote of it only occasionally, as in this short and cryptic piece:

*So he said  
on the radio*

I have to fly  
wit Venus arms  
I found fishing  
to Greece  
then back to Unifers of Wis  
where they got stront. 90  
to determ if same marble  
as my arms

Previous place-based poetry anthologies—and many have come out of Wisconsin, as well as, in particular, Milwaukee and Madison—tend to focus on *poets from* rather than *poems about* a location: Bruce Taylor edited *Wisconsin Poetry* in 1991; Jeri McCormick and Mardi Fries brought out *Poetry Out of Wisconsin V* in 1980 (published by the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, with four previous volumes by other editors also appearing over the decades); the Wisconsin Poets' *Calendar*, founded in 1982 by Tom and Mary Montag, has been a nearly annual anthology project for 28 editions; *The Glacier Stopped Here*, a chapbook, featured "Dane County writers" in 1994, published by the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission and selected by a large board of editors; the 1988 chapbook, *New Roads, Old Towns*, edited by Gianfranco Pagnucci, 1988, brought four Wisconsin poets from Milwaukee and Madison together; *Words Reaching Between, Ten Years*, 1984, by the editors of *PrimiPara* featured women poets of Wisconsin, as did their magazine; two anthologies, *Brewing* (1972) and *Gathering Place of the Waters* (1983) focused on poets from Milwaukee; *Winter Nest*, edited by Angela Lobo-Cobb, and *A Confluence of Colors—The First Anthology of Wisconsin Minority Poets*, emerged out of multicultural conferences in Madison during the 70's and 80's; another multicultural anthology, *Between the Heart and the Land/Entre el corazon y la tierra: Latina Poets in the Midwest*, ed. by Brenda Cárdenas and Johanny Vasquez, focused on Latina poets, many from Wisconsin; Oscar Mireles has brought out two anthologies under the title *I Didn't Know There Were Latinos in Wisconsin*, with a third on the way as we write (forthcoming Cowfeather Press, 2014). The ambitious three-volume literary history, *The Journey Home: Four Centuries of Wisconsin Literature*, North Country Press, 1989, edited by Jim Stephens, provides a comprehensive overview of Wisconsin poetry in the context of other literary genres and historical periods beginning with Native American voices. All of these projects provided food for thought, a variety of directions, and courage.

Two recent Midwestern anthologies, like our project, shift their focus to *poems about* place rather than *poets from* a place: a 2008 anthology of poetry and oral history, *Art and Ethos of Dubuque*, edited by Paula Neuhaus, Alice Oleson and Rich Rossignol, and *City of Big Shoulders, An Anthology of Chicago Poetry*, edited by Ryan G. Van Cleave (Iowa, 2012). Both of these volumes, writing of and out of different but not distant cities, have helped us ask questions and question answers.

Here is the call for work that we initially issued with Shoshauna Shy of Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf:

Poems sought from poets around the US and abroad which reference a specific public location—street corner, park, building, place of business, etc.—in the city of Madison, Wisconsin. Please note: poem does not need to be *about* said location but should reference it in one way or another...

This call was inspired by Shy's encounter with "First Fall Semester," by Andrea Potos, a lyrical evocation of her college experience:

I bounded off the Badger Bus, grinning  
at my best friend Cassi who was there  
to show me the way to Bakers' Rooms.  
A line wound out the door; we didn't mind  
waiting; classes would not start for a week...

Not surprisingly, given that our subject is Madison, Wisconsin, a place many first encounter when they come to the university and then leave, we received other poems along these lines. However, we also received poems like Alexander Gubbins' poem "Madison Summer, 2005" which starts, "State Street gives me a hug / from a homeless man."

The lakes also provided plenty of inspiration to poets and demonstrate the broad scope of subject matters and connotations. From “The Loon,” by Wisconsin poet laureate Max Garland: “The water winks open, the loon / is sewn onto the moonlit lake...” we move to Danez Smith’s “African-American,” which asks us

How many dead bodies floating in that dash?  
How many little black waves of skin sit on my tongue  
when I say that? How many times have you been to Africa?  
Africa is a word I smelled walking down Lake St, but never held  
in my mouth....

Both Smith and Garland seek to defamiliarize the familiar in their poems, to surprise us with their metaphors and juxtapositions, and both of them do that beautifully, powerfully. But it is a different *familiar* and a different *unfamiliar* that they lay on top of *lake*, on top of *Madison*.

Clearly, then, selecting poems “about” Madison was a complicated project. From the very start we had to ask ourselves and the poets, *How many Madisons are there?* Every one of these poems, as well as every one of the poems we did not collect, and the poets who wrote them, has a story. Listening, exchanging, and valuing each others’ stories makes us human.

Interestingly, you won’t find some familiar Madisons here: only one poem in the bunch references Big Ten sports, for instance, and sports events in general are largely absent. Other surprising absences include graduations, births, and celebratory occasions in general; civic meetings (though we see plenty of political protest); pharmacies, gas stations; buses; legal proceedings and court rooms; accountants, dentists, pediatricians; prisons; hotels; churches and religious ritual are mostly absent, and the poems that mention them do so negatively or problematically; homeless shelters; gyms; the zoo. While East and West Madison appear again and again, we wonder what happened to South Madison and the North side of town. We hope to continue gathering material—responses and poems—and hear more from and about all of these places and spaces in future projects coming out of this collection.

Places that do appear include the mall, hospitals, highways, streets, and cars (poets clearly write, or conceive of, poems frequently while driving). The University, the Capitol, restaurants, bars. Hiking trails (we write while we walk too) and gardens. The Lakes. The Airport. Museums, the Farmers’ Market. Bike trails, the cemetery and the food pantry make it into the book as well.

Perhaps more interesting than specific places within the city, is the fact that a number of different Madisons emerge. By our quick count, we have included in this book: Prehistoric Madison, Historic Madison, Mythic Madison, Imagined Madison, Madison as regionally “North,” Madison as “Winter,” Madison as “Water,” Madison as “Alcohol,” Homeless Madison, Madison Remembered (frequently blurring into Nostalgic, or *Sostalgic*, meaning the longing for places that no longer exist, Madison), Madison as Protest, Cultured Madison, Eco-Madison (sometimes the same as Madison as “Nature”). Perhaps we don’t need to add that for poets of color and immigrant poets, the connotations surrounding Madison and particular places can have very different meanings. While we have attempted to include a variety of stories, representing different people and populations, as well as different emotional connections to the same setting or place, that’s a complicated, complex task, whose dimensions we only began to appreciate fully while reading submissions. As with so many projects involving research, narrative, and people, more knowledge has only made us more aware of our lack of knowledge, and sometimes, our lack of connections to the people whose work we would like to include.

We are all too aware of how many voices we are still missing.

As we read, winnowed, discussed, read again, re-read, reshuffled the piles, we became aware that we weren't reading only for variety of locations. We wanted a variety of voices, experiences, forms, techniques, approaches. It seemed important, increasingly, throughout the process, to include both poems that were highly polished and crafted, and poems that attempted a more casual tone. The blending of voices, the process of poeming, is crucial to our project, more so perhaps, than the "final" product, itself a part of that process and not an end.

Initially, we thought maybe we wouldn't want too much repetition of subject or location, but as we read, repetitions became interesting. What does it say, for example, that we have six poems referencing Johnson Street and none on Gorham? Themes emerged: winter, water, alcohol, politics. Not always pretty, but these same preoccupations and patterns hold true for the larger state; interestingly, Madison, as the poets map it, has particular aspects and qualities, but also doesn't always look so different from the rest of Wisconsin—a conclusion that challenges predominant media narratives from different ends of the political spectrum, as well as Madison's exceptionalist vision of itself.

While we attempted to select poems that have significance and meaning, whether or not a reader knows Madison, the backstory—historical, political, geographical—is usually interesting and often necessary in order to appreciate a poem fully, and we include as many of these little stories as we were able to gather from the poets. "Exposure," by Joseph Briggs, for instance, requires knowledge part present and part absent in the poem itself: George McGovern's daughter, Teresa, for whom a treatment center in Madison is named, died of exposure here. Whether or not you know her story or connection to the former senator and presidential candidate, however, its importance is clear, more so perhaps in the current political economic situation: "These people are shivering in yards knee deep in snow / and they're not warning anyone about any one thing." Although such details are a matter of public record, we, too, sometimes needed to look them up in order to read better and more deeply. In this case, a sensational public story becomes particular and localized at the same time that it is *more* familiar, with its relation to *Wisconsin, winter, alcohol*. These are some of the Madisons that we may not often see, or look away from if we do.

Maybe that's the principal value of this project (because we did ask ourselves, repeatedly, throughout the reading period what all the work was for, anyway): the knowledge that poets (and by extension, all creative artists) can provide a different perspective, a different way of seeing and thinking about place, community, culture(s), offering narratives that complement, complicate, and fill out the work of journalists and historians and social scientists. Sara Parrell's poem, one of a number we received around the 2011 protests in Madison, does just that in an economical and effective eight lines, elaborating on the newspaper fact that begins it using local language—"Ash Wednesday Ambush"—as well as personal observation of protestors, politicians, and the crowds that watched from windows.

As we map the stories we tell about place, we find that our understanding of place is inseparable from those very stories. Rather than simplifying narrative into a series of bulleted sentences, we need poems such as Fabu's "Macaja Revels," reminding us of the many real experiences that go otherwise unrecorded:

Who remembers Macaja Revels, Black settler in the 1800s  
Who camped at a refreshing stream  
Eighteen miles north of the village of Madison  
but moved on, maybe knowing there would be no welcome in Madison.

Who remembers that Black people came to Wisconsin  
to be free?

A humorous, but nonetheless serious, example of a poem that makes sense of the local within its local context, is the poem “Orange Custard Chocolate Chip,” by Frannie Zellman, based not only on the knowledge that the UW–Madison makes its own famous ice cream and serves it at the student union, but that the sensory experience it implies contrasts with the language of academics that also pervades Madison, embodying in the poem the tension between the cerebral and the sensual. This combination of sensual and cerebral happens in another way, with local food again as metaphor, in Robin Chapman’s “This Was a Great Day,” which begins with the image of a heritage species of Brandywine tomato and spirals out to historical events of the Spanish Armada, the English occupation of Ireland, and subsequent oppression and famine, before returning to the poet’s house, garden, life. Although these are well-known facts in comparison to the importance of locally made ice cream in Madison, they are more deeply meaningful in the context of the 2011 protests and ongoing political divisions throughout Wisconsin and the US. The poem concludes:

we contra danced  
at Gates of Heaven Synagogue to live fiddle and banjo.  
And though the world’s still a mess,  
and still we’re working on separation  
of church and state, world without war,  
that tonic of lively minds mining history  
and heritage seed stocks gave me hope,  
and scope for local work, a vision of future feasts.

This project has made us more aware of the importance of “scope for local work,” of poetry as it engages with specific times, places, and people. Poetry as witness, poetry as ethnography, poetry as history. Poems also give insight into the stories we inherit, and the stories we tell ourselves unconsciously, and help us bring our blind spots into focus. Kimberly Blaeser’s “Exit #135” illustrates this idea beautifully, bringing personal observation and a Native American scholar’s critical acumen to bear on some ways contemporary Madison is not at all exceptional, but rather a road stop on the American highway, just one more Cracker Barrel. Blaeser’s powerful poem points to the expanding tension between *local* and *national* culture in an increasingly corporate-driven world, and to the retail exploitation of this confected local and of manufactured desire for it, giving us in the Big Box store a story about “ourselves” predicated on whiteness, “Holy oleo,” an American Dream. Blaeser’s poem calls collective nostalgia into question, in how it purports to preserve, but actually obliterates, and always has, the local:

In truth I live as tracker, a sniffer of memories, collector of stimuli—  
I am a walking butter churn, a contradiction in terms, or the future perfect tense:  
*We will have been feasting of the forbidden fruit for years on end.*

Indeed, many of the poems in this book question and complicate narrative, rather than accepting dominant stories that, depending on one’s politics beliefs and economic realities, sometimes sound good or not (e.g., “Most Livable City,” “77 Square Miles Surrounded by Reality”). We love Madison as much as the next neighbor, but we see this critique as invaluable as Madison moves into a new chapter of its own. Our population is changing rapidly, diversifying and growing. Can a poetry anthology like this one help us understand the coming challenges and better engage with our neighbors? We believe so, and a number of poems write directly to interracial communication, white privilege, lack of knowledge, and the difficulties of creating that knowledge. That is a theme of Martín Espada’s “St.

Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp” about his experiences with poverty in Madison as a young person. Of Daniel Kunene’s “They Hang People, Don’t They,” which addresses the recent hanging of a black effigy from the roof of a fraternity. Of Tim Yu’s “Chinese Silence No. 19,” which also calls out racism powerfully and directly in the poem, and in the backstory he provides. Timothy Walsh approaches the subject with subtle irony and from the point of view of privilege in “At the Asian IGA by Monona Bay,” exploring the exoticization and asking why the (white) poet-observer can’t, or doesn’t, see himself in these terms, as well as the lack of imagination that also underlies this failure:

I’ve taken a liking to these sesame candies  
and seaweed crackers,  
which I know is partly an excuse  
to walk these aisles  
and feel I’m off in some foreign land  
as I pass by roots stacked in split wood boxes,  
bunches of healing herbs hanging from rafters,  
and shark fin soup in cans.

Outside, walking toward home round the bay,  
I try to see the dandelions, mallards, and gulls  
as if the world were an Asian market—  
to make the beige slipcovers slip from the familiar,  
revealing the bright-patterned upholstery beneath.

Walsh’s poem raises a number of other important and related questions, not the least of which (as an editor) is why aren’t more poems set inside in places like gyms and daycares and offices and schools? Is it because these places don’t strike us as *poetic*? Why do we so often name unfamiliar, travel destinations in poems and not the places close to home? Why include *Athens* or *Parthenon* in a poem, for instance, but not Camp Randall Stadium, Regent Market Co-op, South Madison Library, the Lussier Center, or Villager Mall? Do we forget to name places nearby because, as Walsh writes, they have “beige slipcovers”? Because we rush through them without seeing? Because we internalize the sense that those places really are not significant outside of, and sometimes even within, the city or neighborhoods where we live?

Who do we see? What is invisible to us and why? What do we name? How do we name it? What meanings do we assign those names? On one level, we are talking about *signs*, denotations and connotations, the stuff of literary theory. On a level that is more meaningful to us as poets, activists, and neighbors, we are talking about people and relationships. We are also talking about people valuing the places they live in the context of a state with more people leaving than arriving, where, especially, our children leave to look for opportunity elsewhere. Where even *Madison* seems to have lost some of its cultural capital, as its capital and the state’s capital literally and figuratively drain away. How can we better see and value where we live and who we live with?

Moisés Villavicencio Barras, an immigrant from Mexico to Madison who has lived here for a decade, offers us both an insider and an outsider’s perspective on the city in lyrical poems written by him in Spanish and in English, as well as another take on why writing the local is vital. For Villavicencio Barras, it is a matter of imaginative, artistic, metaphorical and literal survival. Although both languages appear in the anthology, here is an excerpt from the English version of “Reasons in the Winter”:

I write so my sons one day know that I have another voice  
not the voice that tells them when to turn on and off their eyes,

but rather the voice that you also recognize in the almond trees,  
and in the movement of the clouds.  
A voice that was born many centuries ago  
with rattles and feathers.  
I write so that you find yourselves before my words.  
I write for those who don't write and laugh alone,  
for those who love and walk among the dust.  
I write, then, to name the things that we don't have,  
to invent them,  
for those who undo themselves from sorrow,  
for those who strike us and make us prisoners,  
for those below the water's roots.  
I write so that together we are amazed.  
I write for those who cannot see light and hold it in their hands  
like our sons do every morning.  
I write so that with your laughter you disperse the rhythm, the song.

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from Sarah, June 12, 2013 8:13 AM

It's always good to end where you are; as a 40-year old with two cars and two kids, I'm learning that. I write this from the Barriques Cafe on Old Sauk Road, a couple of tables over from my neighbor, Barry, who is on sabbatical this year and comes here to write and work. We live in a neighborhood where streets are named for famous golf courses: Pebble Beach; Harvest Hill; Oak Ridge. This is a transitional season: my daughter just boarded the school bus en route to her second to last day of second grade at Crestwood Elementary. My son rides up with classmates to the Dells, to Chula Vista water park, for Jefferson Middle School's end-of-year field trip. Reading this over, again I'm fascinated by names, by the names, by what and how we name.

After I finish writing this, I plan to drive to my neighborhood grocery store, Willy West, over in Middleton, where I might see my poet friend Andy. Then I'll mail off the pre-ordered copies of Villavicencio Barras's just published poetry collection, *Luz de Todos los Tiempos/Light of All Times* (which itself shuttles between Madison and Oaxaca) to destinations around the state and beyond. Tonight my husband arrives home from his weekly commute to Waukesha, then I'll head to an informational session at Westgate Mall to learn about my son's upcoming youth choir trip to Aberdeen, Scotland.

Given that paragraph, *Madison* still seems a little like an idea on paper, all coming and going, arriving, pausing, departing again. Porous. Permeable. Yesterday a tree crew trimmed and cleaned up a next door stand of willows. Those giant trees have anchored the neighborhood since we moved here, while the other trees grew up around them. All day the men hoisted themselves higher and lower through the branches, to the continuous sonic distraction of saws and tree chippers. Now this morning, the trees still stand, but I notice the silence, along with new interstices, more air, more movement. That's how I feel reading over these poems as well. Have we mapped anything? Maybe this collection of texts is less a map and more a gathering of motions, unlike what you'll find on bike path or beltline. Maybe it's a handful of moments saved out of a continual barrage of daily events. Maybe it's to pause, before we head out the door.



# Weekday Service

## Welcome Aboard!

Metro's Transfer Point System provides connections in all directions at the North, South, East, West and Middleton Transfer Points for convenient service to many destinations throughout the Madison area.

Be sure to look at both the Weekday and Supplemental School Day Service maps for weekday travel, and the Weekend and Holiday map for travel on those days. Locate the route(s) closest to your origin and destination point. Now that you've determined which route(s) you need, refer to the appropriate schedule(s) in the Ride Guide.



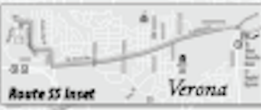
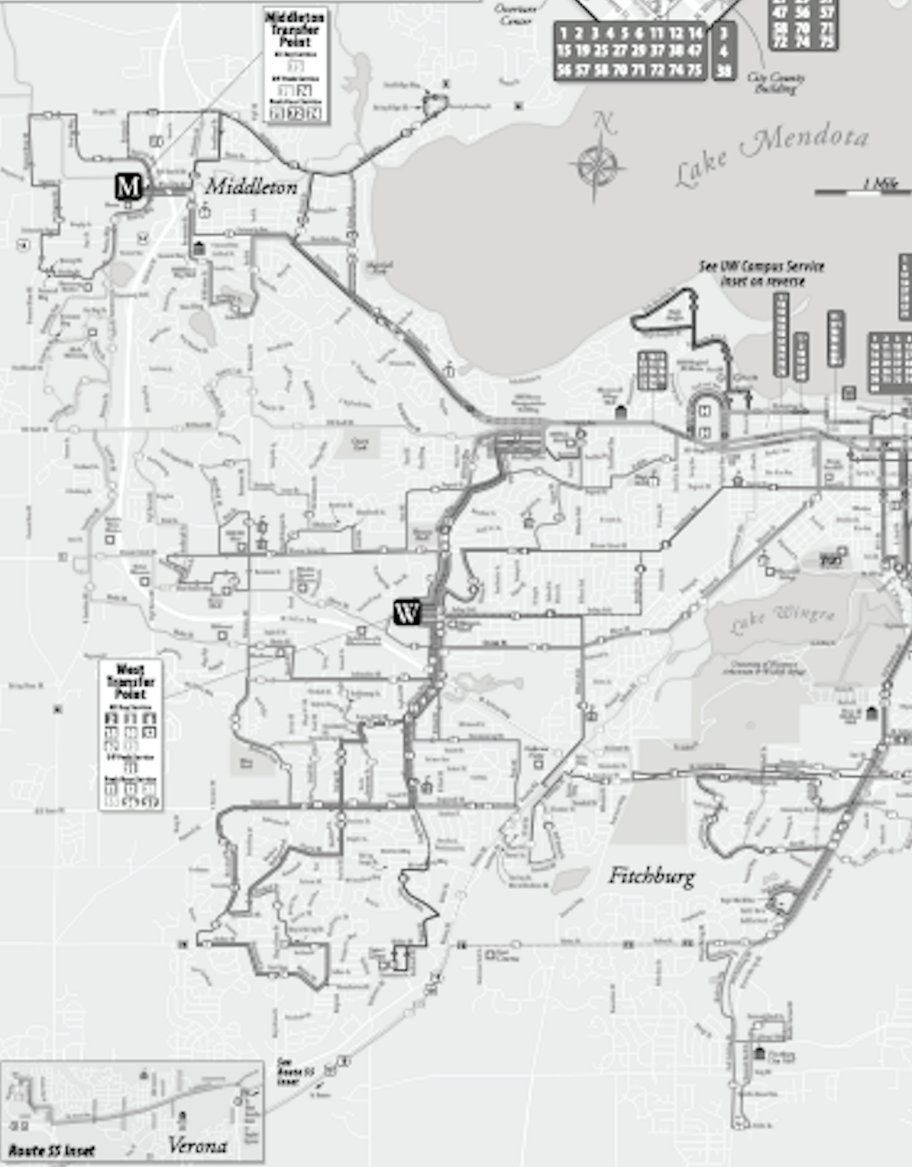
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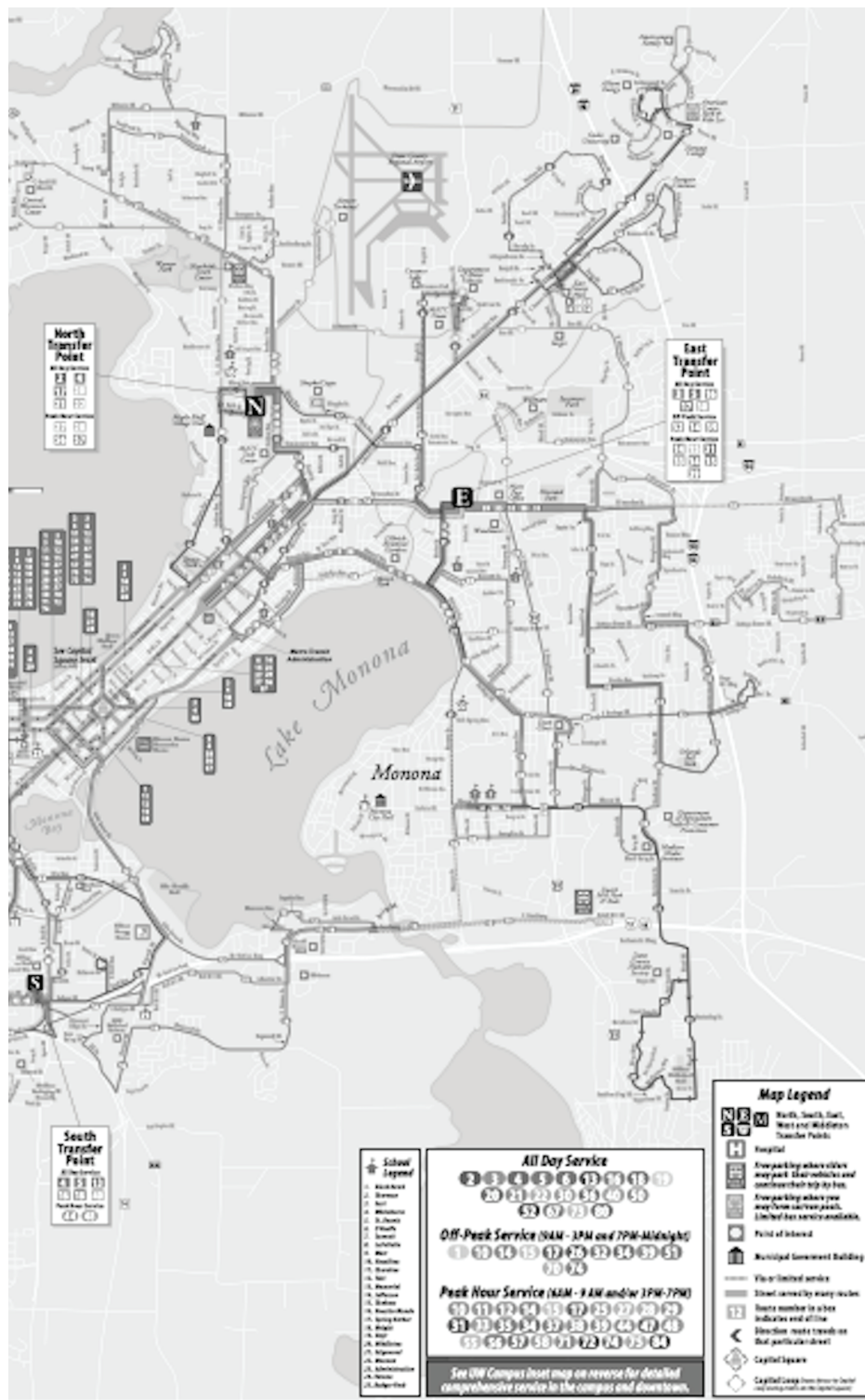
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• Weekdays: 6:15 AM–6:30 PM • Saturdays: 8 AM–6:30 PM

• Sundays & Holidays: 9:00 PM–4:30 PM

## Capitol Square & Capital Loop Detour Inset Bus Stops for Weekday Base Service







ARBORETUM WALK

The trail to the spring snakes in  
and out of the woods, snow packed

and easy through stalks of tall  
prairie grass stiffened and gold in the clean

winter sun. Ice fishers hunker  
down to their work, far off on an ocean

of white, their voices travel  
upstream, deep and rusty as barking

dogs from a distance. Follow  
the sound of spring water bubbling

to the surface, forming  
wreaths of low-lying vapor. Find

hope in the watercress, impossibly  
green alongside the snowy bank.

## ROSEMARY ZURLO-COVA

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### STATE STREET, LATE NOVEMBER

After rain, the street smells of fresh  
meat and metal. A trail of leaves

iridescently gold on wet  
pavement, marks a line

on the sidewalk. We keep  
ourselves to the left, hand

in hand, our shoulders hunched  
towards winter. Low

to the ground a crumpled brown  
paper bag rolls over the street

like a small animal rushing  
towards shelter.

WAITING FOR THE TORNADO

Siren sounds.  
Sups pack us off  
to the hall.  
Giggling, work-punchy,  
we sit and make jokes  
about what might happen  
to the call center  
and all of Blackhawk Av  
if the wind swooped down.  
God does not love our calls.  
Automatons one shade  
removed from bots,  
we start to remember  
when we were new  
and cared how the sample  
responded when we didn't know  
the people in it were called sample.

Tornadoes can't be controlled.  
This one menaces the southwest corner  
of Madison,  
then slams south, like a gang  
of motorcycle riders high  
on good whiskey.

Hard to get back to work,  
asking people about their phone service.

Something in us has left  
and is flying over the whole of South Madison,  
coiling, spiraling down  
and wrecking all the wires.

**ORANGE CUSTARD CHOCOLATE CHIP**

Illogical  
until you parse the thick  
orange and rich  
custard component  
and amplify the meaning  
of an unrelenting  
depth of chips of  
chocolate.

So worth the Memorial Union  
ice cream line.

Then, if it's sunny out,  
you can quantify  
the Lake Mendota ducks.

**BEFORE THUMBIN' TO MADISON**

I'm hunkered down in the driver's seat  
of Ray's 12 year old VW bus,  
the long stick shift rod pressed  
into my right calf.

It was a beautiful summer day—  
but not anymore.

My brother is under the front hood cursing,  
wiping dirty oil off his hands, again.

The song "Keep on Truckin'" thumps  
the radio air, while the outside air is smokin'.

We nearly made it to Madison this time.

On the shoulder of Hwy 151, north of Columbus,  
oak trees are sway-waving their leaves skyward  
and daisies are flower-child smiling in the median.

"Strip this bus and sell it, Ray.

Its memories are all done being made."



**CHINESE SILENCE NO. 19**

*After Billy Collins, "Kathmandu"*

It was sleeting in Madison, Wisconsin,  
and hail was falling in Duluth,  
but still, the access roads to the malls  
were thick with station wagons,  
all waiting for the books of the Laureate,  
whose title pages had been smeared with ink  
by the thumb of the poet,  
to smear their words across the mild brains  
of these Sunday crossword solvers.

Don't worry, there are plenty of copies,  
the kid at the cell-phone kiosk said  
as he laid out headsets and Blackberries  
assembled by silent Chinese fingers.  
The woman at the Dead Sea minerals booth agreed,  
pouring out exfoliant scrubs and mud soaps  
onto the desiccated floor.

But still they waited, hunkered down  
in their Subarus with windshield wipers flapping,  
hoping to make a connection  
the way one might hope to be connected  
by a long chain of allusions  
to Ezra Pound and Li Po  
only without the need to read  
anything dull or unpleasant.

Meanwhile the Laureate is riding  
in the backseat of a New York taxi  
blackening his lashes with ink  
and pulling his eyes up at the corners,  
demonstrating to his driver his belief  
that someday we will all turn Chinese  
and that we go to China when we die—  
a silent realm of modest ink-drawn birds,  
a middlebrow kingdom of solipsism.

---

The driver, the Laureate thinks, must understand this  
because he is already Chinese,  
and although he is not wearing a funny hat  
he receives the words with an authentic silence.

The Laureate's words smear the glass  
as the driver looks out the fogged-up windows  
at the obese children,  
the teenagers shuffling along in their flip-flops,  
ears plugged by headphones,  
and in front of the bookstore, public-radio listeners  
huddling together in the rain,  
awaiting their Chinese afterlives.

1970 BIPOLAR

The marriage exploding  
the morning we walked in silence  
from another psychiatric draft  
of what was to follow  
—guilt, fear, love in question  
always pride.

Is to medicate the only solution?

Along the sidewalk smoldering lines,  
gawkers and uniformed men,  
August 25<sup>th</sup>  
one day after the Sterling Hall bombing—

It gave us a reason to move in closer, share  
some recognition: what is wrong  
in light of what is right—we were both

liberal dreamers used to denial—  
the hard consequence of not feeling enough  
or feeling too fully, taking outcome  
out of the desire for freedom.

THE PARK, MARCH THAW

Everyone is out under the astonishing sky,  
walking the sidewalks like cruise ship passengers  
strolling the promenade.  
Young skate punks and smiling drunks  
intermingle tentatively.  
Halter tops have sprung up, surprising as crocuses.  
Winter huddles in the shade,  
sending out stray fingers of cold  
that shrivel in the sun.  
On a bench, bongo players bongo away—  
dreadlocks and frayed leg jeans—  
gonzo players ecstatic on their bongos.  
A street-crazy in khakis strides briskly by,  
mad as a March hare,  
talking loudly to no one, gesticulating furiously.  
Grackles on the grass perform angular mating rituals,  
black plumage iridescent with hidden greens and purples.  
Underfoot, scraps of foil glint in the sun.  
The ornamental cabbages, flattened and winterkilled,  
are still vaguely purplish-gray.  
Finches and sparrows chirp for sandwich crumbs  
while the bongos bongo on.  
Businessmen in neckties and collars practice nonchalance  
while the bongos bongo on.

THE WILD SWANS AT WINGRA CREEK

On this day of sun-bright snow,  
I stop at Wingra Creek where it empties into the lake,  
and there, a hundred yards offshore,  
a thousand tundra swans brighten the bay—  
a thousand cloud-white swans on the sapphire blue  
of the not-yet-frozen lake.

Earlier, I had been thinking about the perfection  
of the curves of an S,  
how the wandering line makes an almost-circle  
before doubling back—  
and now a thousand graceful swan necks  
trace perfection against the blue.

I suppose it's true, everything they say  
about the S-curve—  
the sigmoid curve or logistic function—  
how it predicts population growth,  
athletic performance,  
the behavior of neural networks and chemical reactions,  
even the growth of tumors—  
and what is the Tao symbol but a swan's neck  
bisecting a circle?

It was Hogarth's "line of beauty," the essence  
of Capability Brown's naturalizing of English landscapes.  
It is the ogee curve we all so love in our crown moldings,  
our furniture and entryways—  
a simple concave running into a convex.  
It is the serpentine way of snakes,  
the switchback of mountain roads,  
the sinuous undulations of a kite's tail in the wind,  
the shape of breaking waves that so entrances us  
for hours.

Once, in Strandhill, I went for a midnight stroll,  
lost my bearings, and got irredeemably lost.  
I walked first one way, then the other, doubling back,  
then doubling back again because of my doubts,  
wandering further and further afield,  
tracing an S over and over in ever-widening arcs.

---

And what I thought of, then as now,  
was the emblem of a swan's neck,  
the circuitous path we're all destined to wander on.

Now, as I watch the chortling, chuffing hubbub  
of these tundra swans,  
I wonder if it was the swan's neck  
that taught us the beauties of curvilinear form,  
the universality of this ever-pliant, shifting shape—  
if it is the swan's neck that sings to us still  
that the world is a vast chorus of vibrations—  
light waves, sound waves, waves of all sorts,  
oscillating filaments, ribbons, and strings,  
the dance of atoms and particles—  
all of them humming, twanging, and crooning  
their characteristic S-shaped vibrations  
that together make up the singing fabric of ourselves,  
this world, all creation.

Yes, I think as I continue on my way,  
the swan is the essence of what is,  
and I smile serenely at every curve  
in the sinuous path.

AT THE ASIAN IGA BY MONONA BAY

I've taken a liking to these sesame candies  
    and seaweed crackers,  
which I know is partly an excuse  
to walk these aisles  
and feel I'm off in some foreign land  
as I pass by roots stacked in split wood boxes,  
bunches of healing herbs hanging from rafters,  
and shark fin soup in cans.

Outside, walking toward home round the bay,  
I try to see the dandelions, mallards, and gulls  
as if the world were an Asian market—  
to make the beige slipcovers slip from the familiar,  
revealing the bright-patterned upholstery beneath.

It's a question of distance, I suppose—  
    the familiar close, the exotic far—  
just as I suppose it comes from looking up at night  
that we think of death as a distance we'll travel  
farther than any distance we've gone...  
    though death, in fact, is never far.

I come to a patch of water mint growing along the shore,  
blue flowered and pungent.  
I snap off a sprig and look up at a bald eagle  
    high in a cottonwood.  
Traffic, purposeful as ants, streams along the distant causeway  
while weed-cutter boats out on the lake,  
    paddlewheels churning,  
fill their gaping, chain-tongued mouths  
with an unending breakfast  
    of green.

**"YOU CAN'T WRITE A POEM ABOUT McDONALD'S"**

Noon. Hunger the only thing  
singing in my belly.  
I walk through the blossoming cherry trees  
on the library mall,  
past the young couples coupling,  
by the crazy fanatic  
screaming doom and salvation  
at a sensation-hungry crowd,  
to the Lake Street McDonald's.  
It is crowded, the lines long and sluggish.  
I wait in the greasy air.  
All around me people are eating—  
the sizzle of conversation,  
the salty odor of sweat,  
the warm flesh pressing out of  
hip huggers and halter tops.  
When I finally reach the cash register,  
the counter girl is crisp as a pickle,  
her fingers thin as french fries,  
her face brown as a bun.  
Suddenly I understand cannibalism.  
As I reach for her,  
she breaks into pieces  
wrapped neat and packaged for take-out.  
I'm thinking, how amazing it is  
to live in this country, how easy  
it is to be filled.  
We leave together, her warm aroma  
close at my side.  
I walk back through the cherry trees  
blossoming up into pies,  
the young couples frying in  
the hot, oily sun,  
the crowd eating up the fanatic,  
singing, my ear, eye, and tongue  
fat with the wonder  
of this hungry world.



## RONALD WALLACE

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### EARLY BRASS

*For Emily*

When five balding men in long-tailed tuxedos  
rise to the bright occasion, their brass  
sacbuts, cornet, and slide trumpet in hand, O  
the chansons and canzoni, the madrigals, the sass  
they pull out of their bold embouchures! Their bravado's  
a coinage of lieder and light so daft  
no music could, under sweet heaven, surpass  
the New York Cornet & Sacbut Ensemble's.

Yet last night in the lunchroom of Van Hise School,  
when my sixth-grade daughter and her oversized trombone—  
all silverware, sour milk, and John Philip Sousa—  
sashayed on stage at a slapstick recital,  
she sounded (By God!) not altogether un-  
like the New York Cornet & Sacbut Ensemble.

## ANGELA VORAS-HILLS

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### ALARM

When the apartment's pool gate  
was padlocked, we'd crawl over the fence  
  
with a bottle of Cab, listen to sirens  
screaming down Johnson. Strangers  
  
were fighting in the street, a neighbor played  
bongos on his balcony. We learned  
  
to replace batteries, test our detectors  
early. We left a broomstick  
  
in the sliding door track. For a week,  
water dripped into our bathroom  
  
from the third floor, filling our cups  
in fifteen-minute increments.  
  
The yard was consistently littered  
with contents from the same third floor unit:  
  
a milk glass lamp without bulb  
or shade, "The Good Son" on VHS, pink  
  
carnations with wire stems in a tangle.  
She must've pulled the alarm  
  
before throwing herself onto the lawn.  
We stayed in bed, watching neighbors  
  
stumble around her body in the dark  
until the firemen knocked, calling us out  
  
to stand pajama'd with everyone else  
in the parking lot,  
  
where once a doe ran through,  
her white tail raised.

## ANGELA VORAS-HILLS

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### WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

Children and pregnant women  
should avoid eating yellow  
perch, bluegill, inland trout.

No one should eat the muskie  
from Lake Monona. Last summer,  
boys dove into the lake's belly

under a full moon. Behind them, the city  
lit the shore, and from far away, I could see  
what I was missing. After years

near the ocean, I'd been dreaming  
of clean water surrounded by trees.  
When I came home, I needed

a car to find that water.  
On the shoulder of all the highways  
I took to find it, the faces of bloated deer

were painted pink. Each road  
was soaked with blood  
until it rained. There were no children

running through the fields  
as I'd imagined. The beach I live near  
in the city is clean enough

for mallards, who live here year-round  
and rest in pairs in the garden.  
My backyard is big, but squirrels

empty the feeder before cardinals  
can find it. Cats dig up my pansies.  
Weeks after the screech owls nested

in the tree across the street, the tree  
was sprayed blue and cut down.  
I began counting

---

the feathered-bodies on curbs  
and center-lines. As I drove  
to work, watching the honey locust

lose its leaves, fall skipped winter  
completely, and the lake,  
cold as a restless baby,

was afraid to fall asleep.

**RAZONES EN EL INVIERNO**

*Para Erik, Flavio, Gustavo y Oracio Sosa Villavicencio*

Escribo para que nuestra sangre hable  
con el río de la calle donde nadie sabe de nadie.  
Para que tú desde una esquina de la noche me consumas  
con la fuerza de un barco que se hunde.  
Escribo para que el aire respire aire.  
Escribo para que me piense el musgo del camino.  
Para que me descifre en la pradera el ganso y el búho.  
Escribo cuando tengo hambre,  
cuando estoy por cerrar la puerta de mi alma.  
Escribo para que ustedes me escriban,  
para que me consideren uno de los suyos,  
de los que reúnen semillas y se abrazan con las llamas,  
como si nada pasara y solo yo pasara.  
Escribo para que mis hijos un día sepan que tengo otra voz,  
no la voz del que indica a qué hora apagar o encender la mirada,  
sino la voz que ustedes también reconocen en los almendros,  
y en el movimiento de las nubes,  
voz que desde hace siglos me nace  
con cascabeles y plumas.  
Escribo para que ustedes se hallen ante mis palabras.  
Escribo por los que no escriben y se ríen solos,  
para los que aman y andan entre el polvo.  
Escribo entonces para nombrar las cosas que no tenemos,  
para inventarlas,  
para los que se deshacen de tristeza,  
para los que nos golpean y nos encierran,  
para los que yacen bajo las raíces de las aguas.  
Escribo para que juntos nos asombremos.  
Escribo para los que no pueden ver la luz y sostenerla en sus manos,  
como lo hacen nuestros hijos todas las mañanas.  
Escribo para que ustedes dispersen con su risa el ritmo, el canto.

## MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

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### REASONS IN THE WINTER

*For Erik, Flavio, Gustavo and Oracio Sosa Villavicencio*

I write so our blood speaks  
with the river that is this street,  
here where no one knows about anyone  
so that from one corner of the night you consume me  
with the force of a drowning boat.  
I write so the air breathes air.  
I write so the moss on the path thinks about me,  
so that the goose and that owl on the prairie understand me.  
I write when I am hungry,  
when I am about to close the door of my soul.  
I write so you write me,  
so that you consider me one of yours,  
one of those who gathers seeds and embraces flames,  
as if nothing happened and only I happened.  
I write so my sons one day know that I have another voice  
not the voice that tells them when to turn on and off their eyes,  
*but rather the voice that you also recognize in the almond trees,*  
and in the movement of the clouds.  
A voice that was born many centuries ago  
with rattles and feathers.  
I write so that you find yourselves before my words.  
I write for those who don't write and laugh alone,  
for those who love and walk among the dust.  
I write, then, to name the things that we don't have,  
to invent them,  
for those who undo themselves from sorrow,  
for those who strike us and make us prisoners,  
for those below the water's roots.  
I write so that together we are amazed.  
I write for those who cannot see light and hold it in their hands  
like our sons do every morning.  
I write so that with your laughter you disperse the rhythm, the song.

MADISON

*Para Erin Teksten*

Uno entra en la lluvia como en una historia de relojes y cuervos.  
Reales como el frío sobre las lámparas.  
Vemos de madrugada sus banderas en la ciudad que ignora  
cómo cierras los párpados cuando te azota el viento,  
cómo pronuncias las palabras de golpe aprendidas.  
Uno lejos de todos los espejos  
se observa en las ventanas de autos y vitrinas.  
Uno recuerda una calle, una casa, una mujer enferma  
una ventana abierta que nadie cierra donde las botellas vacías  
se reúnen entre las manos de los amigos muertos.  
Uno no es uno entre tantas preguntas ciertas.  
Ella recuerda las manos de su tío árbol de tamarindo,  
recuerda los días como el agua entre sus piernas,  
recuerda sus primeras lluvias, la cama de cuatro, las manos oscuras.  
Hay remolinos eléctricos que barren las hojas,  
monedas en el aire de una ciudad no aprendida  
por las horas a la deriva por la sal en los ojos y el hambre.  
Uno acostumbrado al día se levanta,  
y encuentra que la nieve bebe la sangre de una conejo herido.  
Uno encuentra la vida y las cosas  
como ese pequeño arcoíris de aceite en la banquetta.

## MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

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### MADISON

*For Erin Teksten*

We step into the rain like into a short story of crows and clocks,  
real like the cold over the streetlamps.  
We see flags of rain in the city that ignores  
how you close your eyes when wind strikes,  
how you say words suddenly learned.  
Away from mirrors we find ourselves  
in the reflection of car windows and displays.  
We remember a street, a house, a sick mother.  
We remember an open window that no one closes  
where empty bottles gather among the hands of dead friends.  
We are not ourselves among certain questions.  
You remember your uncle's hands like a tamarind tree.  
You remember days as the water between your legs.  
You remember your first rains, a bed shared by four shadow hands.  
There are electric whirlpools sweeping leaves,  
coins in the air of an unknown city,  
the hours wandering, hunger and salt burning our eyes.  
We are used to days like these,  
when we wake up to find that the snow  
drinks from the blood of a wounded rabbit.  
We find life and things  
like that small rainbow of car oil on the sidewalk.



**SATURDAY FARM MARKET**

Tables laden with  
earthy dark beets,  
yellow wax beans,  
smooth green beans,  
layers of kale,  
orbs of tomato.

Behind the tables  
are two kinds of faces  
ancient and young, Hmong.  
They blink when I stop  
to run my finger along  
a zucchini or inhale  
some basil.

No one smiles or speaks  
until I pull out my wallet  
to trade one green thing  
for another.

## ANGELA TRUDELL VASQUEZ

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### FAIR OAKS AVE: AUGUST, 2009

Squeal, crash, kaboom,  
glass shattering, spinning,  
out of control, that was me and D  
on Sunday at 6 PM—by 6:02  
it was all over maybe two minutes,  
maybe less, the quickest thing  
to happen to me yet,  
an instant unwritten  
goes really, really, bad  
and five lives hang in the balance  
and are spared, intervention of seat belts,  
airbags, a well built car, God's hand  
or a Guardian Angel, maybe for all of us  
it wasn't our time to go yet.

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**BLACK & WHITE (1966)—AN UNNUMBERED AUTO-HISTORICAL SERIES**

*Artists have it all when they are born and it just comes out at the right time.*  
—Ellsworth Kelly

She said *paint sky*  
So I do                      black sky                      cloud thick sky  
   new moon sky                      rural Missouri sky  
   before stars sky  
   three coats of cheap tempera for so little blank  
   to show through sky

Maybe it's lonely at four-years-old sky, but I don't think so. Not yet.

More like Lutheran kindergarten in a church-basement sky  
lights out before I'm tired staring out the window every night sky  
back to the Ozarks' caves & collapsed arcs after riots  
in Los Angeles sky  
white strait-jacket dress at the Christmas show sky  
told war happens *far away* after another evening news sky

For my teacher it is *why did you do that sky*  
*black is not a color sky*  
calling my mother at work when I don't reply *didn't follow*  
*directions/girls don't usually/bad example/anything wrong at home!*  
*why don't you go to church on Sunday sky*

For my mother it is worn-out by evening *why make ugly/can't you be*  
*creative at home sky*

It is neither of them knows Color Field Painting but then I didn't either sky

For Ellsworth Kelly it is *Black Over White* hard-edged sky  
& *camofleur* of WWII/three kinds of disguise—*mimesis/crysis/dazzle*—sky  
& *countershade*/maximum disruptive contrast/eliminate shadow sky  
& *I wanted to be anonymous sky*

It is what/how/why are we hiding sky

& Miranda v. Arizona Vatican Index of Banned Books ends *Dark Shadows* Second Wave N.O.W. founded Indira Gandhi Freedom of Information Act Beatles at Candlestick Park Botswana/Lesotho/Barbados Independence bombing Hanoi color TV sets Gemini yields to Apollo Draft Deferment starts first Kwanzaa Black Panther Party founded Joseph Brodsky returns from exile HIV brought to the Americas China's Cultural Revolution Martin Luther King struck by a rock in Chicago Stephanie Kwolek never gets to be a doctor & invents Kevlar instead *We Real Cool!*

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*Ariel/Live or Die/Necessities of Life sky*

& can't keep writing the same when no one asks what we repetitive for  
a reason lacking audience response picture lying in the dark picking out  
scraps of ideas & things wondering what *your* 1966 was like poem in here  
somewhere not *nothing, not nothing*, but everything sky

It's picking up fragments one Sunday in January after dusting a poetry  
chap by that same teacher Mildred Broedehoeft off a packed attic shelf  
before hearing Michael Penn read "For Rudolf" at The Fountain, then  
turning a MMoCA corner into the black & white room *naming the colors*  
neither abstract nor anonymous sky

It's the rectangle of the cubby where we tuck our coats/ the rect-  
angle of windows that do not exist in this classroom  
& the longest I have ever reflected before replying sky

ODE TO THE CROSSING GUARD

*For Russell, who watches over Edgewood & Monroe*

Who asks my son where his sister  
has gone to college and how she likes it.  
Who waves as if he wants  
to hand me a cloud  
as I pass his corner morning and afternoon.  
Who hands my kids a Mother's Day  
card and tells them to sign and give it to me.  
Who is happy to hear *Northwestern*  
because *I'm from Chicago*.  
Who yells *slow down* at the cars

even when there aren't kids waiting to cross  
this busy road that killed another cat last night.  
Who holds back drivers while  
bicyclists escape  
another face-to-face with death.  
Who never misses a school day.  
Who teases my son for not wearing  
a coat in the cold then shares the joke  
with a shout across the street at me later.  
Who has pieced us together over years

of bringing our neighborhood peace.  
Who arrives early with his collection  
of orange cones then sits in the car  
reading the paper until it's time to center  
them in his intersection. Who says *hello, hello, hello, hello*,  
each greeting as cheerful as the first. Who calls me *young lady*.  
Who crosses over one afternoon  
to gift me with a folded clipping  
pointing at the thumb-sized photo, *Isn't this your smiling  
face?* Whose name I only just now think to ask.

THE SEARCH

now the street  
is filled  
only with faces—

faces glued  
to broken-house windows—  
faces hung  
from twisted tree branches—  
faces encased  
in blistered concrete—

faces slashed and scared—

faces of white  
    of black  
    of red—  
and here and there  
a face of blue  
(premature or unexpected?)

The face across the street  
has not smiled for weeks —I knew him  
when a smile hid his  
face.

There is no more music, and  
someone said  
they took away the breeze, too.  
They hauled off the poets  
when they refused to have their  
faces  
changed.

They haven't found me yet.  
Sometimes I wish they would—  
there's no one here  
to talk  
    with...

PERSEPHONE AT THE MALL

*Sleepwalking.*

That's what you think  
when you see a girl walking  
alone at West Towne Mall; *she's*  
*sleepwalking*, trying on the allure  
of the body like the platform sandals  
and mini-skirts you wore at her age  
that have suddenly come back; *she's*  
*sleepwalking*, her body a new  
continent she is exploring,  
her breasts taut under the black  
burnt-out velvet shirt,  
her legs endless columns of light  
spilling from short-shorts  
purchased at the Gap; *she's*  
*sleepwalking*, entranced  
with the spell  
of the body, how it drifts  
on the surface  
of the bustling crowd,  
intricate as  
the lily she seems  
dressed to resemble,  
the book of myths  
open between her legs,  
though she does not  
know the story in the book; *she*  
*sleepwalks*, not knowing  
because she does not  
see herself, does not notice  
how men's glances  
strip her of being, this girl  
who slinks and provokes  
without knowing  
the danger, only  
that men look and look; *she*  
*sleepwalks*, and you know  
that she likes it, as you did  
when you hemmed your  
good-girl skirt into a micro-mini  
and ran to the bus-stop,  
all legs yourself, nothing

---

touching your skin but air,  
your long hair falling  
around you like a veil,  
while your stepmother  
screamed, *Tramp!* and *You'll*  
*be sorry* at your back;  
*she sleepwalks*, parting  
the crowds of people  
before her as if this  
is the first day of the world,  
the mall a meadow where bees hum,  
where every nameless flower  
anoints her with pollen; *she*  
*sleepwalks*, lost so far inside  
her body you ask, was I ever  
that young? *She sleepwalks*;  
and it is not envy you feel  
but fear—so many eyes  
watching from between blades  
of new grass—*she sleepwalks*;  
and despite what you see,  
screaming in the soot-blackened  
glass of the mirror before you,  
staring through the window  
into you she has become,  
*she sleepwalks*;  
and there is nothing,  
not one thing  
you can do or say  
to wake her.



PERSEPHONE, PRETENDING

*Madison, Wisconsin*

When the news said that the girl  
who had been missing almost four days,  
only to be found in a marshy area  
at the edge of our medium-sized city,  
was faking it all along, I wondered  
what made her do it. I'd seen  
her face—bright smile, dark eyes—  
on a flier masking-taped to a pillar  
at the airport the week before,  
felt the involuntary frisson  
of the curious, then only fear  
at the thought of a girl *abducted*  
in this place once voted  
“America’s most livable city.”

She must have wanted  
something she couldn't name,  
that good girl with good grades  
who looks like so many girls  
in my own classes, but who keeps  
changing her story. It happened  
here; no, it happened there; no,  
*I really just wanted to be alone.*  
Then she turns her face away,  
tired of telling her tale,  
not sure what to make up next  
or where invention will take her.

“Fictitious victimization disorder,”  
*Time* magazine claims, but I wonder  
what else, imagining her in the marsh,  
cold, unrepentant, powerless, her mind  
gone muddy with lack of sleep,  
no way out of this lie she almost  
believes, of the lies ahead,  
nothing but memory of the rope,  
duct tape, cough medicine,  
and knife she bought at the PDQ  
with her own cash, wanting  
to be taken by someone so badly  
she takes us, she does it to herself.

**THE LIBRARY AT MIDTERM**

All knowledge in one location: Piled  
Up, collected, catalogued, filed.

The shelves lie empty, unused, old  
Abandoned years ago. In cold

December, students roam the stacks  
As in a daze, transfixed by facts

Pictured on a screen, the shelves  
Reflect their still divided selves

That like machines, they want to keep  
Reliable, useful, and cheap.

The books, unread, gather dust.  
They make up stories. They must.

LISTENING TO BLUES AT THE BARRYMORE

It's not so much  
the notes he hits

or the deep, bass chords  
that thump  
you in the gut.

Not the guitarist's body  
language when he  
bends a string,  
curls his lip

Not the riffs  
the arpeggios that glide  
smooth down  
settle warm.

It's more the exquisite  
tension  
just before  
the next note. The one

you know  
is coming, the one  
you have to hear  
but crave  
the wait too.

It's like leaving a gift  
unopened a little longer, like home  
around the next curve  
after a long time gone.

It's the *frisson*  
of your lover's hand  
just before.

**JEANIE TOMASKO**

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**POEM STARTING AT A BUBBLER IN JAMES MADISON  
MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SEVENTIES**

First we say some small  
things at the bubbler  
in some high school  
hallway and next

you walk me home  
through puddles and  
April (will always remind)  
streets, and then

you're there I'm here  
past years of puddles  
and spring  
everytime still is

I KNOW A BANK WHERE THE WILD THYME BLOWS

Judy I still  
remember how we  
would sometimes drive  
through the arboretum  
on our way  
to the Park Street  
A & W for root  
beer floats (*Too  
much*, we decided  
in the car, *too much Spenser,  
Donne and Shakespeare*)  
and how we slowed beside  
a stand of lilac trees  
posturing in pale blue  
and laced with drowsy musk,  
beckoning with fingers  
dripping petals;  
and how we ran to them,  
our summer dresses lifting,  
bare arms raised, our hair  
gilded with pollen as we  
assumed our places, mimicking  
the age-old choreography  
turn for turn, dip for  
dip, enchanted  
as Titania,  
insatiable  
as Mab.

EXPLICATION OF A TRUE STORY

*For Lani, my college roommate*

Now that you've told me  
what my father did to you  
in the boat on Lake Mendota  
the summer we both turned twenty—  
that there had been a moment when he  
carefully released his grip  
from the throttle of the Evinrude  
and snaked his hand down inside  
the top of your magenta bathing suit—  
I understand *the plot*.

And when I think about your face,  
your startled rage, your fierce blush,  
I recall that your assaulter was a man  
who went about his everyday affairs  
a scion of respectability, genteel  
down to his cordovans: the linen  
handkerchief, the perfect press  
in his Van Heusen shirt, the *ching*  
of change in a front pocket—  
These are the *symbolic elements*.

I did see him naked once,  
when I was nine. He lay sprawled  
across his bed, snoring like a diesel  
in the slatted sunlight.  
Between his legs lay coiled his  
enormous apparatus—a gilded pile  
of gunnery which even then I sensed  
boded mighty ill for somebody, sometime.  
This you would call *foreshadowing*.

And I'm sure that every thought  
you have of me dissolves into that day  
on the lake. You have it memorized  
by now, and I am always at the heart of it:  
the other one violated—the daughter, mortified.  
And that would be the *moral* of the story.  
The *message*. The *denouement*.

THE GHOST ON JOHNSON STREET

The neighborhood, sometimes tatty  
occasionally postmodern  
mostly gabled Victorian houses  
with porches smiling in the sun  
was perfect for student renters.

My father abandoned the South  
in 1907 to spend his freshman year here  
before the harsh winter chased him home.

Did he walk this street every day to class?  
A fleeting thought until I stood  
before the yellow brick building,  
Romanesque arches with two story columns  
and a bulbous window.

The green awning read  
Pinkus McBrides' Market & Deli.  
Above it—1893—worked in brick.

Is this the place  
he got the idea for the book store  
and chili parlor across the street  
from what became his own alma mater?

Other than a nickname  
he carried for life, is this where the idea  
for success began?

Memory invaded and I stood on another sidewalk  
in another city outside old Presbyterian Hospital  
smoking a cigarette and waiting for results of the spinal tap.  
I knew he was dying.

Today he would be one hundred and fourteen years old.  
No. Today, not was, but is.

MORNINGS AT RESURRECTION CEMETERY

They're up early  
—already dressed as I speed by,  
their regal shoulders cloaked  
with vines or Rome, or all the in-between

Nature and Antiquity chant their stony duet  
from every other gravestone as  
finials of devotion shimmer in the sharp soft light

The hyphens are still  
rubbing their eyes, and  
all the *PEACE*'s and *REST*'s are  
doing their morning stretches

*Loving Wife's* and *Dear Father's*  
are busy not planning their days,  
the devotional flowers gather  
the early rays to  
grow in the plastic way,  
fading, like elderly memories,  
by the day

As the quiet understanding of  
long marriages shimmers within the dew,  
the theoretical loneliness of the unmarried  
*SISTER* has nothing to do now  
but follow around the gravestone's shadow

And granite angels oversee a few  
names whose lives were incomplete  
sentences in early chapters  
of the family story



**CAHOOTS: WISCONSIN MAKES A HOUSE CALL**

We enter the brawl of voices, a mob of signs  
the cameras flare, the sirens thrum and  
howl around the press of people—

It's a clumsy chore of taking it to the streets  
leaning against the beaten door of arson  
or the plate glass of breaking and entering  
and then prepare for what's ahead: joining  
the stream of total strangers, we are in cahoots  
with a common indignation, a despair  
we declare as our own, climbing step and  
stair to wait, we aim to find a place  
to stand together for days if we must.

And you. While you memorize your lines,  
and a smug buttress of millionaires  
smoke fat cigars and reassure you,  
we jam the corridors and crawl through  
windows. We don't ask for the man  
of the house, we don't leave when  
told to go. By now, this much you must know:  
We are coming in.

But this is not the house of corrections  
where we surrender ourselves,  
this is not the house of striking out,  
this is not the house of bums,  
of aimless punks, or derelict junkies  
tying off on the marble floors  
amidst high-collared, learned men. No.

This is the house that we have built  
and come to declare our own this time  
each stone and stair, each frame and border  
Whose house? Our house? And we expect  
the doors to open to the glare of hunger  
to the bone-struck wind of resistance  
to the change in furious weather now—

And you over there? Pull up a chair  
it's time we had this talk.

## HEATHER SWAN

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### EARLY MORNING ON LAKE WINGRA

At dawn, the shoreline  
opens like a clam shell,  
doubling the sanguine  
of October trees,  
mist lifting along the hinge.

The canoe wrinkles  
the surface as we cross,  
surface of melon and blue.  
Distant gulls arc and press;  
geese, grounded silhouettes.

After twelve years,  
you've steered us here  
through traffic, tumult, cold.  
And all you want is this:  
To know we can empty  
and be filled again  
by this early sun  
dissected by trees,  
this silent symphony of light.

LIFE LIST

It was such a little thing, biking the lakeshore path,  
only a mile or two but the long way back  
from work: ten extra minutes, shade, rich aroma  
of earth and algae instead of exhaust and sun-baked streets,  
and then you'd be home, heating burritos for supper,  
thrust into the swirl of homework and soccer practice,  
hoping to have whatever your sons might need.

But that was hundreds of miles ago.  
They're grown men, and you haven't worked  
since the twentieth century, time receding  
so fast, soon it will be mythic  
like the medieval castle in England,  
crenellated turrets, moat and drawbridge,  
just like the ones in books you read  
when you were nine or ten. That castle!  
It was on your life list (you suddenly knew  
you had one). Seeing it took you  
one more step toward a happy death.

Today, after the second cancer, biking home  
from the library, waves eroding the shore,  
driven by some past storm, air redolent  
of damp earth and algae, recalling those boys,  
the job, that castle—you didn't know until you arrived  
you thought you'd never bike this way again.

SPRING

*511 Sheldon Street*

My job since fall has been to live  
until the light grew strong. I did; it has.  
These days I walk through a redbud riot,  
the maples' lacy new-leaf haze, a promise  
of renewal that mocks my every step.

Nine months: the average life  
with metastatic gastric cancer.  
I should rejoice.  
Who doesn't crave "above average,"  
especially at something like this?  
Instead, I'm crabby, depressed.  
This is the half-way point; survival extends  
to a year and a half;  
it's all downhill from here.

I note every twinge and ache; bite the heads  
off friends who miss my poetry readings.  
They ask when they'll have another chance.  
*Nothing's scheduled*, I snap. I don't say *never*,  
*I'm sure I'll never read again*. Or the other thing  
I think: *why write?* I won't have time  
to revise, much less market a book.

Why this faith in statistics? *I'm a person, not a number*—  
I said that once, two years ago, to my oncologist.  
But the last time I saw him, he told me the tumors were growing  
and prescribed a different drug. Now, absent evidence,  
but hyper-aware of the mean, the prognosis,  
the looming CT scan, I figure the chemo will not work.

Still, pink tulips bloom just outside my door,  
planted by a neighbor who waited until  
I'd left the house so I'd be surprised this spring.  
It's churlish to think that pity prompted her kindness.  
And just plain wrong to predict that these beauties,  
dropping petals in the heat, will never astonish again.

LAST POEM

Some day I will write  
the last poem I ever write.  
This is not that poem.  
This is the poem about  
last weekend's bike ride  
on the Capital City Trail.  
It was mid-September,  
a beautiful blue-sky day  
and balmy—warm enough  
for my thinnest V-neck tee,  
breezy so my sweat dried  
right away. Cornstalks  
whispered in the fields.  
The trees had not yet turned.  
All the yellow flowers glowed.  
I'd had my second chemo treatment  
but I felt perfectly well.  
Ten miles into the ride,  
above the Public Hunting Grounds,  
we crested the steepest hill.  
Black walnuts and fallen, split  
apples littered the asphalt,  
stained the trail-turned obstacle  
course. We steered  
carefully past them and coasted  
down to the shady glen.

## MATTHEW STOLTE

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### MADPO

*This is a black & white reproduction of Stolte's image, which can be found in color at [cowfeatherpress.org/echolocations.html](http://cowfeatherpress.org/echolocations.html).*



**MATTHEW STOLTE**

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**A MAP FOR THE DAY OF THE SPIDER**

During the night close to Big Dog Town  
Thunder was strong in the sky  
And then one leaf-covered bird sang

In the morning I shall go with the earth  
Traveling to the hill of towering clouds  
Where watchers hold to the four winds

And so to the place of the standing stone  
Where the deer dances along the marsh  
South of the creek that is flowing  
Into the land of tricksters and wingeds

And then to the woods where Water-Spirit  
Rustles the leaves of a shadowed earth  
The souls rising through the musty smoke

It is at the hillside of the ancient house  
That my thoughts of the day have come so far  
Into the dance of water and stone

So my visits along the path shall be fourfold  
I shall know if the places of the spirit  
Are still there as residences in the earth  
And the traces of the Old Ones remain

So I travel as I have promised to the spirit  
That this story shall be heard  
By the old woman of the hills



ANIMAL EFFIGY MOUNDS

How much earth gathered in baskets and lugged by hand grew massive enough for carvers to shape into animals or spirit creatures of their dreams? Dozens of earthen snakes stretch in the sun exhausted by their journeys through the spirit world. Vees of geese spread their wings in the dirt. Eagles soar out of sight. They catch the dizzy human yearning for flight with breath-taking accuracy. Humans in fur, bears prowl the hills and mutter their secrets. Deer slide through surprising thickets along the ridges. A single swan's long neck reveals the universal love of grace and freedom. Water spirits separate themselves from the dirt and wander into shadowy light. Mound blueprints chopped into a sandstone face at Roche a Cri State Park show a lightning bolt's power passing from thunderbird wings into a human's skull.

Carry dirt with happy hearts, slogans must have urged. Walk slowly, with full baskets, and watch your dreams grow. Kids showed and told their summer vacations with home movies of family visits to Great Serpent Mounds, to Cahokia across the river from St. Louis, to the domes at Trempealeau along the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi, not to mention the extensive picnic grounds of Aztalan. Traditional Culture EarthArt became a high school elective.

And who's to say all this fervor, this ruckus in the dirt generated no foreign interest? Who knows where the Iceman was bound thirty thousand years ago before he froze in his glacier in the Italian Alps? Wouldn't he have been excited (lost in thought over the escapades of Mound City friends and colleagues?), so much that he never noticed the flint arrowhead suddenly lodged in his back? After all, wasn't there news each day about conferences and summer exchange programs with classmates who'd gone native in the new world? Couldn't all of them have been involved in some global intrigue? Didn't smoke signals fill the clear mountain air he picked his way through that day? Why was he in Italy at all except that turquoise trade beads he'd planted in the horned water spirit's belly during Wisconsin graduate school construction had stayed hidden this long? Wasn't it time to stage a career-changing visit of discovery?

**GIRL WALKING HER DOG IN VILAS PARK AT DAWN**

His legs move like brown  
tuning forks. His gait's an automatic  
transmission with fluid drive  
suspension. All his awareness

the result of extended  
dialog. He's illegal, this dog  
in Vilas Park, but only when his feet touch  
the ground if he's running loose

which his moral sensibility would  
never allow. And  
he's so cute. Some kind of terrier with fox-  
pointy ears, and a scruffy thick wiry coat

spliced with Belgian farm dog genes.  
Say a turverin's, wired to jump  
under buses in her place.  
Past the zoo's main gate, over the lagoon's

stone bridge, his consciousness evolves  
as they go. If he can't respond  
yet, his walk makes plain he knows  
each day's route is his to choose.

THE 2011 WINTER REVOLT

Something human says Please  
kick me in the teeth. Forget  
whatever I said. Freedom's not  
for me. I'm no good at it. This strait-  
jacket feels fine. Think of mother's *Everything*  
*happens for the best*. Rabbits scream  
full of heroes and midnight  
murder, but in the end lie  
back in the cat or owl's sharp  
relentlessness,  
content as holy men on  
beds of nails.

## SANDY STARK

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### OUT OF THIN AIR

*For John Ribble*

*Have you been outside today, John asks on the phone,  
and I think no, of course not, not in that wind chill;  
but he's already saying how beautiful the snow is,  
how it's just cold enough to sparkle in the air,  
that he doesn't have enough paintings this time of year,  
would like to find just the right tints for the way the sun  
casts shadows on covered pine and berry branch,  
softens the tall, stiff grasses, starts to expose edges  
of boot prints on the path to the frozen lake.*

In my mind he's already walked out his front door,  
found the perfect place to set up easel and canvas,  
opened boxes of pastels, and stands, heron-like,  
his hands in constant translation of what he sees  
until the shifting light and numbness in his fingers  
signal now, now is the time to stop and go home,  
that what he has is close enough to what he needs,  
that he will know which colors to add, what detail  
to keep, and that he will call it, he now knows,  
*Looking at Lake Wingra in January, Ten Below Zero.*

ALWAYS, IN DREAMS

*In memory of Gary Van Den Heuvel*

Always the Sixties, always arriving famished  
to the feast of State Street  
after hitching all day on I-94,  
always gawking in mind-blowing head shops  
and record stores (the records in my dreams  
are still *records*),  
always Gary's black room on Spaight Street  
where, after listening to *Strange Days*  
on hash and freaking as Morrison's voice  
stretched and broke apart in elastic  
time-threads before snapping back together,  
emerging I wouldn't know whether  
into night or day,  
and always as antidote, Kristin's calm,  
well-lit room on Langdon Street  
where after hearing my dream  
of red and black lizards contending,  
tesselating into a yin-yang ball,  
she initiated me into the light and  
dark symmetries of M. C. Escher,  
always Paul's Books where I scrounged a copy  
of the rare Avon paperback first edition  
of Kerouac's *Tristessa* for sixteen cents,  
always the tolerant Plaza Bar  
granting privacy to scribble in a booth  
for hours over a nursed glass of burgundy,  
always the Goose Island Ramblers at Johnny's  
Packer Inn, or the Tayles at the Nitty  
Gritty, monumental *Also Sprach*  
*Zarathustra* inducing 2001 flashbacks  
so many indelible wonders from  
footloose years grooved  
deep in my psyche,  
how could my dreams of Madison  
not summon back auras of lost  
highs and anticipations of highs  
often better than the actual fulfillment,  
how *not* manifest some desired state,  
some longed-for flight of possibility,  
some elevation of the freedom-seeking soul?

**REAL MIDDLE CLASS**

*We're actually talking to real people at real companies who are the real middle class. Not the tens of thousands of protesters that have been brought in, not only from around Wisconsin but from Nevada, Illinois, and New Jersey, increasingly coming in from other states...big union bosses from Washington sending in thugs.—Gov. Scott Walker, March 15, 2011, Wausau, Wisconsin*

So who were those people I met in Madison  
the day we took the Square over a hundred-  
thousand strong, stood in snow and icy wind  
slashing as budget cuts for the poor?  
The nurse from Eau Claire.  
The first-grade teacher from Appleton.  
The fire-fighter from Waukesha.  
The owner of the sign shop in Milwaukee,  
there with AARP for his first demonstration ever.  
The cop who came back to join the protesters  
after his shift guarding the Capitol.  
The corrections officer holding a sign that read  
IF YOU HAVE TO CALL OUT THE NATIONAL GUARD  
YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG.  
The organic farmer handing out hot yams wrapped in foil.  
*Unreal* middle class?  
Students—college and high school—more pseudo-  
middle class apparently.  
I wonder what “real” means to you, Governor Walker.  
You thought that blogger was the “real” David Koch.  
How is your grasp of reality?  
Could it be a few dozen captive-audience workers  
in Wausau or Hudson are more real to you than we are?  
Speaking of real, you'd have planted phony protester provocateurs  
to turn the demonstrations ugly if you could.  
But the police and fire-fighters—*really* real—  
knew what might happen and did their best to make sure  
it didn't. That warmed this old  
Sixties protester's heart.  
Among us “thugs,” crowded together  
in the freezing March chill of Madison,  
a kindness prevailed, triumphed,  
a decency in which you had no part.

**DANEZ SMITH**

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**AFRICAN-AMERICAN**

is not a word, is a picture.  
How many dead bodies floating in that dash?  
How many little black waves of skin sit on my tongue  
when I say that? How many times have you been to Africa?  
Africa is a word I smelled walking down Lake St, but never held  
in my mouth. I told my fairy Godmother to send me home, she took me  
to Mississippi, wrapped me in cotton, told me to run  
until my feet turned mush. I told her I meant Africa,  
but when she dropped me off, I stood lost, couldn't even ask for directions  
in the right language.

## DANEZ SMITH

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### FROM MY WINDOW

you know lake Mendota still sings  
    under its frozen flesh in January.  
you know you can't wash a song out.  
    you know the salt  
boiled out of the dead sea in summer  
    must make some kind of music  
when it swallows the feet of a couple  
    of kids playing in the sand,  
no clue one day they will anchor,  
    drown, wade swollen blue to shore.  
I thought to warn them, but who am I to ruin  
    the best hurt they'll ever know?  
what is love without threat  
    without good reason to fear or run?  
what is a lake if its waves do not hum?  
    what is the skin's salt water  
with no one left to savor?  
    what is a song if no one will sing it  
into an ear they've memorized  
    the taste of?



FADE

*for Lucky*

oh, master of blades, king of tender  
-headed grace, take my scalp in your hands  
perfect me, make me a man of edges & waves

the sharpest ocean to ever cut  
eyes with you from across the shop.  
sir, I surrender my neck & whiskers above

my lip, they are yours. your denim the only thing  
between my knee & what makes you a sir at all,  
is this not love making? a prelude to birth?

how skin must press skin to make a something new?  
I am new, only in your hands. I have done this  
business too. I pay you how they paid me,

to come close & change a body, to clip away  
until the man can't recognize his own image  
in the water. oh, the water. wash me, sir,

demand my mane & toes to curl, drown my skull  
in your palms, dry me, grab the razor & finish me,  
your precise breath on my spine, make me look

good.

## SHOSHAUNA SHY

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### CURSIVE DISCARDED FROM GRADE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

*October 2006*

Serviced by U.S. postal workers in jaunty jeeps,  
the corner mailbox, American as blue jeans,  
is pulled from thousands of corners coast-to-coast.  
Men who learned how to keyboard as third graders  
hoist the box outside Mifflin Co-op into a truck

while the co-op itself, with its buy-in-bulk tofu  
and cereal in scoop bins gets muscled off the map  
by a market that delivers to students who shop online.  
How long until the time no one chats at a check-out,  
flirts in a produce aisle, keeps a journal in longhand?

In bedrooms across the country  
postal carriers wonder  
if their regulation walking shoes  
will see another summer.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE HUNGRY WHEN THE MEOW MIX SMELLS GOOD

Like rag-tag leftover balls of yarn spilled  
from a basket, the afternoon sprawls ahead.  
Elect to leave the Toyota at home  
even though a bevy of cats awaits feeding time,  
and there are miles to cover before your own supper.  
Even if only 31 degrees with the threat of snow.  
Locate the bike-share station at Brittingham Bay,  
chuck belongings into the B-Cycle basket,  
pedal through a park that picnickers deserted.  
Slowing at the Harrison Street switchback, pluck free  
what's caught in the stalks of diamond grass

—*Eric, will you marry me?*—

scratched in ink on a folded slip of giftwrap.  
Dock the bike at the station outside Trader Joe's,  
stride down the block for warmer mittens  
from Art Gecko, for Sylvia Plath on a library hold.  
Imagine that's the woman who wants to marry Eric—  
the one with russet-colored curls buying a crêpe pan  
at Orange Tree Imports.  
Or maybe that's Eric himself carrying twin carafes  
out of Gallup Bakehouse to a car idling at the curb.

Scoot on to the yellow foursquare to coax Bootchie  
off her patchwork quilt for lunch before retrieving  
the bike and winging diagonally through quiet streets  
again, the same lindens and maples that shaded  
your children as they stretched beyond 5<sup>th</sup> grade  
now arching twice as high.  
Dip downhill past a chorus of callery pear trees  
wearing autumn's party dresses, churn up  
the Park & Pleasure Lane that splits through woods  
hugging Lake Wingra, smell char-grill from Jac's  
Tap House as you park at Knickerbocker Place.  
Prepare to hoof it past the art gallery to Crandall Street  
for box-shoveling and nuzzling with green-eyed Lucy,  
for Jade & Gypsy's bungalow beyond Dudgeon School  
where children leap out of playground swings  
to clusters of mothers in crescent moon reception.  
A sudden swatch of blue shows between  
the clouds as you board a city bus going back  
the mile, disembarking atop Terry Place at Diesel's.

---

Choke back the slip—you forgot to stop off  
at the fiber store for a skein of Berroco alpaca  
to finish a pair of wristcuffs. Retrace and retrieve,  
then double-back to Diesel's.

Robust with purrs and gratitude, he chows  
while you sit cross-legged against the fridge  
braiding the alpaca to a former skein,  
bamboo needles at the ready.

When the November sun is low enough  
to cast your shadow on the wall, that means  
you have six minutes till expected  
in your own kitchen, husband at the stove,  
steam of sautéing onions venting to the driveway,  
streetlights blinking on.

Take the slope down Woodrow and marvel how  
you managed to pull all those loose ends snug,  
how you actually knit together the entire afternoon.

**CROSSING TRACKS, FORDHAM AND COMMERCIAL.**

*Contemplating my new used car, after reading Neruda's ode to his socks.*

There are all these discoveries  
Captured in the newly-acquired  
Absence of negatives.

Absence of auto fluid smell,  
    permeating the house  
Absence of fumes in the garage,  
    eternally open window  
Absence of constantly sagging visor,  
    premonition of impaled forehead  
Absence of sudden parachuting of moon-roof control panel  
    dangling from the ceiling like a spook-house surprise  
Provoked by every bump,  
    perpetually jumbled streets.

For weeks my arm still reaches reflexively:  
    hold visor with thumb  
    control panel with fingers.

Micro-habits of economy.

Their absence would not occur (to consciousness)  
As perks of privilege.

**CELEBRATING THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING**

*Madison, Wisconsin, January 26, 2013*

In honor of the assassinated civil rights hero,  
in remembrance of his being jailed in Birmingham,  
his defiance of the usual order of business on Montgomery  
busses, his flagrant disregard of court orders against marching in Selma,  
his leading a 54.2 mile walk to the state Capitol to confront the governor  
of Alabama,

a nice celebration  
in the Wisconsin State Capitol  
with dignitaries on the dais, the governor  
who shuts down unions to open the state to business,  
the lieutenant governor who fears marriage equality,  
the state Supreme Court justices who fear each other  
with good reason, Madison's mayor who once was fearless,

the sweet child, winner of Madison's  
city-wide Dr. King speech contest, and  
the keynote speaker from Chicago, who  
chooses not to mention the fierce resistance King  
faced in Chicago when he brought the movement North.

Not in the front row Charles Tubbs,  
the former Capitol Police chief,  
eased out for keeping  
the Capitol open  
for protest.

Not on the dais  
the singers there  
day after day for more  
than two years to keep  
the rousing sound of *Solidarity*  
*Forever* from fading into history.

Not in Madison at this nice event  
the Overpass Light Brigade who hold up  
the light of solidarity messages on freeway  
bridges in Milwaukee and spark other holders  
of the light to stand up across the country and beyond.

---

Not at this nice event, the worker fired  
from Palermo Pizza in Milwaukee for missing  
a day of work to care for her sick child, the Palermo  
worker who lost three fingers in a machine on the assembly  
line, the workers fired for gathering signatures for a union election.

Not at this nice event the Bad River Ojibwe  
who plan for tomorrow, plan how to keep alive their  
tradition of caring for the land, the Penokee Hills, their  
tradition of caring for the rivers, the Lake Superior watershed,  
threatened by the business of some seated dead center on the dais.

Not at this nice event, Youth Empowered in the Struggle  
who march in Racine, though their funds got cut. *Not nice, too  
political*, belts out AM Radio's Mark Belling. *Not nice*, screams his  
crony Charlie Sykes. Imagine! The students of Y.E.S. want the Dream  
Act, immigration reform. *Oh, not nice, too political*, Racine Unified School  
District officials say again and again.

In official places they dream  
up their own nice image to hang  
in place of the often jailed, defiant,  
flagrant, assassinated, full-hearted,  
fierce dreamer, Martin Luther King.

**MARY C. ROWIN**

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**THE STATE OFFICE BUILDING, ONE WEST WILSON**

It was where we met, that great art deco monolith on Lake Monona. The etched brass elevator doors opened to whisk passengers to one of eleven floors in the center tower, where the Parole Board at the top was as distant to us as it was to the prisoners at Waupun. Before air-conditioning, grit from open windows coated our desks. When we got our own PCs, the typing pool vanished and so did the boxes of dusty punch cards and crumbling printouts that hid desiccated bananas and a few musty athletic shoes and socks. We watched the Circus Parade on the tracks in back of the building as it headed to Milwaukee, or escaped to the Wednesday Farm Market, where our purchases left scent-trails of basil and onions and gladiola in the elevator where you gave me a kiss right after the doors closed.



**SALSA AND DANCE AT THE JAZZ FEST, UNION TERRACE**

Two dancers, so close to my table I could touch them, their hips swinging, the conga player's hands talking to each other in twos and threes, her hips, his, they say, step into a June night. The sax sings for clouds that stretch and split spilling orange stripes like paint along the edge of a world as immediate as the trumpet player blowing on the sax's spinning line. The dancers shake and sweat, their laughter the breezes that sway sail boats and rattle anchor chains, boats drawing closer. The band loops into a chorus. My dancers pass palms, turn under each other's arms, wrap around twice, embracing belly to back. I want to taste their sweat. I want to hold them, the night sky, embrace the band's cross rhythms, this momentary forever. They stumble as they must, fade away quickly as boats tied up, the band packed up, the lights turned out, leaving only the moon and an old poet slipping his anchor.

WHEN I WROTE MY NOVEL I BORROWED MADISON

I required an airport  
the right distance from Chicago  
for the lawyer to leave his car—  
proof of a falsified death.

How did I dare?  
When all I held were three  
Madison memories  
rolled deep in my mind  
beneath the fruit and crust  
of an apple pie-full life.

I remember Marianne  
practicing her liberal politics  
while her three daughters  
oppressed their little brothers.

I remember Jennifer juggling  
studies of women and media.  
We sipped beer in a bar  
on the lake far from Boston,  
where a child I taught  
earned her learning by serving.

I remember Donna who was dying,  
living with her  
while I attended a conference  
that I do not remember.

Three flakes of memory  
should be enough  
to borrow a city  
when you need it.

**CHRISTMAS NIGHT OUTSIDE TEMPLE BETH EL**

*You notice that [St.] Paul has very peculiar worries about nature. Of course, they're not ecological worries. He's never seen a tree in his life. He traveled through the world just like Kafka—never described a tree, or mentioned one... Look through Kafka's novels some time, whether there is a tree there. Maybe one on which a dog pisses. —Jacob Taubes*

I prefer this, he thought, for what is not there.  
No one is drunk except us. No angel  
From Saint Luke. No torpor or self interest:  
No fear that we are taught not to have.

Only the park and Lake Wingra beyond:  
Dark trees and dim, incandescent snow:  
Burr oak, white birch, cedar and some willow:  
Rough glitter in the calm midnight distance.

And the Temple, too, a silent mystery.  
Like the cultured olive tree in Saint Paul,  
On which we all depend, engrafted new:  
Some wild and lofty and free uncouth shoots,  
Perplexed, benumbed, sublime, with floating hair.  
In dead midwinter, upheld in winter air.

## FRAN RALL

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### ALEXA

Implement Row hummed like a dynamo  
Crafting tools for America.  
Up on Third Lake Ridge,  
German tailors and contractors  
Built close, basking in the fires.  
All quiet now except for Alexa,  
Bright colors flashing.  
Steel strength come back  
To gaze, frowning, on flimsy.

### WISCONSIANA

The gate stands square, not a red Temple gate.  
In the courtyard skateboarders whiz  
Clocking around pillars.  
Peering, perplexed, I ask one of them  
“Does this courtyard go all the way through to the other street?”  
“I wouldn’t know,” he said hesitantly.  
“I come from Minnesota.”

## BRIAN POWERS

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### THE RUN TO PICNIC POINT

August ends, humid and hot  
but that's not stopping you from hauling

yourself up hill after hill. Off-road,  
across the grassy flat of a football field,

you stride with light, silent steps—  
though your pace in this heat

is more jog than dash.  
The run grows in its slow

and winding way, flourishing at last  
on the path to Picnic Point. The trodden

ground is dappled, sunlight blazing radiant trails  
through the leaves overhead. The breeze

sprays you with the fragrance of apples,  
strokes your sweat-slicked skin.

You dodge and dart over tree roots  
and rocks, breathing easy, immersed

in the spread of an incandescent day.  
Sunlight runs among the treetops on photon feet.

FIRST FALL SEMESTER

I bounded off the Badger Bus, grinning  
at my best friend Cassi who was there  
to show me the way to Bakers' Rooms.  
A line wound out the door; we didn't mind  
waiting; classes would not start for a week.  
We took a spiral staircase down  
into the bowels of the scarred brick  
building. Chandeliers hung low.  
Vivaldi's strings filled the air,  
and coffee smells like brown, rich peat.  
Linen flowed over round tables  
set with silver, crystal pots heaped  
with crimson jam we lathered over  
warm croissants. Even the steam  
tasted of butter. And the jam, oh  
the jam that crunched gently in our mouths  
was studded with seeds like those  
Persephone tasted after she left  
her world, when she knew  
she would never return home to stay.

**JAMES POLLOCK**

**EXCERPT FROM "QUARRY PARK"**

...I set Felix down to show him the colors  
of quartz pebbles and sandstone in a sweet  
armored mudstone till ball poking out  
of the slope in front of us—then take a seat  
on it to tie my shoelace. With a shout—  
“Daddy! Come look!” —Felix, who has gone  
ahead over the ridge we’re on to scout  
out the next gully, calls me to attention  
and over the hill to see what he’s found there.  
“Cereal,” he exclaims, and points one  
middle finger at a trailside pair  
of limestone blocks tattooed with fossils not  
unlike his favorite breakfast, spilling their  
mossy calcite circlets like a lot  
of nuts and washers across a table. To me  
they’re either the holdfasts or scattershot  
stalk plates of ancient feather-stars or sea  
lilies, hundred-million-year-old runes  
from when all this, as far as the eye can see,  
was shallow ocean billowed by the moon’s  
long-distance lugging. My boy’s tired. I swing  
him yawning up into the afternoon’s  
brindled sunlight on my shoulders, turning  
my thoughts, as I walk, to stone-age invention:  
how ancient people lived here by hunting  
mastodon and mammoth to extinction  
with spears tipped in dark blue Moline chert  
and silicified sandstone the colors of the sun  
cut long and thin and shaped like works of art.  
How later peoples who camped here in the forest  
near the lake which with his melting heart

---

Huge Toad had left behind still did their best  
with herds of elk and caribou and deer.  
How when the centuries warmed the people fished

and hunted goose, muskrat, turtle, beaver;  
and gathered acorns, wild rice, raspberries, roots;  
and thought up the stone ax, spear thrower,

quern stone, pottery, awl; cremation, arts,  
rituals, ossuaries; and long-distance trade  
in blue-gray Indiana hornstone cherts,

Atlantic Ocean seashell, bright knife-blade  
copper from Lake Superior, and rings,  
axes, hooks, harpoons, and spear points made

by hammering hot copper till it sings;  
and black volcanic glass from Yellowstone....



**BEFORE EAST TOWNE MALL.**

Tractors once crossed the expanse  
between JCPenney and Sears.  
Before that humans and beasts  
in tandem tilled and harvested  
the land. And before that,  
natives profitably hunted here.

Some 100,000 years before,  
the great Laurentide Ice Sheet  
appeared at the Mall's doorstep  
although shoppers were only  
a mammoth's dream as the beasts  
trolled the tundra for sprigs of grass.

Wikipedia will tell you whatever  
you want to know before that. Or  
you can ask the few old-timers still  
hanging around about life before  
East Towne Mall put down nearly  
a million square feet of retail space

not to mention nicely paved concrete  
stalls for 5000 horseless carriages.  
They'll tell you life was better then,  
simpler, quieter, but that's talking like  
the old men they are, not accounting  
for the briefs they bought cheap at Sears

or the shoes they got readymade  
at Penney's. The Mall has been here  
more than 40 years, which is  
a long time for them to remember. Soon  
they'll be gone. But any damned fool can see  
East Towne Mall is here to stay.

## MICHAEL PENN II

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### FOR RUDOLF

i stare into your Black  
the way They stare into mine.  
We can relate  
because neither are expected to be  
Here.  
but it works.

Black works.

yet we're still self-convincing.

the shunned side of the spectrum  
illuminates the rest.  
We have stars to realign and solar systems to caress.  
Black holes spin through blind-eye worlds  
i forget if mine is worth saving.  
They fear the abyss implanted in our skin

self-defense is relative.

They want Black to be forgotten.  
a lost piece of the archive.  
disappearance is presence elsewhere.  
They display your Black in convenience.  
like mine.

can everything be said in nothing?

a vast slate of nebulous.  
universal silence.  
silence is darkness, but it does not equal Black.

*Chazen Museum of Art*

SARA PARRELL.

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**MARCH IN WISCONSIN, 2011**

*Tens of thousands took to the streets in response to Gov. Walker's budget repair bill eliminating collective bargaining for most public workers.*

*Ash Wednesday Ambush* they called it, the voting behind locked doors at dusk, senators exiting under piled coats in the back seats of black cars driven by Troopers, hundreds wagging fingers at the dark and shouting *Shame! Shame!*

Some held signs, some fingered rosaries, some left half-eaten dinner on their plates, rushed up without coats, and some ordered a second bottle, lingered to gaze out at the gathering crowd.

SARA PARRELL

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FRAUTSCHI POINT, DECEMBER

\*\*\*

single-file foot path  
we follow our dog's glib trot  
toward the wavering  
city-scape across the lake  
boot-squeak      squirrel-scratch      water-lap

\*\*\*

broken Bud bottles  
clutter the shoreline boulders  
we pluck up brown glass  
as if gold      pocket fragments  
careful not to cut our palms

\*\*\*

abandoned bathhouse  
snow-steeped      doors boarded      waiting  
we circle like wolves  
hungry for a glimpse of light  
holding gloved hands      hip to hip

\*\*\*

four white swans float      flanked  
by dozens of barking geese  
a squall blocks the sun  
ice chunks bounce and bob nearby  
after the freeze      where is home?

## HELEN PADWAY

---

### FLOWERS KEEP COMPANY

with what I am sure are weeds  
in the casual gardens of Madison.  
Gardens that are not bounded by rocks  
or little white picket fences.  
Instead they circle  
light and street poles in the green  
patch between sidewalk  
and street. Sometimes in the middle  
of a small lawn tall day lilies  
orange and yellow  
provide splashes of color.  
Petunias and pansies  
snuggle next to porch steps.  
Neither the flowers  
or the garden owners are upset  
with what others consider  
upstart weeds. Foxtail.  
Milkweed, clover.

*(inspired by gardens on the East side...)*

**TIMES CHANGE**

They have torn down the Badger Bus Depot in Madison. Commerce has replaced passenger ease. Wanderers from Milwaukee, Goerkes Corners, Johnson Creek and Waukesha must gamble. Where will this bus go? Will we be deposited at the Memorial Union or the Chazen Art Museum? Both are difficult for the picker-upper and passenger. At the Chazen when the wind doth blow, swift traffic flows in a too fast, endless, hard to cross stream. At the Memorial Union the lot is too crowded to park and the departed must lug the entrance stairs with all those goodies from home while scanning the traffic for the all important ride. All decisions depend on the Badger driver who considers the traffic and construction. Construction. The new double decker cherry colored buses are complete with travel comforts. Tables, WiFi, cup holders. Comfortable seats on which to sleep or read. But I would trade it all for a place to park on a bench in the vanished depot out of too hot or too cold Wisconsin weather.

THE MAJESTIC

Because the evening is warm  
and one day closer to the summer  
solstice, we make our way  
to the roof of the theatre,  
climbing iron rungs that I cling to  
like Buster Keaton  
when I look down, then passing  
over the rooms where people lose  
themselves in front of shiny icons  
and when we reach the top  
we sit on gravel among empty  
bottles of Jack Daniel's and Old  
Milwaukee and look beyond  
the building across from us  
to a sky where city lights blend  
into stars so that if we were careful  
to lose ourselves we would be unable  
to distinguish between the two.

THE ORPHEUM

You said I lied in that poem, the one I called *The Majestic*,  
that by calling the theatre by another name—a false name—  
I lied about you, about us, so let me script the cinema vérité.

It was the Orpheum where you took me the first night  
we met, where you worked all those years, in the office  
balancing the books, in the booth counting out tickets.

It was the Orpheum where we climbed ladders to reach  
the roof, me trailing behind you (but I was no myth, no vanishing  
woman when you turned around), where you told me—your forever

ingenue—to press my ear against one wall beneath the grand  
staircase while you stood on the other side of the arch,  
whispering words that traveled mysteriously to me,

repeating like a film score's leitmotif. It was the Orpheum  
where you waited behind the vending counter, drinking  
blue raspberry and listening for the closing credits' music

of the night's last show, your signal to open the doors  
to the throng of young couples dissolving onto State Street  
as I rushed in. Beneath the marquee, I brushed against

their electric elbows, pushing past the extras to reach  
your blue lips and blue tongue, their wild searching  
of my body, your body projecting onto mine, my body reeling

from your cinematic touch, the house lights dimmed,  
we the only two players, and though I believed we were royalty,  
you must know I know yes of course yes it was the Orpheum.



AN OCTOBER NIGHT ON THE BELTLINE

The road steadied like a piano exhaling its last notes as those familiar places with missing letters brightening from their signs eased by. The radio didn't work, so we listened to the engines half-hearted *om's* reach, bent-armed, towards where salvation was rumored to be, and the tires, one of which was a donut, trudged over potholes and neglected concrete. Close to winter. The windows fogged enough to hold vulgarities or our names or whatever else a finger could create. We had coats, though, and when the exit went by, we zipped them up.

**IT DIDN'T FEEL DANGEROUS**

climbing on the back of a motorcycle  
with a boy she just met in The Pub,  
a hangout for frat boys and a tamer  
breed of jocks. Chances were  
someone she knew, knew him.

It didn't feel dangerous  
speeding down East Washington,  
racing past townies cruising the night  
in souped-up cars, or when they roared  
out of the city, onto the highway  
and she threw back her head  
and sang into the stars.

But, when he skidded onto the dirt road,  
for a shuddering instant,  
it did.

**AERIAL CHOREOGRAPHY**

*Cycropia Performs at Orton Park—August 2007*

White orb of balloon light is the moon of this world  
Where the park is the stage, an old oak holds the center.  
Circled by dancers and stilt-walkers in translucent gold hoopskirts,  
The tree harbors cocoons that hatch winged magic;  
Scarves, rings, ropes unfurl, twirl and dangle from branches  
That sprout acrobats whose taut limbs, carved by light,  
Are caught in flight as they climb, spin, and somersault  
In silks and stripes, tails and tights  
While jump-ropes and hula-hoops swirl in velvet-pocketed night

The flood rains of the wettest August ever recorded  
Have momentarily ceased and granted release  
From sodden despair:

Cows drowned standing in the fields  
Thousands of acres of soybeans, corn, squash, melons  
Beaten into swamped ground  
That a week before had whittled dust from drought

And sudden horror:

A bus stop      lightning      downed power-line  
Sparks leap through water to incinerate a mother, her tiny daughter  
And the man who reached out a helping hand

So we need these trapeze artists spangled with glitter and daring  
To teach us the ropes and lift our hopes.  
For a moment we rise as one—

White doves cooing with delight as we flap our vestigial wings.

## RALPH MURRE

---

### IT WAS ALREADY CLEAR

the ice had become thick  
enough to walk on,  
the chill between us  
spelled out in your letters.

It seemed right  
to venture out  
on Lake Mendota that night,  
your mittened hand in mine,

lovers all around.

It seemed right,  
the uncertain footing  
as we said our goodbye  
beneath the light and laughter

of Langdon Street  
and just above  
the dark liquid  
of once more alone.

**ARTISTIC LICENSE**

*After "Undetermined Line" (charcoal and collage) by Bernar Venet, 1985, at  
the Chazen Museum of Art*

He's been drawing line after meaningless line since dawn.  
The studio floor is littered with frustration.

She enters his sanctuary, rabbit-quiet, careful,  
Her body ungainly with its unwanted burden.

You get the picture: naïve student,  
Professor in need of creative transfusion,  
A too-fruitful liaison, a decision made too late.  
Give him credit: He's doing what's needful.  
But he saves his midnight thirsts for other victims.

She bends with awkward grace to clear away the papers  
Crumpled at his feet. She is a model of weariness and strength.

See how quickly he reduces her to charcoal and collage,  
How quickly he transforms her into undetermined line.

**GEORGIA'S INHERITANCE**

*After "Turkey Feathers in an Indian Pot" (oil on canvas) by Georgia O'Keeffe,  
1935, at the Chazen Museum of Art*

It is slow work. The potter's  
Thick brown fingers work the clay  
Find the shape hidden in the lump  
Set it in the kiln and wait.

The bowl is water, is earth.  
Black fire gleams from its belly  
When Georgia turns it  
In the light. *It will do.*

A woman plucks the bird  
Readies it for water, for smoke.  
When she moves from stove to table  
The feathers on the dirt floor stir.

There is only one peacock feather.  
The goose feathers are too pure. Georgia's  
Thin brown hands hover,  
Alight on a trio of turkey feathers  
Nondescript, plain as the sand in moonlight.

It is slow work coaxing this pot, these feathers  
From her oils. She is forty-eight, and patient.

The pot emerges  
Smooth as a stone for grinding corn.  
Unlike her flagrant flowers, the turkey feathers  
Rise in dark simplicity,  
A totem for the clan of unnamed women.

DANCING WITH LIBERTY

*Madison, Wisconsin, February 19, 2011*

My friend called to say, “I’m waiting  
at the top of State,” but I was across

the square, so I kept walking with the crowd  
past the media stands where a few angry

men screamed through bullhorns while  
we answered the call: *Show me what*

*Democracy looks like*, singing back over  
and over, *This is what Democracy*

*looks like*, the marchers slowing to let  
parents with strollers cross to the Capitol,

past the costumed onlookers, past the sax  
player giving us “Solidarity Forever,”

past the Harley-jacketed family, past  
“Queers from Chicago” with raised fists,

*Show me what Democracy looks like—*  
*This is what Democracy looks like—*

but at the top of State, amid thousands  
of marchers, my friend and I could not

find each other, so I called and told her,  
“Look for the man dressed as Liberty,”

and cut through the crowd to stand  
beside a young black man in green silk

and a plastic-foam Lady Liberty crown—  
*Show me what Democracy looks like—*

*This is what Democracy looks like—*  
and he told me he was from Milwaukee,

and that his mother was a teacher,  
and I told him I was from Alaska

---

and my father was in the service,  
and all the while music was pounding

out from the Capital steps, and after  
a few minutes we were dancing to

Michael Jackson, swaying and pumping  
our arms, *Show me what Democracy*

*looks like—This is what Democracy*  
*looks like—and somehow, my friend*

never did find me, and none of us  
who are hoping for justice know

whether we will find it, now or soon  
or never, but what the heck, my friends,

isn't this what Democracy looks like:  
each of us, all of us, dancing with Liberty?



## OSCAR MIRELES

### THE ALMOST 9 MINUTE CAR RIDE TO MADISON, WISCONSIN

The daily car ride takes about nine minutes  
from my house in Deforest, Wisconsin  
to the Wheeler Road, City of Madison address  
where my fifteen-year-old son lives.  
He usually wipes his eyes open  
when he finally gets situated in the front seat of my car.

About a half hour earlier, I gave him his wake up call.  
He answered his cell phone after only about eight rings  
saying he would be “ready to go,” when I arrived and he would wake up  
his sister too.

Sometimes he would say “good morning”...  
well actually...

He never says “good morning,” he just gets in the car  
and grunts “hey”

and the other times when he forgets to grunt  
he just sits down and avoids looking at me  
and we both sit  
and listen to the car idle.

Every once in a while, my son gives me a warning notice  
“Mom and Lorena got into it last night,”  
or this morning  
or yesterday.  
As if I am going to solve another problem today  
or maybe he is trying to protect me from getting into more trouble  
or maybe he just wants me to shut up, and not say anything  
before I make things worse.

Lorena always comes out about three to five minutes later.  
If she is in a hurry it is always five minutes.  
If she still needs to do her make-up  
we all have to switch seats, so she can use the front mirror.

On a good day that is only a little hassle  
which also involves one punch between siblings.

Silence is different with my daughter.  
The radio is always something she can put in between us.

---

You can tell her mood,  
if she sings along with the songs, singing with emphasis and using her  
sweet voice.

But sometimes the louder she sings  
sometimes can mean she is mad too...  
So one has to listen carefully, when she sings.

Once both children are safely in the car,  
however...  
I did back up once without one of the kids fully inside  
the back seat of the car and it was almost a painful accident,  
but I am not supposed to bring that up.

As we race by and wave at the crossing guard on Wheeler Road and  
Wyoming Way  
I am reminded my children are no longer at middle school and  
Jackie the crossing guard who could read my children's moods  
better than I could, was let go from her job  
a year or two ago, from having to take time off to care for her mother.

We turn on Sherman Avenue, where we race up two hills  
and try to avoid the intersections of Highway CV and Northport  
where we had an accident once.

But it does place the McDonald's restaurant  
on our path and if I have enough money left over  
I offer breakfast (usually a Bacon Egg and Cheese Bagel for her, and Two  
Sausage Breakfast Burritos for him and both want Medium Hot  
Chocolates with a straw).

One time driving out of the restaurant Lorena saw a classmate  
waiting at the bus stop and said "Let's pick him up for school"  
and as we tried to clear space in the back seat and I pulled up beside him  
it was not her friend only someone that looked exactly like him  
and she was pretty embarrassed and the look-alike didn't seem too upset  
that he was being noticed.

Driving down Packers Avenue becomes a race  
of avoiding the slow lanes  
staying away from the stopping Metro buses  
and not looking at people in cars talking on their cell phones,  
drinking coffee, reading the paper or putting on make-up  
while pretending to be driving to work.

---

As we get closer to Madison East High School  
I see some of their friends and classmates getting out of cars  
they drive to school in  
thinking that my kids love riding with their dad  
or more dislike riding the bus to school  
which if I would have counted  
each of my kids did less then five or six times.

As we turn past the high school tennis courts  
the metro bus lets out a mass of teens  
some with backpacks ready for school to start  
some without backpacks, ready to get into more trouble  
than they could possibly need.  
I think sometimes they think people don't notice they don't have backpacks.  
I do...and I know not having a backpack means something  
but I haven't quite figured out what.

I usually park on the right hand side of the road  
with a yellow curb marking indicating not a parking spot  
and it gives them a chance to get out of the car  
and onto the cross walk and into the school.

Sometimes my kids do not walk together  
on the way into the school grounds.  
They each get into their own mind  
and keep walking.

Sometimes they do walk together.  
When they do  
they are talking to each other.  
If I did not know better

and if I were too busy  
to waste nine minutes of my morning  
I would have missed this special moment.  
I realize they will be more than family for life.  
They will be friends too.

AT THE MESH FENCE

On my shoulders Bobby wobbles. We have walked  
to the Library Mall, a wasteland of renovation.  
Bobby, barely four, cannot stand up long. A cancer climbs  
his spine; surgery is set for the coming week.  
Backhoes and bulldozers bash the clay;

the earth is like minced meat. A drill spits splinters of brick.  
Mounds of shredded asbestos imitate giant tumors.  
Bobby calls the pile in front of us a “funny hill,”  
as if it were destined for a playground. A forklift rumbles past.  
Two sheds squat on flats where a skin of turf had been.  
On a door, signs read “Building Solutions.” “Look,” I yell to Bobby,  
“there is where the people in charge decide how  
to fix this place.” Bobby hugs my neck.  
“Pretty messy, isn’t it?”, I say, gesturing to the ditches,  
the rusty wire. We trudge to where a dump truck is stuck  
in the mud from recent rain. “Watch out, truck,” cries Bobby,

as if the mire will swallow the truck. “What’s the use of this?”  
I wonder. Then I notice an open tractor-trailer.  
Its load of fiber optic cable is designed,  
I suppose, to improve the campus message flow.  
Rolled into a globe, the cable gleams; I can see  
the glittery plastic that layers the fiber, shielding it  
from corrosion or pollution. Those lines will fire right;  
they must have passed a thousand tests. Or so I tell myself.  
“Hey, Bobby, see that big ball?” I shout, pointing at the cable.  
He lifts one hand, stretches toward my finger, tumbles  
towards the muck. I catch him. He laughs. “Again?” he asks.

TOO BAD HE WUZN'T A WHALE

Well, well, well, well, that man fell down the well. Well, it's not a well, it's  
a mine shaft;  
some rich dude dug one, well, they dug hundreds of thousands,  
and just left them open there in the ground,

and this poor dude, he just had to go look inside it and get hisself stuck  
190 feet down.

We got a camera down there now, and he's still a'breathin' so, to comfort  
his family,

we got a priest to give him his Last Rites, and we're gonna keep that  
camera down  
there til he stops a'breathin'.

God bless America, I mean God Bless America.

*The man picked up his remote and changed the channel—*

Yes, Bill, I'm standing outside the capitol building  
here in Madison, Wisconsin, where they've just brought in

Father Gilbert Gauthé to perform the Last Rites for  
the United States of America.

Father Gilbert's not looking too good today, but he's  
walking bravely into the capitol, and so far no one has dragged  
him to the ground.

Meanwhile, state workers, including teachers and other  
municipal employees, continue their protest as the last

American government continues its quest to strip them of  
their right to collective bargaining.

*The man's wife changes the channel—*

*Oh, I love the History Channel,* she squeals, as she passes him a  
dish of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Dinner (ten for ten dollars).

Today on the History Channel, we return to the event that captivated the  
entire world back in 1988, when three California gray whales were stuck  
in the pack ice off Barrow, Alaska...

## JERI MCCORMICK

---

### ONE BY ONE BY ONE

*At the Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled*

Today my daughter  
prepared three bodies  
for the morgue.

Again and again and again  
the elusive pulse skipped away  
and she washed the empty faces  
of those whose tether to life  
was not long. Though a few  
grow old, holding their teddy bears  
maybe seventy years, opening  
their mouths at mealtime  
like wrinkled robins,  
most die young.

Today my daughter  
turned the pliant not-right  
form of a six-year-old,  
his knees falling aside  
like failed miracles.

I, who manage to forget  
that all who enter the world  
will one day leave,  
have raised a child who never forgets  
that everyone leaves.

Today my daughter  
worked an extra shift  
and wheeled her throbbing questions  
down the hall.

TAKING OFF

Sitting on the runway, twenty minutes,  
thirty minutes, delay, delay,  
the snow swirling down, the flush  
of dirty water down the windows  
as they de-ice once again,  
having second thoughts,  
third thoughts.

They apologize for the wait,  
serve juice, coffee,  
our choice. The plane is warm,  
bright, the motors hum, voices  
hum, the stewardess squats  
beside a girl in an aisle seat,  
six, seven, traveling alone.

“It’s like a womb,” I say,  
thinking *coffin* even as I speak,  
seeing my father in his  
in front of the church,  
the file of viewers, the waxen skin,  
cheeks rosed, eyes closed,  
preserved, unnatural.

Clemmie and I fly together,  
the kids grown, on their own,  
and we have boarded  
without any good-byes,  
routine departure, just like my father,  
driving off on the way  
to his fatal crash.  
And Clemmie’s hand, seeking reassurance,  
clutches mine.

JOHN LEHMAN

---

**ME AND TED KOOSER AT THE  
WISCONSIN BOOK FESTIVAL.**

I'm sitting out in the lobby selling festival t-shirts, you're inside on stage being interviewed by Public Radio. You're *being* modest. I *am* modest. You are amazed at "the starry blue lid of a saucepan," while I wonder how 100% cotton doesn't shrink. You describe "hands fluttering like birds," as mine borrow a book from the Borders table next to me and I read your words. Both our fathers are dead. "Today he'd be ninety-seven," you write. My dad nudges yours. "My son, John, is also appearing at The Union Theater tonight."



**THE ANGELIC BREWING COMPANY CLOSES ITS DOORS**

*The Angelic, which stopped brewing its own beer a while back, closed its doors for good.—The Isthmus, Madison, Wisconsin, December 26, 2008*

Every time we passed, you waved  
lovingly, a private joke, almost a talisman

between us. The building stumpy  
like an old garage, comfortless,

with Goodyear Tires painted on its side.  
Still, Clarence, we decided from the sign

above the door, had settled there,  
an angel nursing hot mulled wine,

and making gifts for you to find  
of pennies on the sidewalks.

God, our name for how we touch  
the shapeless fingerprints of light,

can better be imagined or embraced  
in comic underwear, his shirt tied

with a bow. Now the paper says  
the brewery has closed. The days are numb

with snow; darkened nations bomb again,  
their faces closed, their voices dumb

with rage. Everywhere, the winter trembles  
huddling its wings. And while I know

that shapelessness can never disappear,  
I will miss your waving.

MAYA ANGELOU AT THE UNION THEATER, 1990

She gave a long, rambling talk that night  
no notes, just memories, encounters, optics  
on experience in that mesmerizing voice  
from deep within her tall, straight form,  
but that is not what I remember most.

After the program we went backstage  
where maybe sixty people, mostly young,  
milled around waiting to give her a hand,  
quietly pay our respects, not more.  
So, when she swept into the room

and we felt her electric energy firsthand,  
we gasped, taking it in along with her words.  
*Press the brain*, she said. Then in her sixties,  
she had begun to study Japanese,  
her seventh language. If she could do that, then think

what we, who were so much younger, could do.  
If she, with little formal education, could serve  
on famous Boards, what could members  
of a great university do if only we would  
*press the brain* harder, work it out

like a muscle that has not reached its  
full size. And then she went from student  
to student in the crowd, putting her hands  
on both sides of their heads, and pressing hard,  
saying over and over, *press the brain*.

One of the women in my class received  
this laying on of hands. I thought her eyes  
would pop. It was a call she needed  
and so did I. Although I didn't feel  
those hands that night, her words press on.

**JON K. LAUCK**

---

**PROUD SON IN THE STACKS**

It was open country, voiceless

But Lyman Draper gathered  
memories

Then you came, proud son of  
Portage

Our day of adolescence slipped—or closed, you said—a new permanence  
budded,  
a region rooted itself

In Draper's stacks you found our voices,  
projected them, added us to the drama

They still live there—our voices—  
in the cartons on the shelves in the stacks

And the century has heard more voices

Homeward, you said, look homeward.  
Find our voices.  
Listen to our home.  
Find our center.  
Start in the stacks. Start listening.

**OLD HOUSE ON LAKE MONONA—THE NEAR END OF JENIFER ST.**

In this old house, fifth along the lake,  
warped windows are polished  
by wind whether it's moonless starless,  
or, as today, sunless; smoke flails the air  
so the chimney roars, wails.

The last oak leaves whirl and tumble  
along the curbs while within  
the three cats, marmalade, tiger,  
Persian, race in dark hallways  
making butterfly shadows.

Cardinals in back peck open  
hard sunflower seeds, while coots  
along the edge of the yard  
float beyond the first thin ice.

DANIEL KUNENE

---

THEY HANG PEOPLE, DON'T THEY?

Down  
Down  
Down in the Deep South of the Soul  
A black effigy dangles  
From a hangman's noose  
On Langdon Street  
In Madison, Wisconsin

White heat strives to sear  
The last mercy drop  
In the Deep South of the Soul  
Where a black effigy dangles neck twisted  
From the eaves of a fraternity  
On Langdon Street  
In Madison, Wisconsin

Down  
Down  
Down in the Deep South of the Soul  
Arizona fires roar through the land, to the border, their white heat  
Threatening even the feisty moisture-laden desert plants  
While a black effigy dangles from a hangman's noose  
On the eaves of a fraternity on Langdon Street  
In Madison, Wisconsin

But, Brothers and Sisters, today we meet here  
To exorcise the demons of the Soul  
And invite whomsoever the spirit moves to join us  
In our sororities and fraternities of freedom

For, whatever the odds  
We're moving forward, and forward and forward  
And no obstacles shall deflect us from our path  
Power to the People!

**ON FIRST READING *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL***

I tossed the book aside and searched  
out the window at snow swerving down  
to the avenue below.  
Some flakes were losing their nerve  
and gliding back up into the sky,  
just as I feared my life would waver  
and never match the depth of passion found  
in fiction. Awake when the Badger Tavern  
neon nodded off at two, I entered that world  
of ghost shapes flashed on the screen of sleeping houses.  
I couldn't devour entire blocks in a manic stride  
like Thomas Wolfe, though I was just as in love  
with aloneness, just as in love  
with a strange inscrutable sky watching me  
as I watched the snow's advancing wave.

**1-900-CHAT**

*People where you live waiting to talk to you now.—TV ad*

So I hope this reaches you, I mean,  
I didn't want to call at first, or, I did,  
I do, it's just I'd think, If not now when?  
And then,  
Well, just not now.  
I mean, I'd think of someone  
friendly and alone and I'd picture Johnson Street  
and Orton Park, and I'd picture someone  
in a yellow dress; I'd picture someone  
reading, someone sewing, someone  
with a cat. Another rides the bus  
but has her cell phone while a dark-haired  
someone steps indoors to check her messages.  
Two more make drinks and others,  
laughing, slender, patient, seem  
content to watch TV.  
Or sometimes I think of the end  
of an endless long chain of events:  
before now I was shoveling snow  
and before that I was talking to Richard  
and then zipping my jacket, then  
tying my boots and then rinsing a cup,  
and before that I was reading in bed,  
and then it was night and then day,  
then night and then day,  
and last month and last year and so I go  
faster and farther until there's no one  
and nothing and then just God  
at his big desk inventing the moment.  
In fact, I think of eternity stretched in every direction  
and I think of the first half back to God and up  
to me again, a muddle of circumstance  
and baffled will, boots pooling  
water by the door, gas fire  
blazing, a secret to myself.

**SELF-PORTRAIT ON YOUTUBE**

*His reasoning was specious, and did much to reassure me. —P. G. Wodehouse*

Like a casement opening out upon a world  
He chooses not to see, the prisoner of a point of view  
Remains complacent in that choice, until a slight  
Alteration of perspective, a trick of light, reveals a small  
Illuminated window in a corner of the factory's dull façade.  
I don't like looking at myself (*I like to watch myself*,  
Says the countervoice)—how can that odd, uncomprehending  
Object looming right in front of me be *me* (*and there I am*)?  
I was wandering through the Internet last week  
(As if I'd nothing better to do) in a dilatory state of mind,  
Revisiting my usual sites, checking my e-mail now and then  
For news of something interesting or new or strange,  
And then I came across myself. I was standing at a podium  
In a bookstore, reciting a poem I wrote last summer  
About the sixties, about how the world you believed you knew  
Changed in ways you couldn't have foreseen; about disappointment.  
It all seemed tentative, yet tentative in a way I wanted it to be,  
For thought itself is tentative. As the reader plodded along  
A sense of peace came over me, as though the person I was watching  
Were the real me, relieved of the burdens of self-consciousness  
And spelling out the words as I had meant them all along. Perhaps  
Life *is* best looked at from a single window (I saw *Gatz* last week too,  
Another objectification of self-consciousness, of perfect sentences),  
But a perspective boxes you in. To see yourself the way others see you  
Is a wonderful kind of freedom, the freedom of starting over again  
Without preconceptions, the freedom of looking at your heart.  
I'm at the age when death becomes a fact, however long deferred,  
Instead of just an abstract possibility, which is why I crave distractions.  
The mirror is too intimate. What I want is the cool detachment  
Of another person's vantage point, free from the distorting  
Self-conceptions consciousness imposes on itself, when the mind  
Is caught in the brief interval between thought and action  
And it finds a way of moving forward, and it's time to start.



BLUE PLATE

After the porno theater became a revival house,  
the neighborhood began to change.  
*The Blue Plate*, a designer diner, opened,  
all aluminum and curves. Inside,  
the menu featured revived comfort foods—  
meat loaf, mashed potatoes, a glass case full of pies.  
Young families moved in, the drawn shades  
of the elderly replaced by window boxes  
and Big Wheels in the yards. Another revival.  
Then a Mexican restaurant opened—  
though not one run by Mexicans.  
A pizza place whose specialty is a pie  
made with Greek, not Italian, cheese  
called *The Feta-licious*.

But what is real? In time, everyone  
came to depend upon the diner. Packed  
for breakfast, lunch, pie, and coffee.  
If you need a good plumber,  
go to the Blue Plate and ask for Carl  
who's there talking politics  
with the other long-suffering followers of Trotsky.  
If you want a sitter, ask the waitstaff,  
Who has a younger sister?  
If you're invited to a potluck, stop  
and buy a whole pie.

In the town where I grew up,  
there was a diner too, *Bev's*,  
named after the cook and owner who,  
my mother whispered the first time we went there,  
was a Holocaust survivor.  
When we went for breakfast or a hamburger,  
Bev would wait on us, her tattoo shining  
on her thick, damp wrist. She was not Jewish,  
but Czech and Catholic. She kept an Infant of Prague  
by the cash register and changed  
his tiny satin outfits to match the seasons.  
But she didn't make pie and her mashed potatoes  
came from the same box as my mother's.  
Bev's food wasn't good, only better than nothing.  
Just like being a death camp survivor,

---

Bev told my mother, wasn't a good thing to be,  
only better than not being.  
My mother is dead now. Bev too.

My mother wasn't a good cook either, rarely made pies.  
I can, but I like the ones at the Blue Plate  
better. *Dutch Apple, Three Berry, Lemon with Mile-  
High Meringue.* The trouble with meringue,  
my mother said once, is that it weeps.

Amazing, I thought, sad pie.

STRANGERS

We both pull a foot back up to the curb, calculating the narrowed opportunity for dashing across the street. The oncoming cars do not lurch forward. They are not as impatient as us. I look quickly to the traffic sign, for the little LED pedestrian guy. He's flashing red. I look back to the traffic, at the headlights pulling ahead, and acquiesce.

"It's not worth it," says the woman who had gauged her traffic-defying potential beside me.

"This would be the night we slip and fall," I say, shaking my head. Cars snake across our intersection.

"That would be an awful way to go," she says.

This strikes me as funny, for some reason. "Yeah," I say. "I'm hoping to give my people a better story to tell at my funeral."

We're both peeling back the beginning of a laugh. Her voice is chiseled, textured. The caliber you wouldn't want firing threats or reprimands.

"I read about an actress who took a bunch of pills, and they found her with her head in the toilet," she said.

"Not in the toilet," I groaned.

"I don't care what people have to say after I'm dead," she said. "It doesn't matter if they know how I died."

"But *you'll* know!" I insist.

She tosses her head back to free a hearty laugh. I've always had good luck with people who surrender to joy this way.

"I'm not used to your Midwest ways," she says after a moment, and turns to demonstrate a processed, static smile. "I'm from the east coast. When everything is wrong, you see it."

I was told once that, elsewhere, waitresses refer to customers' neat nesting of their own dirty plates as The Midwest Stack. Congeniality, we've got in the bag.

"It's a practiced survival skill," I say.

---

“The laugh was good,” she says. “I’ve been remodeling.”

“One room or everything?” I ask.

The little LED pedestrian guy lights up for us and we step into the intersection. My comrade moves swiftly, clutching books and binders to her body. She stands at about five foot four, with a revolution of graying chestnut spirals bouncing against her shoulders, keeping time with her steps.

She tells me about the broken sewage pipe. The spewing. The contractors. The boxes of everything she owns. She tells me about her unexpected travel to Baltimore and back. Baltimore and back. Her mother is ill. She asks me what I thought about Philadelphia when I visited.

I tell her about the sharp contrasts of neighborhoods, the cantina we ate in with an octopus on the patio roof, the Gil Scott-Heron performance, the unplanned beauty of it all.

We’ve walked a little more than a block before reaching the Overture. She’s in the middle of telling me about online dating. I interrupt.

“I’m heading in here,” I say, wanting to hear the end.

“I am too, but it’s the other door,” she says. We keep walking. She picks up the end of her Match.com story. “So, they told me that, even if I’m telling the guy ‘no thank you,’ their computer adds the reply to its algorithm and sends more just like him! So, don’t be too nice. That’s what I learned.”

It’s my turn to laugh.

I tell her about my online profile. My divorce. My writing. My youth program. The show I’m attending. She’s heading to the literary revision panel. We both think of staying in touch, but pull back our feet. So many invitations evaporate once the moment passes. My mother calls it vacation promises; they seem real on the horseback ride along the beach but unlikely once you’re back in your real life loading groceries in your trunk.

I go for it anyway, and hand her a card. I’m not in the city often, but when I am I’d enjoy a leisurely coffee and conversation with this lively woman. Our not-near-death exchange felt purposed, somehow. Lucky.

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“Oh, good!” she says. She’s genuine and enthusiastic. “Email me whenever you like. I’ll email you back.”

*Honorary Fellow, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Wisconsin.*

The universe is, once again, impressive. Just last week I was advised [read: threatened] by a close friend to start scouting fellowships. I had nodded, though I wasn’t convinced I could. Or should.

Lucky, in the divine sense.

I part ways with my curbside compadre, both of us wishing the other a great event. I took to the stairs, no hesitation in my steps. Smiling at the gift in talking to strangers.

ANCIENT RITES

*Winter Solstice in Glenway Park*

in ancient Greece, Dionysos Lenaios  
was honored in Athenian theaters  
in celebration of the god's rebirth

in pagan Rome, Brumalia heralded  
a month of Bacchus, god of wine and song,  
revelries ending on the solstice night

in Finland, Sweden and Norway  
Sámi worship Beiwe,  
sun-goddess of fertility and sanity

a white reindeer, female, is sacrificed,  
meat threaded onto sticks bent into  
rings tied with bright ribbons,

doorposts covered with butter  
for Beiwe to eat, a bribe to bring  
green back to earth, return sanity

to people out of darkness. Solstice  
in high latitudes is only midway  
through winter, though light is waxing

the coldest nights are still to come.  
Hertha, Norse goddess of light, home,  
and hearth, is still remembered

in mid-winter with cakes like slippers  
filled with gifts, huts strewn with evergreens, fir  
boughs cast into bonfires set on stones,

and sages whisper fortunes through the smoke.

tonight as the elliptic orbit begins to turn  
our way toward the sun, we celebrate in poem  
and song—perform the primitive rite of

sacrifice by fire—white marshmallows  
burned black as chocolate,  
brown as graham crackers.

VOICING THE CITY STRANGE

What sound should I throat you?  
A rustling map, rain on the windshield, roar of wind rushing over lake water  
until surf sounds on the shore as if ocean lived here.

The moon over Monona  
(the lake) bellows tonight.

Do you hear the music of Jenifer Street?  
A blue porch railing, bicycles tethered at the entrance, an un-mullioned  
window scanning the lake. Wet wheels on pavement or a thousand leaves  
ripping in liquid air.

Monroe Street is chiming a Bach. Wind over Wingra. A flute.  
At Victor's the coffee is crying.  
A white crane is flying over my red house.  
The old oak, limb pointing down, has fallen from the Mound.

Where was wind on Bascom Hill? *Look for it at the Chazen.*  
A violin, a mandolin, and a briny lemon  
sang for a pterosaur in a Permian Sea.  
They were on their way to Brasserie V.

Can we sing of the Capitol? *Not today, my lady.*

Well then, where is beauty in this city?  
Once on Spaight Street where it intersects with Few, two white-lacquered  
men sat on a bench, arm over shoulder, ghost men, fleeting, gone to a  
park in distant city; a Segal and a gallery that flew away.

But the coterie at Brasserie V?  
What did they order? A dark ale,  
a Vichyssoise, and two *moules frites*.

What were they reading?  
Poetry. Books colored like rainbows,  
available at Avol's.

Will there be shelter in this city?

---

Perhaps, in a house on Jenifer Street as winter comes on, as the lake ices,  
and the wind  
is a blade that cuts through a thin pair of blue jeans on the legs of a  
southern girl. Look for the dream of a revolution, curled in the hope of  
an equal future, where time lives under a skull.



MARTHA KAPLAN

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WINSLOW LANE NEIGHBOR

To the man who shot bottle rockets into my yard  
on the Saturday before the 4th of July:

Sir, I rounded the corner of my house  
in the soft cushion of the late garden night, bright stars overhead,  
trees framing yard from road, sky from ground, when the whoosh  
and fire of your bottle rocket shot through those trees  
and fell just yards from my feet. The sleepy calm of the  
closed-off watering and the perfume of the roses,  
the rhythmic sound of the few quiet bicyclists on the street  
beyond the garden, all yanked awake  
by that swift trajectory.

Neighbor, you aimed the rocket over your trees as if we,  
who live outside the boundaries of your small square,  
are your targets. Is your dark yard an empire?  
Are we your barbarians?

MIDLIFE CPR

See the *For Rent* sign  
in the window on State Street.  
Try the door and find it open.  
Hear your footsteps echo  
on the worn floor  
as you walk through the empty shop.  
Dream of the contents  
this room could contain.  
Surprise the landlady on the stairs.  
Tell her you will take the room.  
Beg to keep your dog.  
Say she is old  
and cannot live without you.  
It is only a little lie.  
Sign the lease.  
Call a realtor and leave  
your house in his hands.  
Write your letter of resignation.  
Do not explain.  
Say goodbye to no one.  
Move quickly and leave all  
you cannot carry in your car.  
Then sell the car and buy cheese,  
poppy seed hard rolls,  
apples, a bottle of good wine,  
and a candle. Light the candle  
and picnic on the hardwood floor.  
Then say *yes* to the job in the store  
that sells folk art and old books.  
Don't even ask about insurance.  
Close your eyes,  
breathe deeply and shout,  
*There is still time.*

**BECOMING LEGEND**

It won't be long until the locals say you have been  
mumbling down State Street since Sterling Hall  
exploded. They will tell freshmen you finished  
your research early and blew out of Death's way  
before the bomb went off.

Nod as if you remember; gaze blankly at the men  
who burned out at campus parties  
or left their reason in Vietnam,  
who now pick up breadsticks from sidewalk cafes.

Absorb these legends from days when this street  
was fogged with patchouli and grass;  
let them penetrate your pores like the liquid  
you rub into your dog to poison ticks and fleas.

Then go each day to your stairwell  
in the only parking ramp that doesn't reek of piss.  
Sit on the tattered, purple shawl that belonged  
to your mother, pick up your flute, play new songs.

Small change will fall from manicured fingers  
of young women in high-heeled shoes  
and from the pale hands of men in blue suits.  
Watch the constellations form in the velvety sky  
beneath your wrinkled skirt.

When the sun sets, gather the coins  
and place them in your pocket,  
but always remember to scatter some first  
for crows to admire, children to find,  
and to show the spirits that you are still grateful.

EPITAPHS

The Seminoles have gone, as has the oak savannah,  
but here to take their place is Seminole Highway,  
which has spawned a maze of offshoots:  
Timber Ridge Trail, Green Clover Court,  
Wood's Edge Road. They always name  
what they are taking.

Each year another street, another squad  
of houses, soon to be flanked by offices.  
Right there, last year's grassland sprouted  
Pinnacle Fitness and Health; ACH Business Suites;  
an orthodontist's. Beyond,  
a concrete path leads to a heap of dirt  
topped by a digger. The earth is flagged  
with *For Sale* signs declaring: *Build  
to Suit*, there's *Space Available*.

One small farm remains.  
Veal calves lying in hutches  
surrounded on two sides by housing,  
on the third by road.  
Beyond, the new Savannah Oak  
Elementary School, whose US flag droops  
in the windless air.

A black expanse of parking space  
covers the earth beneath.

THE WAR AT HOME

Fall of 1969. All you get for five dollars  
is a membership card and a dime store medallion  
chained to your wrist bearing the name  
of an American POW. And a newsletter  
not even your mother reads. But it delivers the war  
closer to home. Also a rash under the bracelet  
you refuse to remove, at the cost of itching  
and tossing through sleep with ugly, foreign dreams.  
Past cashing paychecks, sacking groceries  
and news of an X-rated drive-in eight miles away,  
your town need be no bigger than it is.  
And when handfuls of pot-head seniors  
parade on the fifty-yard line singing  
*Give Peace a Chance*, you blush and squirm  
how tiny their voices from where you stand  
skeptical at your classroom window  
dabbing a wet Kleenex on a wrist that wants to bleed.

Maybe the same afternoon, half the Midwest between,  
I'm under a sun shower, ankle deep in leprous  
elm leaves, up to my ears in slogans  
of savage beards and red berets. Bascom Hill  
baits me with a big-city view of State Street  
and the capitol dome, immaculate as a tombstone.  
But I'm bored with the SDS, debating  
political realities of bricks and firebombs, posturing  
with our fists raised, our gas masks, our fanatic need  
for public recognition and the inexplicable  
loneliness that smothers me in every public place.  
So I leave before anyone takes a vote. I opt  
for the meaninglessness of French verb conjugations  
and the next day I can read no significance  
in the mocking editorial version of half a dozen  
Weathermen who'd seceded from the proceedings, bothered  
how their fellow anarchists were so unabashedly democratic.

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Reunited with wife and babes, your POW  
writes his thanks for all the five dollars of your support.  
Less struck by his photo than you had hoped,  
your bracelet, the letter, and all those dreams  
become a small archive in a shoebox  
under your everyday panties beside bundles  
of church bulletins and notes from boys your own age.  
You don't feel any more noble than six months ago  
and don't expect history books listing your name.  
Still, that spring your renegade seniors are stung  
by the lethal facts at Kent State: four dead,  
less than a hundred miles and one month away  
from graduation. Meanwhile my Weathermen  
have stolen wings and launched a zero-visibility  
air raid on munitions plants near enough at hand  
to blast me from my top bunk, completely in the dark.

After the news of Kent State, I hit the streets  
wanting not to miss the war at home. Block after block  
I stormed the ignorant neighborhoods, wanting to yell  
around each corner how the world was about to change.  
I tipped some garbage cans into the gutter  
and ran away. I lit a match to a stuffy  
old armchair at the Salvation Army drop-box,  
but it didn't want to burn. Downtown on State Street  
there were barricades, but nothing beyond.  
I split a smoke with a National Guardsman,  
neither of us willing to share what the other wanted  
to know, never coming close to the word revolution.  
Too hard to know when and where these things take place.

## RONNIE HESS

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### THANKSGIVING OWLS

The full moon did not come out  
neither did the owls  
Thanksgiving weekend in the arboretum.

The landscape was between fall and winter,  
a light snow on the ground, oak leaves brittle,  
cattails in the marsh wearing white tufts.

What we did see—three wild turkeys  
roosting on tree limbs,  
flapping their ample black tails.

Last year this time,  
a great horned owl perched  
outside my window. For weeks

it came hooting, courting  
across the neighborhood.  
I waited nightly,

my husband absent in China,  
my bed cold, surrounded myself  
with love tokens—

owl pin, beaded owl, barred owl bowl.

## RONNIE HESS

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### DINNER AT THE SHISH CAFE

My husband surprises me over dinner by asking Rabia, our Moroccan waitress,  
If she's heard of Rabia from Basra, Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya,  
The eighth century Iraqi poet, the holy woman born into poverty,  
The visionary who when freed from slavery chose a lifetime of prayer.

*My peace, O my brothers and sisters, is my solitude  
And my Beloved is with me always.*

Muslim mothers give daughters her name. Of course, Rabia knows.  
She takes our order—Syrian salad with artichokes and feta cheese,  
Pea soup with potatoes, lamb and string beans stewed in tomato sauce.  
She sits with us while she writes the dishes down on her pad.  
She speaks English, French and Arabic. She is studying to be an architect.  
She holds our wine glasses at the stem, not the lip.  
The lamb comes with rice mixed with pine nuts and pomegranate seeds.  
She kisses me goodnight on both cheeks.

My husband says listening to poetry is hard work. Poems are dense.  
Sometimes, I let him read mine. He sits quietly. He studies them.  
He edits in blue ink in the margins. He writes words like  
Good, nice image, not quite right, and meaning unclear.



THE FARMERS' MARKET

Someone's protesting something  
near the Laotian family with the shitake  
mushrooms fanned across the table  
mingling with yellow carrots.

The protesters pass out stickers,  
ask for signatures,  
stroke their gray beards,  
wiggle their leather toes,  
while an old brass band  
plays yankee doodle dandy  
and a watermelon  
splatters  
triumphantly on the ground.

Lisa picks peppers—  
anaheim, red, poblano, orange, serrano, green, jalapeno—  
my mouth waters, her basket is already full  
without the basil, cilantro or spinach.

Kids play tag on the capitol grass,  
avoiding the women in black  
counting the dead.

I purchase elk steaks, smoked rainbow trout and  
suck down sun gold tomatoes,  
basil pesto is next and after that some gouda cheese  
denim jelly, green salsa.

Tall girls in candy cane suspenders  
pass out sports schedules  
next to a toothless man with coarse fingers, a coarser voice and a  
smooth guitar riff.

Lisa asks me if I want an oatmeal raisin cookie  
as someone reminds me that somewhere there's a war and  
we need to do something.  
"I want two" I respond,  
and the protestor is disappointed when he realizes  
I meant the cookies.

## ALEX GUBBINS

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### MADISON SUMMER, 2005

State Street gives me a hug  
from a homeless man. I loathe his  
dirty nails on my sunburnt skin,  
his soiled uniform wearing rank.

My patches, I ripped off at end of service.  
And the barber, I stopped visiting to let go,  
even when I contracted lice  
from the many days I kept from showering.

Because of the many days he's begged,  
I thought he earned more than booze  
and higher than Sergeant.  
I buy the man a sirloin and call him Sir.

I tell him I'm heading back up the hill.  
Before slumping his face to the gutter,  
he manages to utter something I understand:  
Watch the roofs. Charlie's behind the walls.

ANDY GRICEVICH

EXCISED POEM

Philosophy is homesickness and poetry for runaways  
 At home anywhere, that is, nowhere  
 Any ground turns and flows into a rift, a root, a road  
 So how can I say where I stand  
 Read world, record, repeat  
 Repeat the creatures who vibrate all the wires, the ones  
~~blissing out~~ seconds of night (erasing)  
 Repeat the city's shape for a heartbeat waveform  
 Repeat: a terrible sandwich we would make  
 reverberating your mothers  
 outside the ditch  
 garvitone. lets  
 to the last born  
 to marker filings along the hill  
 adaptively spit  
 blossoming ends  
 the shape of town  
 reacting to this kind of sent cling  
 vacui of small mansions  
 (we'll get back there)  
 blurring out the western  
 sticks  
 they don't say here  
 two big pillow half loaves of lake and the meat pushing out  
 at the sides  
 Repeat: can I help whosever next  
 Repeat de facto segregation in liberal guilt, masked in the denial  
 of guilt, mask hidden in the recognition of the possibility of  
 guilt, strata so intriguing in their complexity that they hide the  
 point: that guilt being the point the point repeats repeats de facto  
 segregation  
 The people united will never be repeated  
 Repeat ~~the~~ form, the ramp, the berry, the batard, the egg, the  
 word  
 The flooded ditch  
 The sweat sheen  
 The insistence on extraction  
 How do you feel  
 Fracking feeling  
 How free  
 Is freedom isn't free  
 Dime a dozen plays  
 Imply the question every time  
~~Impishly~~  
 Machine sound near  
 Fills the far half warms  
 brightens, fades.  
 Room for expansion  
 Sounds  
 Like suburban force  
 Not on the tongue  
 but in the mental mind

*Handwritten notes:*  
 I'm happy to make what I see that it's in the  
 most great for me. And that's that the hard when I ~~enter~~  
 ramp away from home I think about the or freedom, on top or bicycle, that place  
 bike or being it behind a little in the place wanting, when the road behind the  
 car, coming in the block of some top in front of that, except the last found  
 to be down the gate as the one last can be. And a bit the ~~own~~ distance of my  
 will make a very bad sandwich us or done. And I think about how much  
 and all de facto segregation as  
 is all feeling as then the way. is the other side of headman  
 are you feeling. you're to about, indeed in poetry. How

*Handwritten notes:*  
 This rhyme  
 78 - Poem requiring  
 excited from T  
 STREAMS (repet  
 200)

*Handwritten notes:*  
 A M A P ?  
 a moving bicycle  
 THERE ARE NO UNDERGROUND  
 easily rewritten, summer's  
 #, 10/12/13)  
 - Andy Gricevich  
 20  
 30  
 40  
 43  
 48  
 72  
 100-108

echolocations poets map madison

with its mental money  
And its mental honey hive  
Offshore  
Prairie  
Unfarmed  
Sea  
Technical stage  
Thought longed in the round  
Cul-de-sac oak s  
I dream retake s, sloughing  
Off chips  
Mr. and Mrs. Personal Tractor  
Filed  
And flat  
Tened round  
Root  
Whole system drowned  
Drowned in cedar  
On: to practice  
Savannah's  
Capacity

I may never be able to read that work  
without a sense of injustice skin-close  
Those little injustices I'd actually forgotten  
Until I tried to figure out what I was up against  
In the reading

Another thing I wanted to get to at or up against:  
"Development is like cancer"  
Drowns the real

Relation  
Metaphor  
Only masks cause  
A cancer  
Stopping up our mouths  
Could that be a constructive overstatement  
An implied mark  
Routings metaphors  
And the cancer metaphor  
Spreading like prairie fire gone  
Wild from mouth to mouth  
Gosh these don't seem like positive figur  
To cut off our incessant answers  
Why do I tie voice to answer  
Answer to cancer  
Well that's obvious  
At the end of the sentence  
There's a black spot  
Where somewhere back  
Before the roads was a kiss  
Ancestor

2

also though I wanted to get to this intersection  
enchanted valley and Autumn road  
names hard on  
"contemporary ears"  
we've all got  
out don't smudge an old road  
Hidden ridge-haiken road  
with a brand-new dead end  
Named for the water drained  
For the ~~arrangement~~  
To be landscape into deb t  
On views late commuters  
Will imagine seeing (picture)  
Until the first house one new lot over  
Blots out the imagined vista

In the names two times run  
away-~~eyes~~ in two directions  
One shortening into the future  
As the other pulls it into faster pace  
To hear them as surfaces  
In the echo chamber of presence  
Drowns the thicknesses ~~dividing them~~ that divide them  
Dividing time into time which is music  
(music, homesick and runaway)  
As perhaps on a lot a family joined by marriage  
And that thought in thought  
Fast blocks and crack a feudal link  
To loosen and crack a feudal link  
Winking, crumbling  
Winking aunts and uncles  
The flooded ditch, the soaked sub-basement  
That's the names, the roots  
Foundations ~~practicing, waking someone~~

What the hell was that  
Implied question  
For history  
To happen now  
All property needs  
A divorce

Q.77  
How to practice  
Savannah's  
Capacity

Do birds ever dream  
I've they ever sleep in  
Wings in personal  
Without a sense of  
Until I tried to figure out what I was up against  
In the reading  
Another thing I wanted to get to at or up against  
"Development is like cancer"  
Drowns the real  
Metaphor  
Capacity

Development is like cancer  
Drowns the real  
Metaphor  
Capacity

WINTER KILL.

I need to arrange a funeral for my neighbor,  
actually my landlord's son-in-law, who's also  
my neighbor but around the corner, how  
casually I listened last week to the news  
*Oh ya all the fish in his pond are dead,*  
standing near the row of pines that borders  
our yards under March sun that felt like early summer,  
and in all fairness my mind was clowned  
with their new Shih Tzu puppy wobbling through  
uneven grass, but now realize days later  
*Oh ya all the fish are dead* actually means  
13 imported Nishikoi suffocated,  
these fish who arrived on planes rolling grey  
against the bottom of an over-winter water feature:  
the Panda Bekko, the Red-Brained Tancho,  
the Cloud Shadow Goromo, even the Solid Gold Matsuba  
gone gone gone. Don't you know  
that ponds *breathe*, Bob? Sure this story was gone,  
it swam down deep until all 13 fish came surging back  
demanding—what—a ceremony? I say let the Great  
Egrets eat them without regret, I'll intone  
each of their names three times with my palms  
upturned. Fortunately souls of fish already know  
how to fly. At Olbrich Gardens in Madison I stood  
beneath a golden pavilion originally built in Thailand,  
a gift crated up, seven weeks by sea, three days  
rail, then reassembled before a reflecting pool by  
the same nine master artisans who originally designed it.  
To fish, the sky is a surface they sometimes breach.  
I hope death is this kind of manifest, but further expect,  
over there, a golden pavilion effortlessly appears  
each time I recall 13 veiltail koi visiting me one sunset  
looking for a pool of light in which to swim, and  
all the water in my body could summon was this.

**PRECISION**

Freezing rain. Shivering past  
the tagged bus stop, walking home,  
my knees two broken dinner plates,  
stomach a tumble of stones, tonight  
each house memorizes the inner shape  
of its heart. Every tree understands  
the blood's difficult passage from this world  
to the next. Trees are the slowest rivers.  
And living on an isthmus is like living inside  
the narrow throat of an hourglass,  
my compass points bipolar, all directions  
channeled through this narrow passage  
between two bodies of water. I'm trying  
to keep my lines straight. I could say  
another millennia passes, or the moon settles  
deeper into its blue socket. What I should say  
is when I get home, there are lights on  
in two upstairs windows. In one,  
a figure. In the other, a shadow moves  
disconnected across the wall. I'm trying  
to understand this as I cross the icy street,  
I'm trying not to lose my key inside the lock  
though for days it hasn't turned.

## BRENT GOODMAN

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### STEAM

I am not political, but even  
the Capitol's bathroom windows  
are bolted shut. I wish this were  
a metaphor. One in, one out,  
no signs, flags, or books.  
The officials I didn't vote for  
access the people's house through  
a secret tunnel system  
once only rumored to exist.

A NIGHT AT ST. MARY'S

Codeine shears the fat black sheep.  
One by one they leap over the tray  
and still I can't find sleep.

Nurses rattle their needles about,  
each one a rainy weather  
I cast off into, my sail  
as slim as old fashioned minutes,  
the ones that used to go by.

Personally, I think  
my prospects are leaking.  
Personally, I think it's the dead  
who won't give me rest.

They ring up and down the cold corridors  
rustling their paper clothes.  
The squeak of a shoe on linoleum  
is the little black door the dead use.  
Do they make a drug for that?

This bed is too much of a gurney  
for sleep. I can feel the eagerness  
in its twelve little wheels.

I watch the clock hands  
struggle to move  
through a medium thicker  
than the plot of an opera.  
It's no joke now. Thicker than fear.

Do they have a bell for that?  
A button to push?

Do they have a nurse to hurry night  
and me along,  
make sleep my shepherd,  
shut the door,  
and blow the needles out?



## MAX GARLAND

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### THE LOON

The water winks open, the loon  
is sewn onto the moonlit lake.  
The lights of the far shore  
could be anyone's necklace.  
Wind rakes a little texture  
across the surface. The loon  
is the one live thing  
on the lake, except the soul  
which is debatable, and could  
be the fading habitat of God,  
or merely like this stain  
the moon makes the water wear—  
exquisite, migratory. *Dive*  
you want to say,  
but the loon is light as thread,  
far away, and whatever you lack  
cannot be wished under.

*Morrison Park, Lake Monona*

## MACAJA REVELS CAMPED AT A STREAM OF WATER

In *Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin*

there is a notation that a Black man

Macaja Revels, born in 1800 on the Cherokee reservation,  
migrated to Dane County and camped at a stream of water  
eighteen miles north of the village of Madison.

Macaja traveled on to buy land elsewhere.

There is no record of physical description; light, dark or medium  
what he accomplished or who his parents were.

In 1800, a Black man was both an oddity and invisible  
but the land welcomed him.

The land was cheap, fertile with plenty

there was schooling for children and protection for escaped slaves  
so Macaja could rest briefly.

Who remembers Macaja Revels, Black settler in the 1800's

who camped at a refreshing stream

eighteen miles north of the village of Madison

but moved on, maybe knowing there would be no welcome in Madison.

Who remembers that Black people came to Wisconsin  
to be free?

**MR. JAMES BRAXTON: A MEMORY POEM**

Eighty-seven years sparsely covered his jutting bones  
with a veneer of amber skin.  
His quixotic face held an absence of pain  
even when he retold  
the hurry from Mississippi to Madison.  
Jumping the train  
at nineteen to escape a lynching mob  
cause he didn't hold both his voice and his eyes down  
when he "sir'd" a white man incorrectly.  
Radiant kindness beamed on high  
from his deep set eyes.  
Bright lights that clicked on  
to show folks the way into his smile  
and to continue right on into his heart.  
His curling southern talk wrapped folks  
into a quilt of soft conversation.  
James Braxton earned and lost much in Madison, Wisconsin.  
His business, his money, one of his houses along with a wife.  
But he never lost respect from good people  
or his personal joy  
as he walked up and down Williamson Street  
With his stretched out hand, a wave of authority and welcome.

**THE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL FOOD PANTRY STOMP**

Waiting for the carton of food  
given with Christian suspicion  
even to agency-certified charity cases  
like me,  
thin and brittle  
as uncooked linguini,  
anticipating the factory-damaged cans  
of tomato soup, beets, three-bean salad  
in a welfare cornucopia,  
I spotted a squashed dollar bill  
on the floor, and with  
a Saint Vincent de Paul food pantry stomp  
pinned it under my sneaker,  
tied my laces meticulously,  
and stuffed the bill in my sock  
like a smuggler of diamonds,  
all beneath the plaster statue wingspan  
of Saint Vinnie,  
who was unaware  
of the dance  
named in his honor  
by a maraca shaker  
in the salsa band  
of the unemployed.

THE BOUNCER'S CONFESSION

I know about the Westerns  
where stunt doubles bellyflop  
through banisters rigged to collapse  
or crash through chairs designed to splinter.  
A few times the job was like that.  
A bone fragment still floats  
in my right ring finger  
because the human skull  
is harder than any fist.

Mostly, I stood watch at the door  
and imagined their skulls  
brimming with alcohol  
like divers drowning in their own helmets.  
Their heads would sag, shaking  
to stay awake, elbows sliding out  
across the bar.  
I gathered their coats. I found their hats.  
I rolled up their paper bags  
full of sacred objects only I could see.  
I interrogated them for an address,  
a hometown. I called the cab,  
I slung an arm across my shoulders  
to walk them down the stairs.

One face still wakes me some mornings.  
I remember black-frame eyeglasses  
off-balance, his unwashed hair.  
I remember the palsy that made claws  
of his hands, that twisted his mouth  
in the trembling parody of a kiss.  
I remember the stack of books he read  
beside the beer he would not stop drinking.  
I remember his fainted face  
pressed against the bar.  
This time, I dragged a corkscrewed body  
slowly down the stairs, hugged to my ribs,  
his books in my other hand,  
only to see the impatient taxi  
pulling away. I yelled at acceleration smoke,  
then fumbled the body with the books  
back up the stairs, and called the cab again.

---

No movie barrooms. No tall stranger  
shot the body spreadeagled across the broken table.  
No hero, with a hero's uppercut, knocked them out,  
not even me. I carried them out.

**FLYING WITH TWO BILLS**

*For Bill Stafford and Bill Rewey*

The Bill who owns the Cessna  
climbs us expertly  
toward scuds of yesterday's storm.

We look down at strawberry pickers,  
corn washed clean, the Wisconsin brimming  
its sand bars.

"Highest it's been in years"  
he says, offering you the controls,  
poet Bill who's never flown a plane before.

"Oh-oh" you say as the wing drops in a buffet  
on your turn over the capitol dome.  
Bill the pilot knows just what to say,

even takes panoramic pictures,  
whirls to snap you  
laughing at his control.

In my back seat it seems there's just one  
Bill in this airplane.  
I think of where we might barnstorm,

buzz the patriots of Hutchinson,  
pull this big banner over Ames, Iowa  
that says "LOWER YOUR STANDARDS AND WRITE"

oh and then we'll follow Lewis and Clark,  
dipping our wings to deans all the way:  
We'll head out Discovery Bay north

to the Chukchi Plateau where  
there aren't any people—visit  
mergansers, harlequins, and eiders.

But you're not saying  
where you're taking us. You fly.  
Saint Catherine, you will say,

---

feared her visions came from the devil  
unless in them the soul  
proclaimed its own nothingness.

It's time to get back to the conference,  
so you touch us down  
in Madison

the way you often do,  
with a perfect three-pointer,  
the way you said a willow touches water.



AIR LOCK

A space odyssey this is not, though in midst  
of another blasted trip, wife and I,  
for the U.W. Clinic, made to reminisce  
over last month's glimpse of how ultrasound  
can turn a pocket of the universe inside out  
already up side down: a college son's rare syndrome,  
"Thoracic Outlet," with "a clot the size of a brat,"  
that flock of doctors' hospital talk,  
his only symptom sudden, "classic,"  
(brought on in an Eddie Bauer trying a sweater on),  
his left arm gone purple as grape popsicle.  
And though it seemed we missed this Christmas,  
cold as hell, we needed no fleece and,  
thankfully, received none.

◇

Now, as if detainees we've made of ourselves,  
early for the appointment, we linger  
until lingering turns to dwell  
in an air lock on the far edge of Fond du Lac where—  
with or without needing to eat—  
we ate, hands still bearing the trace  
of Bacon Burgers and Curly Fries.  
Forgive me, should you think there ought  
not to be surprise. I take a quick glance  
at my wife's eyes, big, beautiful, blue,  
that just happen to have been  
for thirty-three years eyes of a C.C.R.N.,  
eyes that will hear no lies—  
my eyes.



Zippering up, slowly slipping on gloves,  
it's as if we're looking around for the rocks  
in this superheated box a southern-most sun  
at its zenith turns to sauna, when in truth  
we loiter for warmth that cannot be had between us  
until this thing is done, our son is cured,  
the operation a success, no need for a second one.  
Finally, we run for the car, cross a white wind,  
a gust's rush of nothingness  
enveloping us like a ghost-herd of horses.  
I step on more horses, her 300M, for heat.  
Halfway across state, though we cannot know it,  
awaits a slate clean of complications.  
We've been to see the Wizard. One of us maybe prayed.  
We're off for the specialist's, pilot  
to co-pilot, mum.



On the way home, somewhere around repairs  
on Highway 151, just as, one right after another,  
reflectors flare, steering us clear  
of on-coming cars, I find my tongue,  
but see by dashlight she's asleep. So  
I tell myself what I might have told her,  
why I have not wept or, even in relief,  
weep. Outside it's zero on the overhead console,  
though we're here warm, cruise control on,  
hurling through space as if in place.  
Like the interior, it occurs to me,  
earth's an air lock where zero's absolute.  
In an hour, maybe, we'll pull into the garage,  
park, another air lock. Out of one into another,  
whether we make it there or not.  
*Now tell me, dear wife, what one of us is without  
a sorrowful sense of life?*

SUSAN ELBE

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**EVERY SPRING GROWS DEEPER**

Wet April like an old demon pushes up  
through deadfall, shrugs sleep  
from its shoulders and shudders awake,  
a rainy light in the curl  
of its open hands, mercurial  
as the gray slip of water  
shivering out across lake ice,  
as something that opens too in me.

We were barely twenty that Spring,  
walking the slender arm of Picnic Point,  
green and urgent as the small birds  
pitching songs back and forth  
high above us in cages of branches,  
pressing their swollen breasts  
against the sky with unquestioning  
desire, more plain and sure than ours.

We knew nothing of the heart's repetition  
and so we knew nothing  
of its simple, certain signals.  
They rise in me now insistent as breath.  
I am the old demon's prophecy.  
You, the mistake I will make again.  
Not sorry, I turn into the rainy light.

SUSAN ELBE

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**[THE MORNING SOMEONE TORCHED SAINT RAPHAEL'S CATHEDRAL]**

*March 14, 2005*

The morning someone torched Saint Raphael's Cathedral  
I stood at my office window on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor  
staring down into collapsed-roof rubble, white smoke  
still rising from the ash, walls  
stenciled with lampblack, thinking how I'd flown awake  
at 5 a.m. in the scorched dark of my bedroom,  
pulled back to this bare-branched world  
from a collapsing tent of dream, the unexpected  
squawk of an ice-throated bird torn from deep inside me.

Wholly awake in the body's weather of knowing, I  
waited for the dawn to thumb away  
night's soot of fear, and before the clock played  
its first notes, heard the sirens.

The morning someone torched Saint Raphael's Cathedral,  
I looked down into its dark shell, broken sun  
through the stained glass, already light,  
reclaiming its own ruins, illuminating brittle pages  
of each hymnal, igniting each charred kneeler, every one.

FORM 15: AFTER BPNICHOL'S "JOURNAL. 3"

When you read this, everything is here. To stay awhile brings all else back again.



// N POETRY COMMUNITY VIA THE SECOND ANNUAL MIDWEST SMALL PRESS FESTIVAL JUNE 2013 //

. Everything is here and there is a word in you and in the eye that tells them so.



// FORM 15: AFTER PITCHER'S "JOURNAL 3" // BY JORDAN DUNN // PRINTED FOR THE MADISON

**FORM 15: AFTER BP NICHOL'S "JOURNAL 3"**

When you read this, everything is here. To stay awhile brings all else back again. Everything is here and there is a word in you and in the eye that tells them so. If it was here and it was everything, it would be coming forth but not as a word happens to be, nor as what a thing might bring here. It is so easy to say that you are like things to you, that you are what it is exactly to speak to anyone or to ask that of you as you are wedded to the flux of life. When I went forward nothing spoke and so being with them already it ended differently than it always does. There are feelings you have because we are words, but I want to be sure that you are yet another thing in the ease of maudlin putting fear aside. All of them at some point exhaust the possibilities of change. It is unfair to put the book down when there are things we do not have words for. As it happens to be, what it is exactly might be here though it's unfair to ask that of none or at some point it must not end like it always does, because our meanings change, because to speak to tell them that you're feeling these things when everything here is how it happens. To speak is so simple. I never thought you'd listen. Anyone can at some point put the fear aside in the wonder of once I asked them. Our meanings change and yet you are another thing. There is a word in you despite there being things we do not have words for. We just have to talk when you read this. I want to be there, to be everything as it happens or to say what you feel as you set the book down.

*Editors' note:* This text appears on the previous 2-page map.

FAITH WILL EMPHASIZE THE SECOND SYLLABLE

Tonight I'm driving Midvale with the wipers  
 and the defrost on, considering how to write  
 about a friend's poems, as a fine-grained  
     snow-rain falls across Wisconsin.  
 Dusting of magic under the streetlights,  
 sparkle, sprinkle, glitter like the pink  
     sugar I shook onto cupcakes  
     not three weeks ago, this night  
 a wide-eyed, breathless *maybe* as rare  
 as a little girl's six year old birthday.

And not three weeks ago,  
 the teachers marched a first day  
 and I had not yet considered unions, much.

*Unknown but to a handful, Shelly's poems  
 clear their small silence in the air  
 like breath on a frosty night. They burn and drip  
 with her desire for Sofya, wisdom, which  
 in Shelly's case translated to an urge  
 to understand, to peel back  
 until we reach an elemental vision...*

I work for days trying to say it right.  
 I take cupcakes to the classroom and oranges  
 to the protesters because I have an extra  
 box of oranges. Citrus fruit makes nothing happen  
 either, but we give of what we have and today  
 I have oranges and sometimes I have poems.  
 Shelly, forgive me if I find, graced  
 by baked goods and bagpipes, cowbells,  
 and the sprinkling of unused bullets someone left  
 to make a protest look bad, I move  
 in an opposite direction, layering it all on,  
 refuse to give up on *maybe*, on the lovely  
 human muddle, even though,  
 weather like this, visibility's usually poor.



AT THE YOUNG SHAKESPEARE PLAYERS

I climbed the stairs and found the door still locked,  
so I walked back into the snowy alley  
and crept inside the back way—how we used to  
break in the theatre, or we'd pry the window,  
or the door on the fire escape—and I was in,  
the green room's neon light still humming B-flat;  
the pile of wooden swords, the old Furnels  
and other lights, unhung; the costumes rack  
where, once, I hid inside a Duchess' dress  
and slept for hours; and there, the make-up table,  
covered in powder, and a bright-lit mirror,  
and on it, stuck with tape, a photograph  
of Nick. I know exactly when we took it:  
the goofy rattail and the *Star Wars* shirt  
and that pre-braces smile. We'd cornered him  
(he hated photos), but I think he wanted  
this one—proudly wearing bright red lipstick  
and posing, dapper with a bowler hat  
and slender cane. Now, we try to read  
the signs in retrospect, but really, know  
there were no "signs"; he was a funny kid,  
like all of us. The wall behind the mirror  
is all scrawled over with a million pencils,  
signatures, love hearts, doodles, old goodbyes.  
I didn't get a chance to say goodbye.  
I was away at school, and missed the service.  
It wasn't held here, though I wish it had been,  
the only place that ever really knew him,  
the only place that ever really knew me.  
The penciled signatures are like a wreath  
around the photograph. I find a tube  
of lipstick, and I write. "I miss you Nick."

THE GENTLEST EXCAVATION

Imagine for a moment they chose this—  
Not suicide exactly, but crazy, and they knew it.  
A girl they'd been drinking with said no way  
Was she driving on ice that late at night.  
No way was she ice fishing with them then,  
Late February, some spots already thawing.

Imagine for a moment they were raptured.

But they weren't. Madison, Wisconsin is famous  
For five lakes. Searchers picked the wrong one.  
They did not go famously down with Otis Redding.  
Ronald and Carl waited 45 winters in Lake Waubesa.  
They missed bad Packers seasons. They missed the Super Bowl.  
And now they've emerged in time for another bad season.

It's not the moment of death I want to see,  
Though I wonder. Who died first? Did they almost escape  
The 1950 Ford Coupe? Could they see each other at all?  
Did they hold hands? Can you taste your tears in lake water?  
Did being so drunk bring death faster or did time  
Go slow as silt from the moment they hit until now?

Imagine the gentlest excavation possible.  
The Sheriff's department employed a system  
Of balloons to raise the wreck. Bones and cloth  
Confirm—this was the where and the how of the friends  
And their end. The when was suspected.  
Families and detectives can rest now in the knowing.

Imagine any of our many foolish acts made thus  
Permanent. I don't think we ever drove on a frozen lake.  
Only because no one suggested it, I'm guessing.  
We deserve to have died, as much as we drank and drove.  
We are all of us alive nonetheless, none of us drowned.  
Not one of us listed as missing. Whereabouts known.

---

But the time we spent together is no more a hold  
On us than a rusted-out car. In places a touch  
Destroys what remains. Some places a breath.  
Even the holes, however, outline the shape  
Of the original. Absence has a certain curve to it,  
Suggesting the tenacity of memory over time.

Imagine everyone you loved back then  
Is loved by you still. You're loved back.  
Was there one perfect day? One party?  
One summer night when the sun  
Kept it up until 10? Yes, yes, yes.  
We were so young. Not happy enough.

Imagine all of Montana full of our fossils.

What price would we pay to preserve  
What we had there and then?  
I wouldn't go back. I am settled.  
I love my son. I'm in love.  
But I miss what we had. I miss you.  
In the picture of the excavation, the windows are rolled up.

**AUBADE ON ROUTE 51, LATE APRIL.**

Blown retreads, mufflers, road kill and I have the highway mostly to ourselves. Crows ignore me and car parts and aim for new raccoons. Monday sun rising on my right, I head my least favorite direction: the farther I drive, the less spring it is. North of all I love, one man and many restaurants, Wisconsin's sluggish hills and waysides look gray and gaunt, like blight. A Canada goose slides over the exit to Endeavor and strikes me as weary, but watching in the rear view mirror, I have to admit it's just landing. Ashamed of how I spend my loneliness on the man I left an hour ago, I shake my head and watch my speed. His apologetic restraint leaves me in no hurry to get home. He can't, he doesn't, console me, neither does the sun, and stupid trees here won't ever have leaves. The sputter when I accelerate sounds like, I swear it, "bereaves."

**THE HUSBAND CONFESSES**

*State Street, Early February*

I confess, I have spent the afternoon  
wandering from bookstore to bookstore.

I confess, I have fallen in love again  
with dead poets, some of them women.

I confess, I am reading a poem while  
walking down the street. It is cold.

I have lost my hat. I have no gloves on  
because I cannot turn the pages if I do.

I jump from page to page, from book to  
book. I have gotten some of them on sale.

I confess I do not know to whom I confess.  
I confess I am now writing while walking.

I am not paying attention to time or manner  
as I understand for a moment that the books

have forgotten they are books, that the street  
has forgotten I am there as the words begin

to confess. They have lost their way, they  
are guilty they say of these purchases.

They confess they saw me coming, are glad  
to have an afternoon walk and wouldn't

I walk more slowly, tell them why I love,  
speak softly, remind them of anything,

tell them who wrote them, and confess one  
more time to every passerby how I know

books love and how I have fallen again,  
taken time for this walk as I make my last

confession: I can no longer feel these pages,  
I do not know who is holding this open.

WHAT I MEANT TO SAY

I meant to say that sometimes my thoughts get ahead of me. Like the time on my bike this spring on the way home from work speeding down the hill where Lindfield crosses Muirfield. I'm only a block from home and I put on my brakes just in time as the cars speed by but my thoughts keep on going. Right through the intersection. Go on without me. Thinking. Not about work or home or even this poem. No I'm thinking or whatever it is of me is thinking something I can't remember now, but I do remember how they kept on going, my thoughts, I mean. Got away from me. Moved ahead of me. Went on as if they didn't know of me as if somehow the thoughts I'd grown to know and move with had nothing to do with me as if their growing was done without me as if they knew of me as I knew of them as if we had found each other by chance, had happened not upon each other but more simply happened to share the same existence for a while. I think even now, that's the way of haiku. I mean the way it holds you. Holds you until you have it written. With or without a bike, speeds on without you. Knows of intersections you've never heard of will never see. How when it's written it takes you back to when it wasn't. How haiku exist without you. How sometimes even a bike can't take you there.

## BRUCE DETHLEFSEN

---

### GONE TO GROUND

it takes a patch of soil  
some water and the sun  
to raise a plant  
you make decisions  
how much this and that  
you feed the youngster  
clear the weeds  
you tend to pay attention

now there he lies    my son  
fenced in and covered in the bed  
his bandaged head  
gauze white and crusted red  
his eyes taped shut  
a glut of tubes  
around his nose and mouth

I make my three decisions  
first no more resuscitations  
save your breath    stand down  
go call the donor folks  
it's almost harvest time  
and last at ease  
unplug all those machines  
please stop that awful hissing sound  
what's grown so loved is gone to ground

I try to find a place  
a somewhere on his face  
to plant my final kiss

## BRUCE DETHLEFSEN

---

### ANNIVERSARY

I punch in contacts  
and dial up my dead  
son's phone number  
as I drive by  
his house on admiral  
where of course he doesn't  
live there any more  
but cell phones are after all  
miraculous devices

I park my car  
and admire the lawn  
green smooth clean cut  
mown grass the smell  
of grass just mown  
the phone rings and rings  
the edges of the lawn  
are perfectly trimmed  
how neat  
how awfully admirable



STILL HERE

Late May. A stiff wind lofts dandelion fluff,  
flaps pennants on the Union Terrace;  
slatey waves curl, rocking the ducks.  
Still here, I think, shivering,  
thirty-seven years after I said,  
“Wisconsin, where is that?”  
and we packed the trailer in Manhattan,  
loaded babies diapers medical books  
second-hand furniture and found  
this cold and alien land of white  
margarine and Joe McCarthy.  
That first year, when we heard rumors  
of suicides in Finland, from the long  
dark winters I said, “why don’t they all  
go south?”

And why don’t I? Love, or inertia?  
Even now I can’t be sure.  
A perverse loyalty attached itself  
to winter’s monochrome fence-framed distance,  
watercolor sky; to faded barns and remnants  
of vanished forests; to people,  
who say hello straight-on,  
help you change a tire; overdrink,  
and overeat to thaw the chill,  
plain people, outnumbering the cows  
at last.

*My state now—feisty, contentious,  
boasting this citadel  
where genius simmers in a mighty  
stew with anarchy, scenting the air  
with ideas, peopling Wisconsin towns  
with questioners. I know its  
hidden places, mourn its  
passing farms and dwindling fish.  
Gnawed with apprehension,  
I see the cattle stanchions  
carved to microchips, the curving fields  
give way to malls. Yet stay.*

---

Could I go back and make the choice again?  
I weigh the accumulated  
years of staying against the might-have-been:  
cosseted in a brownstone on 52<sup>nd</sup>...

But snowflakes tip the scales.  
Surviving winter's maddening reprise—  
when ice invades the very walls—  
builds sinewy souls. I let Wisconsin  
wrap its bluejean arms around me,  
feed me beer and brats  
and bed me for the night.

WHY NO ONE SAW IT COMING

The accelerating street was wet light  
and we were, impossibly, on ledges  
talking down the suicides,

disarming the shooters on their way to school,  
the night's echolocation  
giving way to

the heart's,  
and though *a signal is not an answer*

sometimes even a glimpse of the Divine Yes  
is enough,  
the quick of it  
almost mocking

a life laboring to break  
bewilderment's code

What if we took in the street preacher?  
Silenced the fortune teller?  
Laid off  
each sure thing?

Maybe all we need to remember is how  
to call the sun up  
or pin down the moon.

Maybe we're merely steps  
from nowhere.

## AMELIA COOK FONTELLA

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### THE WI FILM FESTIVAL

7:30 on a Thursday  
Bartell mostly full  
seats like tiny boats  
let me move over  
I'm here alone  
the screen is  
a white sea  
about to glow  
an empty net  
hopelessly cast  
pulled in overflowing  
but there will be no  
keeping the catch

## JAN CHRONISTER

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### TREE ON JOHNSON STREET

The huge ash, her rippled gray trunk  
sheared flat by snowplows,  
looks as if she's made of concrete;  
her mammoth roots perform as  
bus stop benches.  
So powerful is her presence  
city workers replace  
upheaved sidewalks  
with deference; her untrimmed  
branches tangle with wires.  
Even students decline  
to tack posters  
to her scarless face.

## SUE BUSSEY CHENETTE

---

### FOR TAIT SANFORD BARROWS, 1913-1995

We were walking together after my lesson,  
through that patch of ivy and lilac  
to the back door of Music Hall,  
sun-flecked myrtle overlapping  
shadow-green, Ivesian

polyphony through walls and open windows—  
brass long tones, flutists' scales,  
vocalise rising, and rising until  
untethered it sailed  
toward Bascom Hill, the carillon, the lake.

How to grasp the music, pull it down  
from where it swirled, funnel  
my wanting into muscle,  
tendon, bone, nerve fiber: find  
a footing for my fingers.

That was your gift. The music  
in your body, so when you said  
*Long lines, loose arms*  
your subtle stance sang  
to my body.

You walked through the periwinkle  
in soft capezios you always wore—lightly,  
but feet firmly on the ground. Who  
might have composed you? Someone  
with clarity, wit, a playful syncopation.

When we reached the concrete edging—  
stepped upon it, up and over,  
from green vines to sunny sidewalk,  
you drew the music down, connecting it  
from sky to earth: *That feels,*

you laughed, *just like a cadence.*

CONFESSIONAL: HIJACKED

*Performance script for 2 voices*

1.

dear body invasive *notes from city march 19, 2003:*  
dear linguists *sister, the sky*

breathing here *above us unstitches*  
the boats  
breaking

I  
don't like *the morning the US began*

goodbyes stamped  
eyes restricted

ash-colored buttons *the bombs and our brothers and sisters*  
tongue *need us*

divination // erasure bird

naked *I live in a house underground*  
eye burnt hurt // black  
throat sea of gold *Lolita LeBrun lemonade, frybead, fried rice*  
urine *from the liberation lounge*

my tongue if *Oakland* her song

the canal across my street, your *bodies blocking the SF highway offramp*  
figure slow where I *mob the Chinatown streets* made a map  
of our incisions. that morning, your organ

*my own unwillingness to give*

2.

Eight years since I lived  
in Brownfist Collective  
house, West Oakland.  
Collapsed collective  
experiment.  
Rolling revolutionary  
spring rolls, listening  
to the anti-war march on  
underground kitchen  
radio.

---

I desired the flush  
of crowds moving  
forward on concrete,  
banging gongs  
with the Chinese  
Progressive Association  
elders, watching the  
tango dancing against  
war. I wasn't ready then  
to hunker down  
in my house, sliding  
plates through the  
kitchen wall.

Now, a new city, Milwaukee, with two socialist  
mayors in its lineage. Emergency lights flashing,  
familiar crisis, pack buses to the capital, early  
morning coffee going down the lists, which category,  
black marker legal, roll call chanting, highwire  
voices. Bon Jovi blasting to the crowd on speakers,  
firefighters erupt the crowd.

Solidarity, what it means, wind through your fingers,  
icy mouth chant. Solidarity pressed up against  
window. Red hearts everywhere, classroom cutout  
reminders, labor of teachers.

What can we eliminate, what can we make do, what  
can we scrap together. February 15, 2011.

3.  
*songs in the city with the fiery sheen:*

in my pocket, i could  
have kissed you deeply,  
your teeth hooked

*because you were here before they could remember  
because they could not take no for an answer, because because bitter trade route  
your heart is a transit station, I write down my esophagus,*

face melting into *what printed on chant sheet*

gutter, now your *arrests*  
song—blue river cloth *at the military recruitment station*



4.  
 Floating signs in air  
 Imperial Walker  
 on the man's shoulder, left quadrant.  
 Gathering on Madison mud. Farmers and movie  
 stars, Kill the Bill tractors. Later, faces, clapping  
 hands, megaphone mouths set to a soundtrack

*but every time you close your eyes Lies!*

Plug ourselves into wireboard, keyboard, consensus.  
 Roll call in the meeting room, donated bagels, pizza  
 boxes amass, sleeping bag bodies underneath desks  
 of fleeing senators. Door blockage, bodies bodies  
 bodies against security guards who want to take off  
 their uniforms

*but every time you close your eyes Lies!*

Used-up fuel becoming litter, we do not want to be  
 dirty in the eyes of the camera. Put it in the bag, put  
 it in the bag, a small army of trash-pickers.  
 State officials say \$7 million, cordon off speech zones  
 to 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Young boys decide to hold their space,  
 issued a ticket.

*but every time you close your eyes Lies!*

5. *war profiteers* cut halfway by a dull *Neptune Orient Lines Ltd.'s APL unit  
 Stevedoring Services of America* knife—takes up *of Oakland anti-war  
 demonstration*  
 in back of throat. *Oakland police* All *inch-thick wooden dowels*  
 the voices lie with you down *concussion flash-bang grenades*  
 there where the still *tear gas*  
 birds migrate. my mouth *sting balls*  
 a door where i keep *projectiles*  
 my safe secret lovely. *grapefruit-sized welts*  
 small girls sit *refuse to disperse*

there keeping score. Note

---

6.

i've since left                    *A Manifesto for Action*  
    *what we want*

the window, waiting for silver  
    *Promises are not enough*

flame.

*Sources: Arcade Fire's "Rebellion (Lies)," a song used in Matt Wisniewski's "Wisconsin 'Budget Repair Bill' Protest" video; news coverage of the anti-war Port of Oakland action on April 7, 2003; Milwaukee Graduate Assistant Association's "A Manifesto for Action," published April 26, 2011.*

ROBIN CHAPMAN

---

TEACHING MY SON TO DRIVE

*In the Forest Hill Cemetery*

In the passenger seat I adjust  
Phantom controls, practice  
Lamaze breathing, *put in the clutch*  
The way I did before he was born,  
Copy the names of prominently departed—  
TENNEY, VITENSE, RENNEBOHM, ZINGG—  
*The clutch!*—concentrate on counting  
Replicas of the Washington Monument,  
*Watch out for Zingg!*, try to admire  
The oversized balls that balance on stone,  
*Ice ahead!*, watch the coffin-sized  
Heater that warms the ground *Shift down!*,  
Try to copy the stony grace  
Of the city's dead and not make a sound.

**THIS WAS A GREAT DAY**

I planted Brandywine tomatoes, heritage  
species from 1879, 90 days to fruit, in a corner  
of Gretel's garden plot, and visited old friends  
full of insights on history—Judy,  
my Irish friend, recounting the effects  
of the 1588 Spanish Armada on Ireland's later lot—  
land seizures, church burnings,  
bans on education for Catholics, famine,  
as the English crops went to feed  
the English, in retaliation for the help  
they gave the Spanish fleet; and my English friend  
George updating me on how King Phillip of Spain  
mismanaged that same fleet, appointed as chief  
his most pious advisor, who'd never been to sea.  
I marveled at their converging, wide-ranging reading,  
the cool spring day that kept lilac and tulip  
and apple blossoms all blooming together,  
and for our dinner Will steamed a mess of nettles  
and grilled a grass-fed steak to celebrate  
our tenth anniversary, and we contra danced  
at Gates of Heaven Synagogue to live fiddle and banjo.  
And though the world's still a mess,  
and still we're working on separation  
of church and state, world without war,  
that tonic of lively minds mining history  
and heritage seed stocks gave me hope,  
and scope for local work, a vision of future feasts.

## DIALOGUES

*For Freiburg, Germany*

*Guten Tag, wie geht's?  
Danke, gut. Und dir?*

My fourteen-year-old self played  
those dialogue tapes over and  
over, listened close as I could  
to the clipped professionals pretending  
to be fourteen-year-old German kids.

*Wer ist den das, da drüben?  
Das ist mein Freund, Paul Schmidt.*

To be honest, the only other sentence I remember  
from six years of language study relates to nothing:

*Möchtest du auch meinen Nachtschisch?*

That's it. *Das ist alles.* Except for Freiburg's sunshine  
and solar power. Sitting in the middle  
of a cold Wisconsin spring, sunless for weeks,  
solar won't power this poem nearly as well  
as my daughter, who has claimed, at eight,  
her father's heritage. She leaves notes for us to find:  
*I am German. My family is German.*

And maybe we are. Maybe by the time we get to summer,  
on my little street, we're all German, emerging  
with coolers of beer and wine,  
and folding chairs. We choose a driveway  
to set up in and neighbors wander over,  
bringing their own drinks, and snacks,  
and we raise a hand and glass in greeting  
(as I am waving now, to you):

*Hey, how's it going?  
Fine, thanks. And you?*

## JOSEPH BRIGGS

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### EXPOSURE

*For Teresa McGovern*

During rough winters here in Madison  
there are certain names mentioned  
that always end up marrying silence soon after.

\*

They've come here full of ambition  
and on some Saturday in December  
they can't crack enough mirrors in their rented duplexes  
so they slam doors & crunch their boots on five inches of snow  
in order to drink whiskey at the Crystal Corner,  
or the old Wisco, or someplace off Willy St.

Bartime comes and snow is tumbling again,  
sugar-cube size this time.

Flakes are mixing with salts on their red faces  
but they manage to find their way back to the East Side  
like geese in spring thanks to green & red neon signs  
of liquor stores and tattoo shops.

These bread crumbs lead the way not to beds  
but backyards where prayers are recited,  
cigarettes are lit, and socks finish up their task  
of adhering to skin while blankets, two floors up,  
are now becoming all accounted for.

These people are shivering in yards knee deep in snow  
and they're not warning anyone about any one thing.

## FAUSTINA BOHLING

---

### MY SIDE OF TOWN

Please find a field of dandelions  
Somewhere along East Washington Street  
Along a vein that pulses working class blood to the heart of my city  
Appreciate it enough to find us there  
Within the youthful stomping grounds of the North side, Darbo or Atwood  
Pushing down roots into a thoroughfare of belonging

You may think to overlook it

Sometimes seen past as an automatic function that causes this city to breathe  
Granted, we do move instinctively  
Appearing in silhouettes of Oscar Mayer, Kipp, and Rayovac  
Now relocated, renamed or the same  
Listen closely you may hear the echoes of our parents' names within Morse  
code of time cards

Find them trading what feels like thankless for hours  
Pouring themselves into molds of aspirations  
For next generations

We move about on sturdy roots  
Still lean towards the sun  
Knowing it still rises here  
Even though it's missed between 1st and 3rd shifts  
Or second jobs

Look and you may see first blooms along bike paths and bus stops  
Liquor store signs and high interest check cashing  
Parading achievable dreams pushed up through cracks of "impossible"  
Welcome banners from the East

Reminders that this beauty, on this side of the tracks,  
is the balance of survival and low end street credit  
Not missing the daily warnings  
The possibility of being cut down to size

All lessons to be learned  
Or unlearned

---

All in all, supporting the bruises of hard knocks  
learning what to trust  
Is what you do on my side of town  
Here is where we build more than backbones  
We search for fields of dandelions  
Places for children  
So they can spend idle hours where our parents sweat

The East side

I always feel its arms  
Hear its sounds of trains  
lulling me to sleep  
Pressing on me where I'm from  
like waiting pennies on tracks  
Flattening tenacity hard continually into my skin  
Feel its arms grow wider and wider  
Expanding into developments  
I feel the neighborhoods push and pulse, rooting  
...Gentrifying

And I worry about the dandelions  
Fields and fields of tenacious, overlooked flowers  
Worry they will get lost, pushed around  
...or away

Please appreciate them like I do  
Because there are children who still play here



EXIT #135

Call me an aficionado, a devotee,  
a Cracker Barrel connoisseur,  
yes—a comfort food junkie!  
2002, I'm Minnesota bound in a minivan—  
two hours from home and its potty-stop time.  
Hallelujah. I find a road-trip-mother's salvation.

Hands linked together like paper cutout dolls,  
we stumble into this old-fashioned oasis  
where the all-knowing corporate overlords  
have filled an entire freaking front porch  
with honest to goodness wooden rocking chairs.  
White rockers, flag rockers, and tot-sized minis  
neatly lined up waiting for the wicked and the weary.

Hiding in Madison's freeway corridor—the Heartland.  
Here piped-in country music is keeping the beat,  
ahh, America, I'm kicking off my shoes and taking a seat.  
Thin wood runners flop flop flop across the floor  
and the innocent light-up soles of toddlers flash  
multi-colored intermittent LED signals for wayside believers.

Soon we've rocked our way to nirvana, the promised land,  
or as near as we can get before calling dibs on the bathroom.  
Then the inner sanctum summons me like nostalgia or late-night radio,  
Dick Biondi's voice riding the airwaves across the sleepy Midwest.  
Holy oleo, Batman, it's the American Dream in miniature!  
An entire corner of plush pets, talking toys, and giant checkerboards,  
a dining room with peg games, dumplings, and all-day breakfast.

I came naïve with unnamed hungers, a tired traveler  
in search of a pit stop and old fashioned lemonade.  
This voyeurism started innocuously like all retail obsessions  
I only wanted a glimpse into the butter-churn, oil-lamp century.  
Who knew I would come to crave Beeman's gum and Exit 135—  
my visits to these holy relics from another century.

---

Yes, call me [kon-uh-sur]. Perhaps I am a noun, a part of speech.  
My synonyms sound like sugar: savant, specialis, epicure;  
or like another calorie-laden Cracker Barrel food: nut.  
But I am neither freak nor aesthete, not maven nor cognoscente.  
In truth I live as tracker, a sniffer of memories, collector of stimuli—  
I am a walking butter churn, a contradiction in terms, or the future  
perfect tense:  
*We will have been feasting of the forbidden fruit for years on end.*

**KIMBERLY BLAESER**

---

**SURVEYOR, 1849**

Somewhere in the middle  
of naming greatness  
one nation tumbled  
into the waters of history  
or into the deep end  
of an unfamiliar mythic pool  
where lakeness too  
finds something resembling  
itself a semblance  
brought about by  
dissembled fragments  
of assembled desire  
in other words  
someone son of hugh  
or frankly  
perhaps  
a river himself  
turned story  
into some  
thing simpler  
chart or name:  
mendota.

**CHEAP AT ANY PRICE**

*Cheap at any Price was an open mike in Madison, Wisconsin, in a succession of different venues during the 1990s and early 2000s.*

Gabriel tends bar  
at the Revelation Speakeasy,  
and pours inspiration to all who ask.  
He knows what the regulars need  
and want  
and are better off without,  
briskly wiping down counters  
and whisking away the empties. He relights  
the candles that go out.

From the double row of glittering bottles  
he dispenses Comfort, Absolution,  
and shots of Dutch courage. The Sky is half full.  
A clear, clear Voice flows  
into a clean glass.

The gloom is deceptive: here is refuge  
from harsh light, dark thoughts, or heavy  
weather, any port in a storm. Poets  
nurse their drinks and quietly pull  
from pockets their secret flasks  
of piss-and-vinegar,  
waiting for a turn at the mike  
to make their mark.

On a good night, Gabriel reads  
a poem scribbled on the back of a napkin.  
The room fills with liquid; words lap like waves  
against the bar's lonely headland,  
and the applause breaks  
in ragged surf.

The stragglers huddle in the dying glow  
of alcohol, sharing  
the last flickers of warmth.  
*Last orders, please.*

SELF-PORTRAIT AS MORE THAN THE SUM OF MY PARTS

When the red yearning of Aztec snake  
has gone away,

when my grandfather's arm drops shop  
and no sound pushes through my ears,

when the bees have taken leave,

there will still be the way your eyes,  
meeting mine,

have the ring of five hundred trees,  
brown flickering green  
(or the other way around—you've only

been gone an hour; I should remember)—  
and my visions of you as honeycomb.

The traffic  
is orchestrated for our sorrow, our last  
morning together siren and  
dump truck.

If the light through the window is blue  
instead of pink,  
then we are on my side of the isthmus  
and spring  
has not yet hourglassed. When the sandhill  
cranes, when the drill bits. When  
the double-exposure  
is taken for blanks. I have my one blue

finger for your pink ten. When  
the asparagus field runs dry,  
when hard angles, when gone,

the field will still be ours,  
the sorrow ours, the yearning also ours.

## OLIVER BENDORF

---

### THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, LELAND COOPER

*Waunakee, Wisconsin*

In the morning after an all-night argument  
they drive north around the lake to the state park  
with burial mounds to get some fresh air.

She says, *It's so Midwest*, all these signs,  
and he shrugs and says he guesses so, in a way  
that broadcasts his bad mood even though

he looks around them at the signs: Pet Swim Area  
No Biking Cross Country Skis This Way No  
Smoking Beach Parking Slow Down Welcome

and has to admit there is no paucity  
of interpretation. They hike in further and come  
upon the Panther mound. In the sunlight,

through leaves the color of dying rage, milkweed  
down spreading itself across the muddy trail,  
dirt stretches out beyond them hundreds

of feet in either direction, containing ash  
maybe, maybe clay, definitely old bones  
of ones who were there first. In this way

they forgive each other. On the way out  
he reads one final sign: the Panther mound  
was excavated in 1929 by Leland Cooper

and his YMCA camp boys, who left no  
records and no artifacts. Forgiven because  
of the historical precedent for the destruction

of something built in a ritual way. Forgiven  
because the way what feels like just a dumb  
mound of dirt at the time will someday be

all you have left, and you'll want someday  
to reconstruct it, and you'd better hope  
you (or Leland Cooper) remembers how.

JULY: STORM COMING

I passed a boy  
snorting like a stallion on Marion Street.  
Lovers prodded navel oranges  
and quarreled over stewing hens at the market,  
the sulphur made them crackle  
even in the Bascom classroom: mighty Shakespeare  
grew hooves and garlands bold as Pan.  
The virgin professor spoke of Elsinore, grew pink  
as she told of the profane and misdirected *Hamlet*  
she'd seen where Ophelia was—was, in short, preggers,  
the little mad dame all blowsy-apron'd,  
lost at sea with a cargo of twins!  
We roared and stamped like fiends—  
ah, Hamlet, the dirty dog—  
grew round and happy at the very thought:  
antique seduction with a fine honey bloom...

running home later, paddling down Marion Street  
under a drenching black sky  
I saw the neighbor boy sitting in his treehouse  
like the Grand Turk  
and French major Lucinda Emily O'Loughlin  
standing on the roof of the third hovel  
from the end, which was home,  
waving in broad gestures  
like Hannibal ushering his elephants over the pass  
and calling in good Boston French  
Vitevitevitevitevitevite IL PLEUT!"\*

\*Quickquickquickquickquickquick IT RAINS!"

## DONNA BARKMAN

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### FREEWHEELING

*For Peter*

Newly rescued from St. Vincent de Paul,  
a bike, prized for its three grown-up gears,  
takes a near-east-side kid steaming to  
Orton Park.

*Wanna buy a mystery?  
Ten cents a piece.  
Two for a quarter.*

Small folded stapled books:

*Nosferatu Returns  
Frankenstein's Secret  
The Hunchback of Willie Street Stalks Again*

He pockets nickels and dimes,  
shy smile of thanks below shaggy bangs.  
*Hey Tony*—his friend pedals by—  
*I've got enough to bowl!*

Their bikes jump curbs,  
wheelies whipping them to the Eagles:  
worn lanes, two bits a line  
hippie kids welcome.



LINDA ASCHBRENNER

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UNDERGRAD

From my second floor apartment on Adams Street,  
I watch beer kegs roll onto front porches below.  
Home game rituals. Soon a red current  
flows toward Camp Randall Stadium.

Seventy thousand eerie cheers drift downstream.  
After defeat or victory, the red tide lets out.  
Celebrations through the night.

Sunday mornings, I crunch through autumn's stories,  
sidewalk shadows, scattered plastic cups, become  
a cheering section for sailing leaves, flamboyant trees,  
undercurrents of wonder.

AUBADE

We leave in the hour  
of *film noir*. Neighbors'

eaves and porches,  
trash cans, shady

shapes, your suitcase  
lifted into our car's

back seat. Traffic lights  
blink yellow all the way

down Johnson Street,  
and the sky begins

its slow resolution,  
whitening. Your hand

closes in mine. You'll be  
onboard soon, matter

of fact, will settle in  
to your seat, call me

from your cell, take out  
your book, gaze out

the window as the plane  
noses into the clouds

and you look down  
one last time—roads,

farm fields, loves.  
Freighted into all this light.

**WHOLE FOODS**

are so much better than little bits, little chewed off pieces of foods one might leave for a bird or a woman without a home. Not whole, as in lacking parts: broccoli without heads, potatoes missing eyes. Maimed foods. Pork chops on their last legs. Tomatoes with their skins blown off. Bread crumbs. The whole crumby world out there, not in here. Whole, as in what more could you ask for: bright organic peppers in the jet of the spritzer. Crisp stalks of celery, fennel, white asparagus. Complete, as in all of us together, smiling, restored, fully realized as we reach for that tiramisu. Rich, as in not poor, not stuck with radiated beef, milk, mutated chickens, as in not free, not free-range at all.

**THE NIGHT OF THE METEORITE'S LANDING**

*It basically got light as day here.*

*And it rumbled like a trolley car.*

*—Bob Dowr, bartender, Alley Oops Tavern, Livingston, WI, April 14, 2010*

I must have been in the underground  
garage at the time, thinking

my meter had run out, hoping  
I wouldn't get a parking ticket,

then relieved when my windshield  
was bare. Icarus could have fallen

into Lake Mendota for all the dumb  
ox I was, plowing my way home

up University Ave., left onto  
Franklin. I don't even remember

stars above trees. I barely  
remember trees. And I was sober

as a pad of paper, while the guys  
down at Alley Oops dropped

their beers and squinted out  
into a night blasting with light—

God's trolley car sparking  
on the tracks to take them

heavenward. And then not.  
But they had a story to tell.

I pulled into my dark driveway  
hurried up the front walk.

A bright light blinked on,  
the way it does.

## BACKSTORIES & COMMENTS

**Marilyn Zelke-Windau:** I was a junior at UW–Madison when my brother was a sophomore at Milton College. He and I had always been close, being born a year and a month apart. He would drive to Madison, pick me up and we'd spend a day together. We had grown up with old cars. I learned to drive in a Studebaker Lark station wagon in which my foot would sink through the rusted floorboards every time I depressed the clutch. My brother inherited my dad's tendency for junk vehicles. This poem relates a breakdown on Hwy 151 as Ray was returning me to Madison. I had a huge term paper due the next day.

**Timothy Yu:** This poem is part of a series called *100 Chinese Silences*, which parodies poems by well-known authors that use stereotypes of Chineseness or Asianness. I began the series after attending a reading by Billy Collins in Madison that was attended by over a thousand people. Collins read his poem "Grave," which alludes to the "one hundred kinds of silence / according to the Chinese belief," only to admit at the poem's end that these 100 silences were "just made up." I resolved to write these 100 silences, many of which parody poems by Collins himself. For this poem, I replaced Collins's exoticized setting of Nepal with the more familiar snowy landscapes of Wisconsin. The poem originally appeared in *SHAMPOO* (shampoopoetry.com).

**Ronald Wallace:** Some years ago I was sitting in my office in Helen C. White Hall on the UW campus, eating a McDonald's hamburger and french fries. A student passing by saw me and said, "Oh, Professor Wallace, I'm so disappointed. I thought you, a poet, would be eating watercress sandwiches and drinking herbal tea. You can't write a poem about McDonald's!" The student left, disillusioned; I finished my hamburger, shut my door, and wrote this poem.

**Angela Voras-Hills:** When we first moved to Madison, my family and I were living on the first floor of an apartment complex beside the Yahara River. Possums, skunks, and turkeys ran often by our sliding glass door. One day, I saw what I thought was a deer statue in the parking lot, but then it raised its tail and took off toward the road. Somebody was always pulling the fire alarm in that building. While living in Boston, I missed lakes, trees, and fields terribly. "Water, Water Everywhere" (the title taken from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"), is a response to returning home and realizing my memory of the place was based just as much on a dream as it was on reality.

**Moisés Villavicencio Barras:** When I moved to Madison from Oaxaca, Mexico, my eyes became the eyes of a child again. I started to re-discover seasons, parks, people and streets. My memories of places and people that I left behind began to grow in my mind. "Madison" tells about my experience of learning a new language, learning to love a new city and its people. Like my Madison poem, "Reasons in Winter" also came to my mind when walking during the winter. I was crossing one of the bridges over the Yahara River here in Madison when the poem started to grow. This poem tries to explain my personal reasons about why I write. It is dedicated to my family who were persecuted by the Mexican government for leading a popular uprising in the state of Oaxaca where I am originally from.

**Angela Trudell Vasquez:** We were hit by an inattentive driver head on at 110 miles an hour, we were going 40 and she was going 70. It was in a construction zone. We were hit

so hard we did a 360 in the air and ended up on the edge of the bridge over Fair Oaks Avenue. We almost went over. My husband was severely injured. The EMTs could not believe we were still alive. I could not roll over for a week in bed without great effort. He took much longer to heal and had to have knee surgery ultimately. But we are so THANKFUL to be alive!

**Marilyn L. Taylor:** I decided to write “I Know a Bank Where the Wild Thyme Blows” after returning to Madison briefly for a West High class reunion—I think it was our twentieth. I remember deciding to drive through the Arboretum to see how it was doing after so many years—and I found it as breathtaking as ever. I even drove past what may have been the same grove of magnificent lilac trees—or perhaps their descendants. That’s when I recalled doing exactly the same thing with my girlfriends when I was sixteen. We found the sight of them, and the scent of them, so irresistible that we piled out of the car and almost literally hugged them. When I realized in retrospect how iconic that episode was, the poem began to materialize. (The title, of course, is a direct steal from Shakespeare.) All I can think of to say about the impetus for “Explication of a True Story” is that it is quite literally a “true story,” except for some chronological compression. I wrote it years after I last saw Lani, and I have no idea what has happened to her.

**Janet Taliaferro:** The poem was taken from an exercise I did in Marshall Cook’s creative non-fiction class years ago. The vignette was inspired by my early morning walk in Madison where my father had spent his freshman year in college. He was so impressed with Wisconsin that his college friends nicknamed him “Wissy” because he was always saying, “At Wisconsin they do so-and-so.” When he was a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, the first to receive a Master’s in Chemistry, he bought an old farmhouse across from the campus, establishing a book store that would become the focus of Campus Corner there.

**Jim Stevens:** I came to Four Lakes Country on this particular day with the intention of visiting some of the sacred places I habituated in earlier years. I had in mind to recount this to my longtime friend Marion Moran, whom I had seen a few weeks previous and with whom I had shared them in the past. We had always felt a responsibility for their well-being. All of these spaces make reference to the Earth and to the stars. In this sense, they were the universe and part of Grandmother Spider’s web. I began the day at Eagle Heights Woods and then I completed my circuit in the Town of Madison and in the Arboretum.

**David Steingass:** I loved the idea of “echolocations” but my one Madison poem concerned the winter revolt of 2011. With only weeks to deadline, I decided to try also a prosepoem which fused the subject matter of the effigy mounds as well as the Iceman discovered melting in his glacier in the Swiss-Italian Alps. On a high after these two poems, my dog Marlowe walking through the park across the street from my house, spurred the third poem, “Girl Walking Her Dog...” All three poems slipped in somehow just before the deadline.

**Thomas R. Smith:** For a small-town-bred kid at one of the Wisconsin State University outposts in the Sixties, a weekend excursion to Madison was a true counter-cultural immersion. In my dreams, to this day, Madison represents some larger-than-life bohemian fantasy born of that time. “Always, in Dreams” is dedicated to my late friend Gary Van Den Heuvel, from my hometown of Cornell, Wisconsin, who earned his undergraduate degree in Madison and went on to become, before his too-early death,

an internationally recognized authority on the philosophy of Susanne K. Langer. “Real Middle Class” was born, of course, of the protests surrounding the passage of Governor Walker’s so-called “budget repair” bill in the late winter and spring of 2011. Once again Madison became the locus of a hope for change that unfortunately fell short of fulfillment. But I am still heartened by the memory of the immense warmth, goodwill, and common purpose of those enormous crowds around the Square. They convinced me that what is best of the Wisconsin tradition will survive greedy, short-sighted Walkerism.

**Jo Scheder:** The impetus for “Crossing Tracks” came when, some time after trading my 18-year old heap for an intact newer car, I approached the railroad tracks at Fordham and automatically reached to prevent the ceiling parts from falling. This happened at tracks across Commercial, too, and other places around town where streets were buckled or potholed. The learned response was a reminder of research on stress and health risks: of the kinds of daily hassles that accrue because of differential exposure. One benefit of privilege is buffering from the impacts of mundane aggravations. I had recently read Neruda’s meditation on his socks, and that opened a stream of consciousness about the political meaning of my car.

**Mary C. Rowin:** I met my husband Roger when we both worked for the Division of Corrections. He worked in Madison and I worked on a research project in a Probation and Parole office on the Eastside of Milwaukee. I came to Madison for meetings in the State Office Building at One West Wilson. I did not own a car so I took the Badger Bus to Madison. Roger started his campaign to win my heart by driving me to the bus terminal on South Bedford Street. After a year of commuting to see one another, I transferred to Central Office and moved to Middleton. I worked at One West Wilson for about fifteen years. I have very fond memories of our supervisor, Ted Johnson, who likely knew what we were up to, but kept it to himself.

**Richard Roe:** The dancers drew me in—their energy, their partnership, their joy, and precision—like the band’s rhythms. I took many pages of notes and could write several poems inspired by them.

**Fran Rall:** The poems in *Common Joy II* had their start with a 1992 Writer’s Place contest about outdoor art in Madison. The poems I sent in encouraged Frances Hurst to produce a second edition of her book of photographs with 18 of my poems.

**James Pollock:** This is an excerpt from a twenty-three page poem in terza rima which appears in my book *Sailing to Babylon* (Able Muse Press, 2012). The poem explores, among other things, the geology, natural history, prehistory, and modern history of Quarry Park, a seventeen-acre wood on the near west side of Madison, about a block from my house. The poem resembles a canto of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* because it tells the story of a hike in the woods on my fortieth birthday—though in this case my guide is not Virgil but my young son Felix. The poem also has much in common with the tradition of the ‘Greater Romantic Lyric.’

**Darrell Petska:** Many of my poems deal with time and place. Seeing a farm, a mall, a city, I find myself wondering what came before, what might come after. East Towne Mall has an air of permanence, but eons of history lie beneath it, and someday the mall will be history, replaced by...what? Looking back and forward in time is, for me, an enjoyable way to “know” the world.

**Andrea O'Brien:** I wrote "The Majestic" out of a desire to capture the rare experience of being in the moment. The actual moment took place at the Orpheum, but I thought the name "The Majestic" better suited to the poem because it described not only a physical location but also the characters in that mythical moment. My boyfriend-now-husband thought I took my poetic license too far. It has been a sore point since then, and I suspect it will continue to be for the course of our lives. In an attempt to make amends, I wrote the sister poem "The Orpheum."

**Gillian Nevers:** The impetus for "It Didn't Feel Dangerous" was an online prompt from the remarkable poet, Lisa Chilar. In 1965 my older sister returned from a trip to Europe and brought me *lederhosen*, which I wore every day that summer—to my painting class, my philosophy class, and, at night, to bars. I was an art student and *knew* I'd be forgiven sins of eccentricity and affectation. I was tall, skinny, long-legged and, apparently, noticed, because one night in the Pub a boy approached me. R.W. acted like we'd met before, like we knew each other. He was so convincing that I agreed to leave my friends and go with him, on his motorcycle, to Sun Prairie to a stock car race. Afterwards, he took me to his apartment in a complex off of Badger Road, where we ran into Marshall Shapiro in the parking lot. In those days Marshall had a TV show and was known as "Marshall the Marshall." We engaged in a silly shoot-out, thumbs cocked, index fingers pointed. Later that night, R.W. realized I wasn't "interested," so he took me home. A few years later, 1968 to be exact, Christine Rothchild's lifeless body was found behind some bushes at Sterling Hall. I don't remember the earlier risk I took registering with me then, but when Lisa's prompt appeared on my computer screen, all those years later, I thought of all the other girls murdered since Christine—girls who thought it wasn't dangerous.

**Ralph Murre:** My poem is based on what I remember as real life, ca. 1965.

**CJ Muchhala:** Wisconsin poets were invited to visit the Chazen Art Museum (then called the Elvehjem) and write poems on artworks of their choice for a Public Reading/Anthology project. I've always admired O'Keeffe's paintings, but had never seen "Turkey Feathers in an Indian Pot." I was struck by its elegant simplicity (unlike her flagrant flowers) and felt a timeless- and human- connection among its elements. I was also impressed by O'Keeffe's vision; it's not often that "plain" turkey feathers are the subject of art. When I first saw "Undetermined Line" at the Chazen, the complete picture of this weary young wife came to me. I was surprised as abstract art rarely speaks to me that quickly or that fiercely. Her story cried out to be told. Of course, it's fictional... [*Editors' note:* O'Keeffe was born in the Madison area and attended high school here for two years.]

**Norman Leer:** When Grethe and I moved to Madison in 2007, we noticed the Angelic Brewing Co. on Johnson St. as we came in on the bus. We had developed a private symbolism around the figure of Clarence, the Angel from *It's a Wonderful Life*, where he embodied our sense that any notion of transcendence or spirituality had to be approached with humor and mystery. When the Brewery closed about a year later, Clarence somehow landed in the poem.

**Jon K. Lauck:** Many historians come to Madison, Wisconsin, and they do so for an important reason. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lyman Copeland Draper began gathering and assembling the memories of those who moved West to settle in states such as Wisconsin. He placed the vast amount of material he gathered at the Wisconsin Historical Society and made the institution the leading advocate of recording and remembering Midwestern



history. When the Wisconsin-born and educated historian Frederick Jackson Turner became a professor at the University of Wisconsin, he became famous through his advocacy of Midwestern history and by relying on Draper's large collections and the influential work of the Wisconsin Historical Society. When young historians work through the cartons of historical materials at the WHS and sift through its stacks, they are carrying on the legacies of Draper and Turner and giving voice to the American midlands.

**Peg Lauber:** Our kids lived all over Madison for nearly ten years, our son on both sides and our daughter usually very near James Madison Park, but the place I liked best was our son's house right on Lake Monona where the ducks and coots would swim right up to the lawn.

**Daniel Kunene:** Well, they don't only hang effigies, they shoot people and are exonerated. A "forgiving," warbling system, wouldn't you say? Forgive me. It hurts.

**John Krumberger:** My last year in Madison I lived in an apartment above University Avenue. A McDonald's was next door and then the Badger Tavern. I was no longer a student. I worked at the McDonald's 30 hours a week or so, making just enough to support myself. I had studied compulsively throughout my undergraduate years so as to achieve high grades; nonetheless I was rejected from the four graduate schools I had applied to. After initially feeling stunned and ashamed, I developed a skill during that year of having fun and living in the moment. Sometimes I would read deep into the night. When I read *Look Homeward, Angel*, I remember weeping at the death of the protagonist's brother Ben, then overcome, going out for a walk even though it was almost 2 a.m. Though I longed for an answer to all the questions that couldn't be answered then—Would I become a psychologist? Who would love me? Would anyone love me?—I received instead an awareness that life was bigger and more mysterious than the narrow focus of what would happen to me. The snow, the haunting beauty of a novel about a young man finding his way in the world, that time of life free of any status or title, all of it contributed to a piercing awareness of how we all are just strangers wandering through this odd enchanted world. I had walked down Randall, past Regent Street all the way to the Vilas Park Zoo. Looking up into the sky I let out a howl. Later I would read about how Thomas Wolfe would walk the streets of Brooklyn howling sometimes after finishing a long session of writing.

**Mark Kraushaar:** I was so struck by the ad that inspired this poem, the idea of paying someone to talk on the phone and all it suggests about social isolation and then, beyond that, our struggle simply being here, living here, on Earth I mean, this trying to glean some meaning as we go.

**John Koethe:** *Editors' Note:* The bookstore referred to in the poem is Avol's. The reading of "R.O.T.C. Kills" took place at the 2010 Wisconsin Book Festival and is available on YouTube.

**Martha Kaplan:** "Ancient Rites" was written for the 2011 Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood Winter Solstice Celebration in Glenwood Park that runs along Glenway Street to Monroe Street. The park was created from an abandoned quarry and designed by noted early landscape designer Jens Jensen. Jensen, a Danish immigrant, advocated for the use of native plantings in public parks. He also designed The Clearing in Door County and many nature conservatories in the Chicago area. The solstice celebration includes bonfire, s'mores, music, poetry, sledding and good conversation after dark around a council circle within the glen.

**Joan Wiese Johannes:** Both “Midlife CPR” and “Becoming Legend” are fantasies inspired by visits to State Street during a time when I realized I was never going to trade my home and career for the thrill of spontaneously refocusing my life. An actual For Rent sign in a window was the springboard into “Midlife CPR.” “Becoming Legend” came from watching men wandering down State Street and imagining their connections to it. I had seen the ruins of Sterling Hall when I visited my brother, a student at UW, so I realized I was the right age to drift into legend with the other State Street people if I ran away from the tensions and responsibilities of my sensible life and just played my flute in “the only parking ramp that doesn’t reek of piss.” Of course, I knew there were no parking ramps near State Street that didn’t reek, but writing the poems gave me an enjoyable escape from my reality.

**Catherine Jagoe:** This poem came out of the sadness I feel as a cyclist, watching the countryside around Madison get swallowed up by urban sprawl. About twenty years ago I had a very visceral reaction of loss witnessing the developments then beginning along Seminole Highway, even though of course the road itself, and the farmland along it, were themselves disruptions of an earlier landscape.

**Lowell Jaeger:** I was a freshman in Madison fall of 1969 through spring 1970, a very tumultuous time. The university shut down a couple weeks early that spring semester because of rioting. That summer the Army Math Research Center [Sterling Hall] was bombed, killing a professor. I was just a kid from a backwater Wisconsin hometown. I got a real education that year in Madison.

**Ronnie Hess:** A good waitress and good food can be hard to find. When you do discover them, the combination can be inspiring.

**Rob Harrington:** My wife Lisa is a UW–Madison graduate and quickly made Saturdays in Madison a part of our life. The day always begins with a trip to the Farmer’s Market which I quickly came to love, not just for the food and drink, but for cross-section of individuals. There is no other place in Madison that captures the pulse and mood of the Madison community so amenably.

**Alex Gubbins:** I wrote this poem in reflection of my first summer back to Madison from a yearlong deployment to Iraq (2004–05) as an Army Enlisted Counselor. Before deployment, State Street in Madison was a fun place to go, but now I can only feel pain for all the homeless, some of them Nam vets. The most passion I felt from US citizens upon my return—aside from my mother, father, and brother—was from the homeless; they are the only ones I could relate to.

**Fabu:** I journeyed to Wisconsin in the 1980s because the UW–Madison was the only place in the US to study African Literature to the PhD level. When I arrived, I was told that Blacks in Wisconsin came from Chicago. My personal research has revealed a substantial and rich cultural history of Blacks in Wisconsin such as Macaja Revels and James Braxton. Both African American men, they came to Wisconsin searching for a freedom denied in the South. In Wisconsin they both found better, yet racism met them at the state line in a more subtle and complex form.

**Martín Espada:** *Editors’ note:* “The Bouncer’s Confession” is set at Club de Wash, Lou & Peter Berryman’s bar, though it never gets mentioned by name.

**Sadie Ducet:** *Editors' note:* The poet referenced in “Faith Will Emphasize...” is Shelly Hall, a gifted Waukesha, Wisconsin poet who passed away far too early, in 2010. For curious readers, her three books are available from Popcorn Press.

**Marnie Bullock Dresser:** I wrote “The Gentlest Excavation” in response to a story and picture, in the State Journal, I think, of the true story of the Sheriff’s Department bringing up the car that held Ronald Wick and Carl Stolz for 45 years. It’s such a compelling story—cold case, mystery solved, youthful indiscretion punished—it just really resonated with me.

**CX Dillhunt:** For “The Husband Confesses”: When I was working on campus I’d make my rounds of the bookstores; there were many more back then. The joke with my family for years is that I had a sixth sense for bookstores, could hear them calling and would inevitably be sucked in by some force therein...also, for years I’d keep a \$20 bill as “mad money” tucked away in my wallet for those days when I found myself wandering from store to store, many of them “used” with bargains to be had. Anyway, the poem is about passion, something I seemed unable to tell to others. The joking manner seems to free me to tell, to play with the concept of *husbandry* and its root husband and even going further back to the Norse of “hus” for *house* and the man as occupier and the tiller of the soil, the farmer. Maybe that’s not all in there; but it seems the entry into the poem for me, and I hope for the reader, is when poet says, “I confess I do not know to whom I confess.” I mean, at first even I thought the writer was apologizing to a spouse for falling in love with, of all things, dead women poets; but it’s much more. I am tending to their needs, they (the books!) listen to me and I to them. And, of course, I must tell you, this is a true story.

“What I Meant to Say” comes out of another true story. Lindfield does cross Muirfield, right at the bottom of the hill from our house; it’s actually a valley with roads running through. Muirfield is like the Colorado rushing through the Grand Canyon of traffic. Bikes have to stop, well, it used to say yield. I love the thrill of riding into the valley/canyon on my bike only a block from home. I seemed to get the same rush whether coming or going to work on my bike, sometimes counting out haiku syllables on the handlebars or pumping them out with pedals, the brakes when needed. Nothing like a car running through your poem on its way home or on its way to work to make you pay attention to reality—I felt the words “how they kept on going.” I knew as I slammed on my brakes the happenstance of my thoughts or the words in the haiku trying to find me, me trying to find it, the words flying on without me, as the poems says: “as if we had found each other by chance.” And I guess my attempt at a simple man’s *ars poetica*, the revelation which the poem took me to: “...that’s the way of haiku.”

**Bruce Dethlefsen:** My son, Willi, died in a moped accident just north of Madison in 2010. He lived on Admiral Drive in Monona.

**Alice D’Alessio:** I grew up in New York and had never been west of Pennsylvania when we first moved to Wisconsin. For the first year or so, I prefaced all my conversation with, “In New York, we always...” until someone kindly told me to shut up about New York. The poem is in the form of a reflection—an epiphany—that occurred some years later, when I realized how I had become converted to a Wisconsinite. I consider it a love poem and not in any way a putdown or criticism of my adopted state.

**Ron Czerwien:** The process of writing this poem began one evening while Susan Elbe

and I were browsing the fiction display at our local Borders Bookstore. One of us suggested that some of the book titles might make good titles for collaborative poems. I chose the title from that list and also submitted the first line. We then composed the poem strictly via e-mail. I wrote the first line, Susan the second and we continued to alternate lines. We decided not to edit during the process. The varying line lengths and freer use of white space were Susan's ideas. I followed her lead. Susan's poems are replete with words that are surprising but never arbitrary. My post-modern leanings stretched Susan's approach. Both of us think it's important to collaborate with someone whose work and sensibility you enjoy and respect, but having different styles makes it more interesting. We hope to do more together in the future.

**Jan Chronister:** I saw this tree from a bus window riding to my Write-by-the-Lake poetry class with Angela Rydell.

**Sue Bussey Chenette:** Tait was my piano teacher at the University of Wisconsin—a fine pianist, gifted teacher, and among the most important people in my life. I find myself writing more elegies these days. I think it comes with age. There's a desire to fix, in sounds and images, people and the places now gone or changed. I wrote the poem to keep a person, a place, a particular shared moment.

**Ching-In Chen:** Shortly after I moved to Wisconsin, Scott Walker became governor and I was busing to Madison every other day from Milwaukee, getting involved in the fight to preserve collective bargaining and other rights being taken away in my new home. At the time, I got requests to write about what was going on and I felt like I couldn't, I was too caught up in the rush and flow of what was happening, and I couldn't slow down enough for reflection. It was only in collaging my past experience of anti-war organizing and direct action in the Bay area that I could find an entryway into this poem.

**Robin Chapman:** These poems both came straight from experience to the page—in a burst of exuberance, in the case of “This Was a Great Day,” and from the assiduous notes I made in an effort not to panic while my 16-year-old first learned to master a stick-shift car.

**Sarah Busse:** “Dialogues” was written for Madison's sister city, Freiburg, at the request of the Mayor's office.

**Joseph Briggs:** I had ten days to write this poem because I heard about the call for submission late. I wanted to write a poem involving Madison for many years, but I just couldn't find a way to tell it properly. Deadlines, it seems, help. During Thanksgiving this past year, it was windy but unseasonably warm. I decided not to wear a jacket to Thanksgiving dinner. That night it got extremely cold and the story of Teresa McGovern popped into my head (if you don't know her story there is plenty of information about her online). I wrote a draft of this poem that night after everyone else went to bed. This poem isn't specifically about Teresa, but it does highlight details of her death. She did die of exposure. I wanted to write a poem about young people that come to Madison full of ambition, lust, and high expectations. I wanted to write an ode to those who've decided to take their own lives in the city I love so much.

**Faustina Bohling:** One of my fondest memories of my daughter is her joy in a field of dandelions at age 1 ½. At the end of this field was a playground which we never made it to. She found it more fun to toddle inch by inch picking the flowers and giving them

to me. We sat that afternoon making crowns for her hair and soaking in her joy. I think about how these flowers never have a chance to really get the recognition they deserve. Not really appreciated as a means to express love. From a child's perspective picking them is all the currency needed to express this rich emotion.

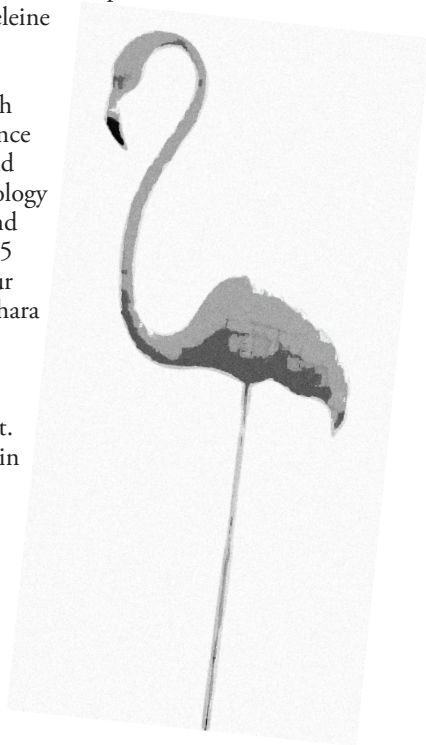
**Kimberly Blaaser:** The tenor of my two poems varies greatly because they stem from very different experiences of place. The "Exit # 135" takes a lighthearted look at my strange (and conflicted) fondness for Cracker Barrel. Despite chastising myself for succumbing to the company's nostalgic marketing, the Madison restaurant-cum-store became a regular stopping point on drives home to Minnesota with my young children. Now, even when they are not in the car, I admit the biscuits and honey draw me in. "Surveyor, 1849" arose from my always testy contemplation of English place names. Colonial claiming and re-naming of Indigenous territory and the notions of who has authority to own place by ascribing a name meets "Mendota" in this poem. In a reflective gesture, the poem itself plays on surveyor Frank Hudson's name.

**Oliver Bendorf:** It is true, in retrospect, about all the signage at Governor Nelson State Park. Also, I learned recently from an archeologist family friend that Leland Cooper is infamous among archeologists in the area, though the friend didn't elaborate.

**Margaret Benbow:** "July: Storm Coming" is grounded in my life as a UW-Madison student during the sixties. It was an unforgettably intense time to be young. In the same day you might be knocked senseless by tear gas in an Anti-Vietnam confrontation, and that evening laugh with joy at Andres Segovia's magnificent classic guitar in a Union concert. Throughout and always, there was the rich background of your friendships, and also a campus so beautiful, so welcoming, that it seemed to nestle you and nurture you like a friend. For a very young English major, it was also a magical time when you might actually catch an awed glimpse of Helen C. White herself, in her splendid hat! Or take a class from the much beloved Shakespeare scholar, Madeleine Doran, the "virgin professor" of the poem.

**Donna Barkman:** In the 1970s, I lived in Madison with my then-teenaged kids, getting a degree in Library Science at UW and subsequently working at College Library and Madison Public Library. When I heard about this anthology project, I interviewed each of my now-adult children and this is one of the poems inspired by those talks. Some 35 years later, we all have brilliantly etched memories of our residency on the Near East Side, one block from the Yahara and one block from Lake Monona.

**Linda Aschbrenner:** To heck with football! I was just happy to be away from home and in my own apartment. Adams Street was my daily companion as I, young and in love, walked to poetry classes.



## LOCAL CONVERSATIONS, LOCAL PROMPTS

*We hope some of you may want to share this book, or some of its poems, in classrooms, community reads, or writing and book groups. Here are questions to begin a discussion around the ideas of local writing, wherever you live, and writing locationally meaningful poetry:*

1. Do you prefer specific language in poems? Why or why not? What places do you think should be named, and how? Do you like “the gym,” “church,” “the store,” or would you write “the ‘Y’ on Odana,” “High Point Church,” “the Jenifer Street Co-op”?
2. What do you think about the use of historical research in local poems? Some examples in this book are pieces by Fabu, Jim Stevens, Kimberly Blaeser, and David Steingass, and Darrell Petska. Local archives are great resources for poetry. Lots of material is available digitally and online, but what places would you suggest, in addition to or instead of a museum, library, or archive, to research a poem? What difference might that research make to the poem?
3. Be aware of and awake to local language—in our region, “Willy Street,” “bubbler,” and “Freakfest” are a few examples of local referents, to local celebrations and events, and to locally significant symbols. What are some of these in your local? How does their significance vary culturally within your local? What local symbols do/don’t resonate for you and why?
4. Does an event that received news coverage outside your local represent the event accurately? When people outside your local refer to it, are they unrealistically positive or negative? How does that make you feel?
5. Be aware of local events and communities, and read local news, but observe for yourself when you can in order to witness what is local. Walk your neighborhood. Walk another neighborhood. Go to events you don’t normally get to in ways you don’t normally use to get there. Take the bus (or other public transportation), if you drive, or take public transportation somewhere new. Talk (and listen) to new people. Write notes about what you see, what surprises you, what you learn.
6. What does “Madison” mean? What’s our responsibility as writers (and readers) to name/create/present/challenge ideas around “Madison” (or the city or town you live) to outsiders and insiders?
7. What is a writer’s responsibility to represent their place accurately? Can we approach poetry this way, at least sometimes? Should we? Why or why not?
8. How is poetry different from ethnography, journalism, or other kinds of observation? Is there overlap? Of what sort?
9. Do you feel like you have some sense of Madison from reading these poems? What is it? If you’re from Madison, does the city that emerges here match your experience or not?
10. How might this anthology be different if we had focused on Madison poets, instead of Madison poems? Would the reader have a different sense of Madison, reading that alternate anthology?
11. What other places and locations and spaces might an anthology focus around? A county? A watershed? A neighborhood? A particular platted area? A river or coastline or culture? A gathering place? A festival?
12. What places do you love? What places do you spend a lot of time and don’t enjoy? What places inspire you? What places do you want to change/transform? How might writing poetry about these different places change those feelings, or would it?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*A number of these poems have appeared in magazines, journals, and books. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity and cooperation of these small presses, publications, editors and individuals who have so kindly worked with us to ensure these poems appear here. Where not otherwise noted, copyright remains with the poets:*

- Yu: "Chinese Silence No. 19" originally appeared in *SHAMPOO* (shampoopoetry.com).  
Walsh: "The Park, March Thaw" originally appeared in *Free Verse*.  
Wallace: "You Can't Write a Poem About McDonald's" and "Early Brass" are from *Long for This World: New and Selected Poems* by Ronald Wallace ©2003. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.  
Villavicencio Barras: Both poems in Spanish and English appear in *Luz de Todos los Tiempos / Light of All Times*, Cowfeather Press, 2013, cowfeatherpress.org.  
Vihs: "Saturday Farm Market" first appeared in *The Wisconsin Poets' Calendar* 2013.  
Vardaman: "*Black & White* (1966)—an unnumbered auto-historical series" was written for the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's exhibit on Ellsworth Kelly, 2013, and published in *Verse Wisconsin*. "Ode to the Crossing Guard" appeared September 18, 2012, for Poetry at Common Council Meetings (<http://www.cityofmadison.com/MAC/poetryCC.cfm>) and in the Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood's Newsletter.  
Tuschen: "The Search" appeared in *Junk Mail* and here by permission of Jordan Caylor.  
Townsend: "Persephone at the Mall" and "Persephone, Pretending" are from *Persephone in America*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2009. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.  
Toomey: "The Library at Midterm" was published in *Family Reunion: Reflections Carved in Sand and Stone*, Parallel Press. Reprinted by permission of Jane Cooper.  
Taylor: "I Know a Bank Where the Wild Thyme Blows" first appeared in *Kalliope, a Journal of Women's Art*. "Explication of a True Story" first appeared in *The Ledge*.  
Sweet: "Cahoots: Wisconsin Makes a House Call" first appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*.  
Stevens: "A Map for the Day of the Spider" was published in *The Book of Big Dog Town: Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around*, Fireweed Press, 2013.  
Smith, T: "Real Middle Class" first appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*.  
Rasmussen: "Christmas Night Outside Temple Beth El" originally appeared in *The Wisconsin Poets' Calendar* 2013.  
Rall: "Alexa" and "Wisconsiniana" appeared in *Common Joy II*.  
Pollock: "Quarry Park" (excerpt) is from *Sailing to Babylon*, Able Muse Press, 2012.  
Petska: "East Towne Mall" previously appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*.  
Parrell: "Frautschi Point, December" originally appeared in *The Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. "March, 2011" was published in *Verse Wisconsin*.  
O'Brien: "The Majestic" was previously published in *Wisconsin Academy Review* (Spring 2000, Volume 46, Number 2).  
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McCormick: "One by One by One" was published in *The Glacier Stopped Here: An Anthology of Poems* by Dane County Writers (Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission and Isthmus Publishing Company, 1994).  
Madson: "Taking Off" appears here by permission of Marianne Madson. Originally published in *Out of the Welter*, Fireweed Press, 2009.  
Lehman: "Me and Ted Kooser at the Wisconsin Book Festival" originally appeared in *Free Verse*.  
Leer: Originally appeared in *Verse Wisconsin* as "The Angelic Brewing Company Closes in Madison."  
Kunene: "They Hang People, Don't They" first appeared in *Asian Wisconzine*, August 2011.

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Kaplan: "Winslow Lane" and "Voicing the city strange" were published in *Verse Wisconsin*.

Johannes: "Midlife CPR" was previously published in *English Journal*, National Council of Teachers of English, and in *Myopic Nerve*, a collection of poems by Joan Wiese Johannes. "Becoming Legend" was first published in *Myopic Nerve*.

Jaeger: "The War at Home" is from *War on War*, Utah State University Press, 1988.

Hess: "Dinner at the Shish Café" first appeared in *Alimentum*.

Goodman: "Precision" first appeared in *Gulf Coast*. "Steam" was published in *Verse Wisconsin*.

Garland: "The Loon," and "A Night at St. Mary's" are from *Hunger Wide as Heaven*. "The Loon" was first published in *Prairie Schooner* and "A Night at St. Mary's" was first published in *Poetry*. Copyright ©2006 by Max Garland. Reprinted with permission of the Permissions Company, Inc., on behalf of the Cleveland State University Poetry Center, [www.csuohio.edu/poetrycenter/](http://www.csuohio.edu/poetrycenter/).

Espada: "The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp" was published in *Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lovers Hands*, Curbstone Press, 1990. "The Bouncer's Confession" was published in *Imagine the Angels of Bread*, W.W. Norton, 1996. Reproduced by permission of the author.

Ellis: "Flying with Two Bills" was published in *Bone Flute and other Poems*, Parallel Press, 2007.

Elder: "Air Lock" originally appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*.

Elbe: "Every Spring Grows Deeper" appeared previously in *The Glacier Stopped Here: An Anthology of Poems* by Dane County Writers (Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission and Isthmus Publishing Company, 1994). "Why No One Saw It Coming" first appeared in *qarrtsiluni*, "Mutating the Signature," February 28, 2009.

Dunn: The text found in "Form 15" was created using a restrained vocabulary selected from bpNichol's *Journal* (1978), as found in his collection, *The Alphabet Game* (2007).

Ducet: "Faith Will Emphasize the Second Syllable" first appeared in *The Progressive*.

Dillhunt: "The Husband Confesses" and "What I Meant to Say" are from *Things I've Never Told Anyone*, Parallel Press, 2007.

Dethlefsen: Both poems appeared in *Unexpected Shiny Things*, Cowfeather Press, 2011.

Czerwien: "Why No One Saw It Coming" first appeared in *qarrtsiluni*, "Mutating the Signature," February 28, 2009.

Chen. "Confessional: Hijacked" appeared first in *Conversations at a Wartime Cafe*.

Chapman: "Teaching My Son to Drive in the Forest Hill Cemetery" was originally published in *Free Verse* and collected in *The Way In* (Tebot Bach, 1999).

Bergmann: "Cheap at Any Price" first appeared in *Free Verse*.

Bendorf: "Thanks For Everything, Leland Cooper" was published by *Crab Orchard Review*.

Annucci: "Aubade" first appeared in *Comstock Review*. "Whole Foods" first appeared in *The American Poetry Journal*. "The Night of the Meteorite's Landing" first appeared in *Wisconsin People and Ideas*.



## CONTRIBUTORS

Rosemary Zurlo-Cuva is a contributing writer at *Isthmus* and teaches creative writing to middle school children. Her novel, *Travel for Agoraphobics*, is available through most digital outlets. She blogs with idiosyncratic irregularity at [travelforagoraphobics.blogspot.com](http://travelforagoraphobics.blogspot.com).

Frannie Zellman lived in Madison for four and a half years in the nineties. *Feminist Voices*, a wonderful Madison publication, was the first journal to publish her poetry (under another name). Since then she has published in many journals. She's the editor of, and a contributor to, the anthology *Fat Poets Speak: Voices of the Fat Poets' Society* (Pearlson Press, 2009). She misses Madison more than she can say.

Education, art, travel, and writing are lifelong interests for Marilyn Zelke-Windau. Retired from teaching elementary school art, Marilyn is now a docent and workshop facilitator at John Michael Kohler Art Center. She has had poetry most recently published online at *Linden Avenue Journal*, *Brawler Lit*, *Your Daily Poem* and in *Stoneboat*, *The Goose River Anthology*, and *Verse Wisconsin* magazines.

Timothy Yu is a professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is the author of two chapbooks: *15 Chinese Silences* (Tinfish Press) and *Journey to the West* (Barrow Street). He is also the author of *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965* (Stanford UP).

Mary Wehner is a poet and painter who lives in Fond du Lac, WI. She is a founding member of the Foot of the Lake Poetry Collective and has had two chapbooks published, plus poems published in journals around the country. She was Poet in Residence at Penland School of the Craft in North Carolina twice and has conducted workshops around the state.

Timothy Walsh's awards include the Grand Prize in the *Atlanta Review* International Poetry Competition and the Kurt Vonnegut Fiction Prize from *North American Review*. He authored a book of literary criticism, *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature* and two chapbooks, *Wild Apples* (Parallel) and *Blue Lace Colander* (Marsh River). He is an Assistant Dean at UW–Madison.

Ronald Wallace's 12 books of poetry, fiction, and criticism include *Long for This World: New and Selected Poems*, and *For a Limited Time Only* (both from the University of Pittsburgh Press). He founded and edits the University of Wisconsin Press Poetry Series (Brittingham and Pollak Prizes) and founded and co-directs the University of Wisconsin–Madison Creative Writing Program. He divides his time between Madison and a 40-acre farm in Bear Valley, Wisconsin.

Angela Voras-Hills earned her MFA at UMass-Boston and was a fellow at the Writers' Room of Boston. She currently lives in Madison, where she teaches writing workshops through the Writers in Prison Project, UW–Madison's Division of Continuing Studies, and Madison Public Library. Her work has appeared in *Kenyon Review Online*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Linebreak*, among others. Visit [angelavorashills.com](http://angelavorashills.com).

Moisés Villavicencio Barras is a Mexican poet, fiction writer and co-founder of *Cantera Verde*, a magazine which has been one of the most significant literary publications in Mexico for the last twenty years. His first book of poetry *May Among Voices* was published in 2001. His children's book *Urarumo* (2005) was published and distributed for the Department of Education in Oaxaca, México. His second book of poetry *Luz de Todos los Tiempos/Light of All Times* (bilingual edition) was published by Cowfeather Press in 2013.

The poetry of Lisa Vihos has appeared in numerous print and online journals including *Big Muddy*, *Red Cedar*, *Red Fez*, *Seems*, *The Camel Saloon*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas* and *Y.A.R.N.* She has published two chapbooks, *A Brief History of Mail* (Pebblebrook Press, 2011) and *The Accidental Present* (Finishing Line Press, 2012). She is an associate editor for *Stoneboat* and an occasional guest blogger for *The Best American Poetry*. She keeps a blog of her poems at <http://lisapoemoftheweek.blogspot.com>.

Angela Trudell Vasquez is a poet, writer and activist. Her work has appeared on stage and in print in the United States and internationally too. She was the featured poet for the Milwaukee Latina Monologues from 2009 to 2011. Her books of poetry, *The Force Your Face Carries* and *Love in War Time*, are available at [artnightbooks.com](http://artnightbooks.com), Woodland Pattern and the Riverwest Co-op.

Wendy Vardaman ([wendyvardaman.com](http://wendyvardaman.com)) is the author of *Obstructed View* (Fireweed Press), co-editor/webmaster of *Verse Wisconsin* ([versewisconsin.org](http://versewisconsin.org)), and co-founder/co-editor of Cowfeather Press ([cowfeatherpress.org](http://cowfeatherpress.org)). She is one of Madison, Wisconsin's two Poets Laureate (2012–2015) and coordinates conversations, readings, workshops and other events with Sarah Busse. Her blog *liveart(s)/artlive(s)* is at [wvardaman.tumblr.com](http://wvardaman.tumblr.com).

John Tuschen (1949–2005) was appointed Madison's first Poet Laureate by Mayor Paul Soglin in 1977. Tuschen served as Poet Laureate until 2000. He was the assistant gallery manager at Gallery 853, organized poetry readings, published other people's poems, performed in a variety of venues, and is credited by some for "bringing beat era performance poetry to Madison in unfamiliar venues."

Alison Townsend teaches at UW–Whitewater. Her books are *Persephone in America* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), *And Still the Music* (Flume Press, 2007), *The Blue Dress* (White Pine Press, 2003), and *What the Body Knows* (Parallel Press, 2002).

Robert G. Toomey taught college English at UW–Madison; UW–Whitewater; St. Ambrose University (Iowa); St. John Fisher University (New York); and Providence College (Rhode Island). He retired from the University of Wisconsin Memorial Library in December 2001, and devoted his waking hours to music, reading, and writing. Toomey died in 2005 at the age of 76.

Steve Tomasko thinks about the dust mites that live under the couch and the eyebrow mites that live on all of us. He muses about the 5,000 species of bacteria that live in our mouths. Someone has to. He's been published here and occasionally there. Steve lives in Middleton with his wife, Jeanie (also a poet), three cats and half an empty nest.

Jeanie Tomasko is the author of *Sharp as Want* (Little Eagle Press), a poetry/artworks collaboration with Sharon Auberle, *Tricks of Light* (Parallel Press) and the e-chapbook, *If I Confess Before 5:00* (Right Hand Pointing). *The Collect of the Day* is forthcoming from Centennial Press. Born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin, she earned her degree in nursing from UW–Madison and works as a home health nurse in the Madison area.

Marilyn L. Taylor, former Poet Laureate of Wisconsin (2009–2010) and Milwaukee (2004–2005), has published six collections of poetry. Her award-winning work has appeared in many anthologies and journals, including *Poetry*, *American Scholar*, *Able Muse*, and *Measure*. She has recently moved back to Madison after living for many years in Milwaukee, where she taught poetry and poetics at UWM.

Janet Taliaferro lives six months in Leesburg, VA, and six months in Hazelhurst, WI. She is the author of two published novels and a chapbook. She holds an MA in Creative Writing. A member of WFOP, she and three other poets have an online poetry critique group.

Australian-born Katrin Talbot is a violist, photographer, and author of *St. Cecilia's Daze* (Parallel Press). Her poetry has appeared in a number of journals and anthologies. Katrin's photo essay of Schubert's *Winterreise* was published as a coffee-table book and CD by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Denise Sweet taught Creative Writing, Literature and Mythology at UW–Green Bay. She has won several awards for her poetry including the Diane Decorah Award, the Posner Award, the Woman of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Women's Council and the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas First Book Award for Poetry. Sweet was Wisconsin's second Poet Laureate.

Heather Swan's poems have appeared in *The Cream City Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Iris*, *The Comstock Review* and *Basalt*, among others. Her chapbook *The Edge of Damage* was published by Parallel Press. She teaches writing and environmental studies in Madison.

Judith Strasser's poems and essays appeared in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Witness* and many other venues. Her chapbook, *Sand Island Succession: Poems of the Apostles*, was published in 2002 by Parallel Press. Judith's memoir, *Black Eye: Escaping a Marriage, Writing a Life*, was published by Terrace Books/University of Wisconsin Press in 2004. She died in 2009. Visit [judithstrasser.com](http://judithstrasser.com).

Matthew Stolte began practicing concrete & visual poetry July, 1998, in Madison. His work has frequently been in *Versé Wisconsin*.

Jim Stevens lived for thirty years in Madison. He is the editor of *The Journey Home: Four Centuries of Wisconsin Literature* and *Dreaming History: Native Writing of Wisconsin*. Since 1998, he has lived in Northern Wisconsin, where he edited *Yukhika latuhse* (She tells us stories), an annual journal of Native writing. In 2012, he co-chaired "Returning the Gift," a national Native writer's conference held in Milwaukee. "A Map for the Day of Spider" is from *The Book of Big Dog Town: Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around* (Fireweed Press 2013).

David Steingass is the author of six books including *Fishing for Dynamite* and *Great Plains* (RedDragonfly Press, Redwing, MN), which won the 2002 Posner Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers. He is interested especially in technical and stylistic possibilities among lineated poems, prose poems, and flash fiction. Steingass also presents writing workshops and residencies in schools.

Sandy Stark lives in Madison. She is the author of *Counting on Birds*, published by Wisconsin's Fireweed Press in 2010. Her poems have appeared in the Wisconsin Poets' Calendar, the *Texas Poetry Calendar*, the former *Wisconsin Academy Review*, and *Versé Wisconsin*.

Thomas R. Smith lives in River Falls, Wisconsin, and teaches at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. His most recent book of poems is *The Foot of the Rainbow* (Red Dragonfly Press). Some lines of his poem "Peace Vigil" appear in granite at the Elizabeth Link Peace Park on State Street in Madison. Visit [thomasrsmithpoet.com](http://thomasrsmithpoet.com).

Danez Smith is a proud Cave Canem Fellow, two-time Pushcart Nominee, Best New Poets Nominee, avid twerker, and graduate of the First Wave Hip-Hop & Urban Arts Learning Community at UW–Madison. Danez has taken his work to schools, community centers, poetry venues, and theatres across the country, as well as abroad, and is the 2013 Rustbelt Slam individual champion. He is an assistant editor for *Muzzle Magazine* and edits the Line Breaks Chapbook Series for First Wave. He thinks you look good today, now werk!

Shoshauna Shy is a member of the Prairie Fire Poetry Quartet. In May 2004, she founded Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and magazines including *The Seattle Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Rattle*, *Rosebud* and *Poetry Northwest*. Her collection, *What the Postcard Didn't Say*, won an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association in 2008.

Jo Scheder was raised in Milwaukee and moved to Honolulu for research and a professorship at the University of Hawai'i. There she also was an independent film and television producer/writer, and a theater lighting designer/director. An anthropologist, her research on health effects of stress and social inequality includes collaborations in American Samoa and with migrant farmworkers in the US. Email [jscheder@terracom.net](mailto:jscheder@terracom.net).

Margaret (Peggy) Rozga has published two books of poetry, the award-winning volume about Milwaukee's fair housing marches, *Two Hundred Nights and One Day*, and a collection responding to her Army Reservist son's deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, *Though I Haven't Been to Baghdad*. Inspired by her small garden, she is currently completing work on a new manuscript, *Justice Freedom Herbs*.

Mary C. Rowin writes poems and stories from her home in Middleton, Wisconsin. Her poems have appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Stoneboat*, *Solitary Plover*, and the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' *Calendar* and *Museletter*. Mary is a docent at the Chazen Museum of Art and a Literacy Network ESL tutor.

You can find Richard Roe, a retired Legislative Analyst, at jazz concerts, in dance classes, and lounges, taking notes, drawing diagrams, and thinking about his next book. His last collection is *Knots of Sweet Longing*, and his work has appeared in *Stoneboat*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and *Comstock Review*.

Julia Rice returned to her home town of Milwaukee after years of teaching high school English and of practicing law in Chicago. She has had poems published in *Korone*, WFOP's *Museletter*, *Songs of St. Francis*, the 2014 Wisconsin Poets' *Calendar*, *The Goose River Anthology 2013*, and *Alive Now!* She is a Franciscan sister and a member of Greenleaf Writers.

Carl J. Rasmussen practices law at the firm of Boardman & Clark LLP in Madison. He was among the first poets to publish in the *Madison Review*.

Fran Rall is 88 and still writing and submitting to the current WFOP Poets' *Calendar*. Her previous collection of Madison place poetry was *Common Joy II* with Frances Hurst, 1994.

Brian Powers is a lifelong resident of Madison. He has placed poetry and prose in several Wisconsin publications, including *Our Lives* magazine.

Andrea Potos is the author of four poetry collections, including *Yaya's Cloth* (Iris Press), and most recently *We Lit the Lamps Ourselves* from Salmon Poetry in Ireland. Her next book of poetry will be published by Salmon Poetry in 2015, tentatively entitled *An Ink Like Early Twilight*. Andrea has always felt grounded and bonded to the earth that is Madison, Wisconsin, ever since her first journey to the Bakers Rooms on State Street. She misses that place still.

James Pollock is the author of *Sailing to Babylon* (Able Muse Press, 2012), a finalist for the Griffin Poetry Prize and the Governor General's Literary Award in Poetry, runner-up for the Posner Poetry Book Award, and winner of an Outstanding Achievement Award

in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association; and *You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2012). He is an associate professor at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and lives with his wife and son in Madison, Wisconsin. Visit [james-pollock.com](http://james-pollock.com).

Darrell Petska's poetry has appeared in *Scissors and Spackle*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Curio Poetry*, and elsewhere. Now retired, he worked for many years as engineering editor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Michael Penn II is a student and a member of the First Wave Hip-Hop & Urban Arts Learning Community at UW–Madison.

Sara Parrell was awarded first prize in the 2008 Poetry Center of Chicago's Juried Reading for her manuscript, *Psalms of New Orleans*, and received the Leo Love Poetry Merit Award in 2012. Her work has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *qarrtsiluni*, and *Verse Wisconsin*, and she co-curates The Bridge Poetry Series at the Chazen Museum of Art. Sara is faculty at the UW–Madison School of Nursing and a member of the Madison Metropolitan School District's mental health consultation team.

Helen Padway lives, writes, and laughs in Wisconsin. She is part of the Sparks and the Hartford Avenue Poets. Her poems have been published in a variety of print publications and most recently in the ezines *New Verse News* and *Your Daily Poem*. She is young enough to think that poetry can change the world.

Andrea O'Brien has recent or forthcoming poems in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, and *Verse Wisconsin*. She lives in Denver with her husband, who continues to ask her the tough questions about truth and the importance of names in poetry. Visit [andreaobrien.net](http://andreaobrien.net).

Jay Nunnery was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. His work has appeared in various online and print journals. Currently, he lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he attends college.

Gillian Nevers moved to Madison in 1962 to attend the University. She never left. She can't imagine living anywhere else.

Andrea Musher served as Madison's second Poet Laureate from January, 2001, through December, 2007; she taught English and Women's Studies at UW–Whitewater for twenty-six years. Retired now, she sings with the Raging Grannies, paints, and talks to her plants. Currently she is writing a musical dialogue entitled, FRIEDA AND CAROLINE.

Ralph Murre draws, writes poetry and occasional prose, and has been published in various periodicals, in several anthologies, and in his own books: *Crude Red Boat*, *Psalms*, and *The Price of Gravity*. He has had thirty occupations, more or less, and as many obsessions. Look for him near water.

CJ Muchhala's poems have appeared in anthologies, print and online publications, in art/poetry installations, and on CD-ROM and audio CD. Her work has been nominated for the Best of the Net award and twice for the Pushcart Prize. She lives in Shorewood, Wisconsin.

Patricia Monaghan taught literature and environment at DePaul University in Chicago. She was the author of four books of poetry, most recently *Homefront* (Word Tech Press). She was Senior Fellow at and co-founder of the Black Earth Institute, a progressive think-tank dedicated to reconnecting environment, spirituality and social justice through the arts.

Oscar Mireles has been writing poetry for the past 25 years. He is the editor of two anthologies *I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 20 Hispanic Poets* (Focus Communications, 1989) and *I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 30 Hispanic Writers* (Focus Communications, 1999) and the author of *Second Generation* (Focus Communications, 1985). He has been the Principal/Executive Director of Omega School for the past nineteen years and is the father of four children, his greatest poems.

Richard Merelman writes poems because language is the only medium through which he can hope to achieve beautiful expression. Poems of his have appeared in *Main Street Rag* and *Measure*. Recent poems have appear in *Bumble Jacket Miscellany* and *Verse Wisconsin*. He taught political science at the UW–Madison until 2001. His volume, *The Imaginary Baritone*, appeared in 2012 (Fireweed Press).

Tim McLafferty lives in NYC and works as a drummer. He has played on Broadway in *Urinetown* and *Grey Gardens*, and in many other interesting places. His work currently appears in many fine journals, including *Forge*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Pearl*, *Portland Review*, and *Right Hand Pointing*. Visit [timmclafferty.com](http://timmclafferty.com).

Jeri McCormick, a Madison poet and long-time teacher in area senior centers and the Elderhostel program, is a recipient of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' Muse Prize and a Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship. Her most recent book, *Marrowbone of Memory*, was published by Salmon Poetry in Ireland.

Arthur Madson, born in 1925 and reared on an Iowa farm, left farming for the academic life. His fellow poets saw him as quick-witted, wry and unmatched in his nuanced portrayal of fellow humans. A veteran of World War II, Arthur earned his PhD at the University of Oklahoma and taught English for 36 years, mainly at UW–Whitewater. He lived until 2008. Two of his books are available from Fireweed Press.

Cynthia Lin moved to Madison in 2005 for graduate school, and it's been a very special kind of home for her since (despite moving recently and for a short while to Portland, Oregon). Madison raised Cynthia as an activist, organizer, and community educator; it is where she fell in love (with one of the poets in this volume) and found amazing family. She is not a poet (but sometimes fancies herself almost-one or about-to-be-one), and was surprised and flattered at the invitation to write a foreword.

John Lehman is the founder of *Rosebud Magazine*, former literary editor of *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, editor-in-chief of the digital magazine, *Lit Noir*, and founder of the Cambridge Readers Theater.

Norman Leer is Professor Emeritus at Roosevelt University, Chicago. He has published three books of poems and a critical study of Ford Madox Ford. In 1990, he received the Illinois Significant Poet's Award from state laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. In 1997, his collection of poems about music, *Second Lining*, was awarded the Burlington Northern Prize for best creative work by Roosevelt University. He and his artist wife Grethe live in Madison.

Estella Lauter's third chapbook from Finishing Line Press, *Transfiguration: Re-imagining Remedios Varo*, is scheduled for publication in 2013. Her poem "Gaza 2009" tied for first place in the 2009 Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Contest and was reprinted in *Verse Wisconsin* 110. She has been named Poet Laureate of Door County, WI 2013–2015. A Professor Emerita from UW–Oshkosh, she also taught for two decades at UW–Green Bay, and during 1989–90 at UW–Madison in Women's Studies.

Jon K. Lauck was born on a farm near Madison, South Dakota, in 1971. Lauck has a PhD in economic history as well as a law degree. Lauck practiced law and served as

a professor of history at SDSU and now serves as Senior Advisor and Counsel to US Senator John Thune of South Dakota. His many books include *Prairie Republic: The Political Culture of Dakota Territory, 1879-1889* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) and most recently *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (University of Iowa Press, 2013).

Peg Lauber enjoys retirement by reading a book a day if possible (sometimes two) and writing a poem often, as well as keeping up with grandchildren in New Orleans in the winter and St. Paul in the summer, feeding the birds, and fighting moles in her small garden in Eau Claire. She's just finished writing two Grandmother Remembers books.

Daniel Kunene is Professor Emeritus at the UW–Madison. He received his BA from the University of South Africa in 1949, his MA and PhD from the University of Cape Town, and a D.Litt. et Phil. (*honoris causa*) from both. In 2011 he received the International Karel Čapek Award for his translation of the Zulu novel *Mntanami! Mntanami!* by C.L.S. Nyembezi into English (*My Child! My Child!*), and recently published his first novel, *Dawn To Twilight*.

John Krumberger received an MFA from New England College in 2006. He lives with his wife Cris Higgin in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he works as a psychologist. A volume of his poetry entitled *The Language of Rain and Wind* was published by Backwaters Press in 2008.

Mark Kraushaar's work has appeared in *Best American Poetry* and the website *Poetry Daily*. His full length collection, *Falling Brick Kills Local Man*, was published by University of Wisconsin Press, as winner of the Felix Pollak Prize. His most recent collection, *The Uncertainty Principle*, Waywiser Press was chosen by James Fenton as winner of the Anthony Hecht Prize.

The author of many collections of poetry, including *North Point North: New and Selected* (2002), *Ninety-fifth Street* (2009), and *ROTC Kills* (2012), John Koethe also publishes and teaches philosophy. Koethe received the Kingsley Tufts Award for *Falling Water* (1997), the Frank O'Hara Award for *Domes* (1973), and the Bernard F. Connors Award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and a lifetime achievement award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers.

Jesse Lee Kercheval is the author of 12 books of poetry, fiction and memoir including the poetry collections *Cinema Muto*, *Dog Angel*, and *World as Dictionary*. She is currently at work on a bilingual Spanish/English collection of poetry *Extranjera/Stranger* and is also editing *América invertida: an anthology of younger Uruguayan poets*. She is the Zona Gale Professor in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Wisconsin. Visit [jkercheval.com](http://jkercheval.com).

Dasha Kelly is founder and director of Still Waters Collective, a Milwaukee-based outreach initiative utilizing the transformative power of the written and spoken word. Dasha has performed and delivered workshops to writers, youth, educators, co-eds, executives, inmates and artists throughout the US She is also an HBO Def Poetry alum. Her latest collection of work, *Hershey Eats Peanuts*, is available through Penmanship Books. She is currently working on her second novel and a new collection of poems.

Martha Kaplan has published with *Branch Redd Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Hummingbird*, *Versé Wisconsin*, *Hospital Drive*, *Möbius The Poetry Magazine*, and *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*, among others. She was the 2011 winner of the Dr. Zelda Mapp Robinson Award, two Editor-in-Chief's Choice Awards, and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2012. Visit [marthakaplanpoet.com](http://marthakaplanpoet.com)

Joan Wiese Johannes has published three chapbooks, the most recent being *Sensible Shoes*, the 2009 winner of the John and Miriam Morris Competition sponsored by the Alabama Poetry Society. Her fourth chapbook, *He Thought the Periodic Table Was a Portrait of God*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She lives in Port Edwards, Wisconsin, with her poet husband Jeffrey. More about her is available at [bookthatpoet.com](http://bookthatpoet.com).

Catherine Jagoe is a writer, translator, and contributor to Wisconsin Public Radio's Wisconsin Life series. One of the poems in her collection *Casting Off* (Parallel Press, 2007) was featured by Garrison Keillor on The Writer's Almanac. She lives in Madison. Her audio essay about biking aired on Wisconsin Public Radio in May 2011, and the full version of the essay appears in *Apeiron Review*.

As editor of Many Voices Press, Lowell Jaeger compiled *New Poets of the American West*, an anthology of poets from 11 Western states. He is author of five collections of poems, including *WE* (Main Street Rag Press, 2010) and *How Quickly What's Passing Goes Past* (Grayson Books, 2013). Most recently Jaeger was awarded the Montana Governor's Humanities Award for his work in promoting thoughtful civic discourse.

Ronnie Hess is the author of a chapbook, *Whole Cloth* (Little Eagle Press) and a culinary travel guide, *Eat Smart in France* (Ginkgo Press). She blogs for [MyFrenchLife.org](http://MyFrenchLife.org). She loves to walk and bike around town, in all weather.

Rob Harrington is a soccer coach by trade. He lives with his wife Lisa on Milwaukee's east side, where there is enough character and characters to cure all ailments. He started writing seriously again after about a 15 year absence and doesn't plan on stopping.

Alex Gubbins studies poetry at Northern Michigan University's MFA program, where he teaches to flip the bill. For fun in the morning before coffee, and not for pay but passion (the best of motivations), he translates Arabic poetry. He has published in *The Progressive Magazine*, *Prime Magazine*, *Warrior Writers: After Action Review*, and *Metamorphoses* (translation).

Andy Gricevich founded or co-founded or collaborates in or on *Cannot Exist* (publishing a magazine, small books and text objects), the \_\_\_\_\_-Shaped Reading Series, utterly casual quasi-gourmet banquets, and occasional theater and music projects in Madison (most recently *Voices of a People's History* at Broom Street Theater). He has performed nationally with the Prince Myshkins and the Nonsense Company, and biked around a lot locally. His *A Book of Music* was published by Minutes Books. Andy is uncomfortably writing this in third person.

David Graham has taught writing and literature at Ripon College in Ripon, WI, since 1987. He is the author of six collections of poems, most recently *Stutter Monk* (Flume Press), and an essay anthology co-edited with Kate Sontag: *After Confession: Poetry as Autobiography* (Graywolf Press).

Brent Goodman is the author of *Far From Sudden* (2012) and *The Brother Swimming Beneath Me* (2009), both from Black Lawrence Press. His work has appeared in *Pleiades Sou'wester*, *Poetry*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Court Green*, and elsewhere.

Geoff Gilpin is the author of *The Maharishi Effect: A Personal Journey Through the Spiritual Movement That Transformed America* (Tarcher/Penguin, 2006). He received an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College in 2000. Geoff has been a professional writer for nearly 30 years, including a long career in technical documentation. He is currently serving as President of the Council for Wisconsin Writers, where he organized the first state-wide essay contest for Wisconsin high school students.



Max Garland is the current poet laureate of Wisconsin and the author of two poetry collections: *The Postal Confessions*, which earned the Juniper Prize for Poetry, and *Hunger Wide as Heaven*.

Mario Garcia Sierra was born and raised in Guatemala City. He is an alumnus of the University of Wisconsin Madison and has lived in Madison since 2003. He is an active community member seeking racial and social justice.

Fabu, as she is professionally known, continues to write poetry that offers a truer testimony of the lives of African people worldwide, as well as of African American women and children. Madison Poet Laureate (2008–2011), her widely-read poetry finds a home in Madison newspapers, buildings and on the sidewalk of Williamson Street. Visit [artistfabu.com](http://artistfabu.com).

Martín Espada is the author of more than fifteen books. His latest collection of poems, *The Trouble Ball* (Norton), received the Milt Kessler Award, an International Latino Book Award and a Massachusetts Book Award. His book of essays, *Zapata's Disciple* (South End Press), has been banned in Tucson as part of the Mexican-American Studies Program outlawed by the state of Arizona. The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Espada teaches at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

R. Virgil (Ron) Ellis lives near Cambridge, Wisconsin, where he restores fifty acres of wetland and savanna. He is an Emeritus Professor who taught writing, literature and media at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. For an exploration of his work see [poetrvellis.com](http://poetrvellis.com).

Karl Elder received the 2012 Christopher Latham Sholes Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers. He is Lakeland College's Fessler Professor of Creative Writing and Poet in Residence and author of ten collections of poetry, including *Gilgamesh at the Bellagio* from the National Poetry Review Award Book Series.

Susan Elbe is the author of *The Map of What Happened*, which won the 2012 Backwaters Press Prize, *Eden in the Rearview Mirror* (Word Press), and two chapbooks, *Where Good Swimmers Drown* (2011 Concrete Wolf Press Chapbook Prize) and *Light Made from Nothing* (Parallel Press). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in many journals and anthologies, including *Blackbird*, *North American Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. You can learn more about her at [susanelbe.com](http://susanelbe.com).

Jordan Dunn lives in Madison with his partner, Laura, and their two children. He supports bicycles, canoes, and the plant genus Brassica (among others). His chapbook, *Form 32*, is available from *Cannot Exist*.

Sadie Ducet's poetry is curated by Sarah Busse, whose bio appears elsewhere in these pages.

Greer DuBois lives in Evanston, IL, and Madison. She is an actress and a writer.

Marnie Bullock Dresser lives in Spring Green with her husband and son. She earned her MFA at the University of Montana and has taught at UW–Richland since 1992. She blogs at [www.marniere.wordpress.com](http://www.marniere.wordpress.com). A marnière is a sinkhole, a metaphor, and a plot device in Marnie's favorite Trixie Belden novel.

CX Dillhunt is the editor of *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*; he was co-editor of Wisconsin Poets' *Calendar: 2006*. His poems on teaching in China are in the international online journal *Studio*. CX is the author of *Things I've Never Told Anyone* (Parallel Press) and *Girl Saints* (Fireweed Press), and the recipient of the 2012 Wisconsin

Academy Poetry Award. CX teaches elementary school workshops and was named Commended Poet in 2010 by the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission. Visit [dillhunt.com](http://dillhunt.com) & [hummingbirdpoetry.org](http://hummingbirdpoetry.org).

Bruce Dethlefsen, Wisconsin Poet Laureate (2011–2012), has two chapbooks, *A Decent Reed* and *Something Near the Dance Floor*, and his full-length book, *Breather*, published by Fireweed Press, won an Outstanding Achievement Award in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association. His newest book, *Unexpected Shiny Things*, is published by Cowfeather Press. A retired educator and public library director, he lives in Westfield, Wisconsin.

Alice D’Alessio is the author of three books of poetry and one biography, as well as various articles and essays. She continues to delight in the challenge of creating poetry, as well as short fiction and memoir fragments. A transplanted New Yorker, she is enchanted by Wisconsin’s natural beauty and dedicated to conservation/restoration activities.

Ron Czerwien is the used-book buyer at A Room of One’s Own Bookstore in Madison, WI, and he also sells books online under the name Avol’s Books. His poems have appeared in a number of online and print journals. Ron serves as treasurer on the board of The Council for Wisconsin Writers. He hosts the monthly First Thursday Open Mike Poetry Readings at The Dragonfly Lounge.

Amelia Cook Fontella was born in Appleton, Wisconsin. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Minnesota and her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of New Orleans. After spending her twenties exploring warmer places like Honduras, Ecuador, and Tybee Island, she returned north to settle in to her third decade of life in her home state. She lives in Madison and spends her free time teaching, writing, having adventures, and drinking the hoppiest beer she can find.

Jan Chronister lives in the woods near Maple, Wisconsin. She teaches English and Creative Writing at a tribal college in Minnesota. Her parents, brother, sister, son and daughter all graduated from UW–Madison.

Sue Bussey Chenette, a classical pianist as well as a poet, grew up in Phillips, Wisconsin, and has made her home in Toronto since 1972. She is an editor for Brick Books and the author of *Slender Human Weight* (Guernica Editions, 2009) and *The Bones of His Being* (Guernica Editions, 2012.)

Ching-In Chen is the author of *The Heart’s Traffic* (Arktoi Books/Red Hen Press) and co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* (South End Press). They are a Kundiman and Lambda Fellow, part of the Macondo and Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation writing communities, and a past participant in Sharon Bridgforth’s Theatrical Jazz Institute.

Robin Chapman’s new collection of nature and climate change poems is *One Hundred White Pelicans* (Tebot Bach). Her poems have appeared online recently in *The Cortland Review* and *The Common Online* and are forthcoming in *Nimrod* and *Dalhousie Review*.

Sarah Busse co-edits *Verse Wisconsin* with Wendy Vardaman. They also share the Poet Laureateship of Madison (2012–2015). Her collection *Somewhere Piano* (Mayapple Press, 2012) received the Posner Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers.

Joseph Briggs gets lost easily in evergreen forests and has a difficult time not taking pictures of the Wisconsin countryside when he isn’t trying to write poems. His poetry has appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Mobius*, and *Black-N-Blue*. His photography has appeared in *Anti-*, *Red Booth Review*, *Prick of the Spindle*, and *Weave Magazine*.

Faustina Bohling grew up on the East side and has a strong affinity to the Williamson and Winnebago neighborhoods, and currently resides on the West side/Middleton. A graduate from UW–Madison, BA Sociology, a mother of three wonderful sons and one daughter, she has read at Genna's spoken word scene, The Wisconsin Book Festival, UW–Milwaukee and other venues. She has also hosted The Speak Easy open mic at the Cardinal bar.

Kimberly Blaeser, a Professor in the English Department at UW–Milwaukee, teaches Creative Writing, Native American Literature, and American Nature Writing. Among her publications are three books of poetry: *Trailing You*, *Absentee Indians and Other Poems*, and *Apprenticed to Justice*. Of Anishinaabe ancestry and an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe who grew up on the White Earth Reservation, Blaeser is also the editor of *Traces in Blood, Bone, and Stone: Contemporary Ojibwe Poetry*.

F.J. Bergmann is living in Wisconsin for the fourth or fifth time. She dwells in what is shown as Leeds Center on the Wisconsin map but has no other official existence, in the Poynette postal delivery area (Arlington is across the road), and, it turns out, in the DeForest school district. A good deal of her time is spent in Madison.

Oliver Bendorf is the author of *The Spectral Wilderness*, selected by Mark Doty for the 2013 Wick Poetry Prize and forthcoming from Kent State University Press. His poems have been published in or are forthcoming from *Best New Poets*, *Blackbird*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Indiana Review*, *jubilat*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He recently earned an MFA from UW–Madison, where he is now earning an MLIS.

Margaret Savides Benbow is the only UW–Madison alumnus who won the George B. Hill Award in Poetry in four different years. Since then her poems have been published in numerous magazines and anthologies and won many prizes. Her collection *Stalking Joy* won the Walt McDonald First Book award and was published by TTUP press. Benbow has now completed a second collection, *Queen of the Dwarves*. She also writes fiction.

As a writer/actor, originally from Oshkosh, Donna Barkman has had her solo play “Hand-Me-Downs” produced in NYC and environs. In 2013 she wrote and performed in “Words that Paint” at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art. Her poetry has appeared in *Common Ground*, *Chautauqua*, *Boston Literary Review*, *String Poet*, *Per Contra*, *Adrienne Rich: a Tribute Anthology*, and others. She's enjoyed two writers' residencies at Brush Creek and Jentel, both in Wyoming.

Linda Aschbrenner is the editor/publisher of Marsh River Editions. She and her two sisters are working on a book about growing up in a Finnish American home.

Marilyn Annucci is the author of two chapbooks: *Waiting Room*, which won the 2012 Sunken Garden Poetry Prize, selected by Tony Hoagland (Hill-Stead Museum, 2012), and *LUCK*, which was published in 2000 by Parallel Press. Her work has appeared in a variety of journals online and in print; to see more, visit [www.madpoetry.org/madpoets/annuccim.html](http://www.madpoetry.org/madpoets/annuccim.html).



## *About the Madison Poet Laureateship*

Madison has had a poet laureate since 1977, when Paul Soglin named John Tuschen to the volunteer post, now overseen by the Madison Arts Commission. With Karin Wolf, Madison's Arts Program Administrator, Andrea Musher and Fabu, the city's second and third laureates, helped envision and establish a more formal program that has a four-year term and an application process. The John Tuschen Poet Laureate Memorial Fund was established to accept donations for the laureateship, which currently has no financial backing. Eventually, the Fund will help provide expenses for some of the projects undertaken by future laureates. Andrea Musher, who was instrumental in formalizing the position of the Poet Laureate of Madison, and who hopes that it will be a viable institution as long as the city shall endure, created, and serves as sustaining sponsor of, the John Tuschen Poet Laureate Memorial Fund.

Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman work together as the current poets laureate (2012-15). Their mission is to integrate poetry into the fabric of civic life, ritual, and the everyday, and toward that end: place poetry before the public in surprising places/spaces; create conversation about poetry; connect poets and groups of poets to each other and to other artists; build bridges between people using poetry. Poetry at Common Council Meetings, Metro Bus Lines (founded by Fabu), and the annual Olbrich Gardens Poetry Marathon (founded by Fran Rall) are some of their projects, in addition to the present anthology, the proceeds of which will be donated to the John Tuschen Fund. Visit [cityofmadison.com/mac/poet.cfm](http://cityofmadison.com/mac/poet.cfm) for more information and to learn about applying to become the next poet laureate of Madison, as well as how to donate to the John Tuschen Fund.

## *About Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf*

PJOS (PoetryJumpsOfftheShelf.com) is a program launched in 2004 by poet Shoshauna Shy in Madison, Wisconsin, with the mission of bringing poetry out of the libraries, bookstores and classrooms into the general public arena. Calls for submissions are conducted largely via cyberspace. PJOS published ten of these poems on decals that were affixed to Madison B-Cycles in April, 2013, for the riding season. Other projects have included poetry on specific themes published on java jackets, bookmarks, palm-sized books for glove compartments, postcards, and inside jawbreaker capsules. Partnerships for distribution included a wide variety of companies, businesses, and organizations all across the country.

## *About the Publisher*

**Cowfeather Press**, founded by Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman in 2011, is a two-woman volunteer operation committed to developing a place for poetry in civic discourse, serving others through poetry, and expanding and connecting communities of poets and readers. At Cowfeather Press, we believe poetry matters, and we reach towards an aesthetic that represents the diversity of the upper Midwest. We encourage conversations on the page, the stage, and in public spaces which embrace, challenge, and explore both our differences and our common humanity.

*Supporting materials for book groups & community reads are at [cowfeatherpress.org](http://cowfeatherpress.org).*



# echolocations poets map madison echolocations poets map madison

Here's a literary block party filled with both echoes and locations, as more than 100 poets who have crossed paths with the city, past & present, share poems that refer to specific Madison places. Long-time residents live next door to writers who passed through for only a while. Local streets intersect with myth, history, personal narrative and ecology. More than geography, more than chronology, what emerges is something akin to the shifting psyche of a city. Poem by poem, a new map evolves, folds back upon its own stories, and rewrites itself over and over through its sounds and its silences, taking into account a variety of perspectives, a multitude of voices. In the end these poets ask us,

*How many Madisons are there?*

# poets map madison

COVER PHOTO: FRACTURED CAPITOL  
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