

VERSE WISCONSIN

FOUNDED BY LINDA ASCHBRENNER AS FREEVERSE 1998

“I think all poetry is accessible in a certain sense if you spend enough time with it. Poems tend to have instructions for how to read them embedded in their language. I don’t think all poems need to be written in conversational language—those are often great poems but there should also be poems of incoherent bewilderment and muddled mystery.”

—Matthea Harvey

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FEATURES

HOW A POEM LISTENS TO ITS READER
 BY JOHN LEHMAN

THE POTENCY OF POETRY
 A CONVERSATION WITH ACTOR DAVID DANIEL
 BY SARAH BUSSE

WISCONSIN FELLOWSHIP OF POETS
 2009 TRIAD CONTEST WINNERS

RECIPES, LICENSE PLATES & GREASED PIGS:
 TITLING YOUR POEM BY ANGELA RYDELL

WENDY VARDAMAN INTERVIEWS
 MATTHEA HARVEY

“Anyone can tell you what something means. To them. Very few people can tell you what it actually says. In metaphor theater, we actually build metaphors using kids to act out every piece of the text.”

—David Daniel

“A great poem doesn’t tell us something we don’t know. A great poem listens to us.”

—John Lehman

❧ Editors' Notes ❧

Welcome to the second issue of *Verse Wisconsin*, and thank you for the many comments we've received about *Verse Wisconsin* 101, online and print. We appreciate your responses, subscriptions, submissions, and help to get the word out about *VW*. Posts on list-servs, blogs and social networking sites like Facebook make a difference, as does passing along a copy of *VW* to poets, friends and neighbors! Why not take your April issue when you're finished reading and share it with someone else, or leave it at a local library, school, or other gathering place? It's poetry month, after all, and we're very pleased to be able to show everyone what you're up to!

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WISCONSIN FELLOWSHIP OF POETS

On February 21, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (<http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-Math-of-Poetry/64249/>) posted a thought-provoking article by David Alpaugh, "The New Math of Poetry." Alpaugh looks at the ever-burgeoning numbers of magazines, both online and in print, and speculates, "If current trends persist, the sheer amount of poetry 'published' is likely to double, quadruple, 'ten-tuple' in the decades ahead....If journals merely continue to grow at the current rate, there will be more than 35,000 of them by 2100, and approximately 86 million poems will be published in the 21st century!"

Surprisingly, he's not alarmed by this vision. Rather, his article takes on, gently but persistently, the academicization of the world of poetry. It's well worth a read. Still, we admit that although we mostly celebrate the proliferation of poetry, we occasionally worry: what possible reason could we have, here at *Verse Wisconsin*, to add to this glut? What are we thinking?

Repeatedly, we find ourselves returning to the idea of community. We like to think that we continue Linda Aschbrenner's tradition of providing a place for familiar names to share their latest poems, thoughts, and news with each other and with interested newcomers and visitors. We like to imagine readers happy to check out the latest poem by one of their favorite writers, or turn to see what an unfamiliar voice might have to say.

As editors, we look for excellence. No editor that we know of desires less. But we like to think we also partner with each of you, building community among poets, between readers and writers. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Verse Wisconsin*! Look for extended content online—audio & visual—as well as book reviews and a section of "Alternate Realities" poems, a few of which are printed in the center section here.

Thanks to Kristin Alberts, Richard Roe & Shoshauna Shy for volunteer proofreading help. Lingering errors are, of course, the responsibility of *VW*'s editors. Contact us: editors@versewisconsin.org.

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All work will be considered for both the print and the online versions of *Verse Wisconsin*. If you are a high school or undergraduate teacher who is interested in working with us or using *Verse Wisconsin* in your classroom, please read our guidelines for teachers online.

Electronic Mail (preferred method): Please send 3-5 poems, **included within the text of an email**, to editors (at) versewisconsin (dot) org. Contact us if you need to send an attachment for formatting purposes. The subject line should read “[last name] – submission.” We also ask that you paste in a brief (3-4 line) bio which includes any connection you may have to Wisconsin, even if it’s just an ex-boyfriend living in Oconomowoc or a family vacation when you were ten. We’re responsive to a variety of tones, from straightforward to ironic!

If you wish to submit an article, essay, reverie or opinion piece, query first with a general outline or idea in mind. Again, make sure the subject line reads “[last name] – query.” Email your query to editors (at) versewisconsin (dot) org.

We always need book reviews! If you are interested in reviewing, please contact us and read our guidelines online.

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We will try to respond to all submissions within two months. After that time, you may query if you have not heard from us. Given the attention we are paying to

your words, we ask that you refrain from simultaneous submissions.

Payment for contributors to the print magazine is two copies. We wish we could pay you more!

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Books Reviewed Online

Barbara Jordan Bache-Wiig, *Yoga Woman*, Poetry People Press, 2009, by Kathleen Serley

Nicholson Baker, *The Anthologist*, Simon & Schuster, 2009, by Richard Swanson

B.J. Best, *State Sonnets*, sunnyside press, 2009, by Karla Huston

Philip Dacey, *Vertebrae Rosaries*, Red Dragonfly Press, 2009, by Brent Goodman

Alice D’Alessio, *Days We Are Given*, Earth’s Daughters, 2009, by Ralph Murre & by Shelly Hall

Rob Eckert, *Pheromonal*, Desperado Press, 2009, by Noel Sloboda

Eric Greinke, *Kayak Lessons*, Free Books of Lowell, MI, by Judith Swann

Tony Hoagland, *Unincorporated Persons in the Late Honda Dynasty*, Gray Wolf Press, 2010, by Kevin Fitchett

Judy Kolosso, *Aubade* and *In the First Place*, Durnford’s Landing, 2009, by Judith Swann

Michael Kriesel, *Moths Mail the House*, sunnyside press, 2008, by Erik Richardson

Robert B. Moreland & Karen M. Miner, *Postcards from Baghdad: Honoring America’s*

Heroes, 2008, by Kathleen Serley

Andrea Potos, *Yaya’s Cloth*, Iris Press, 2007, by Judith Barisonzi

Christine Rhein, *Wild Flight: Poems*, Texas Tech University Press, 2008 [Winner of the Walt McDonald First-Book Competition

in Poetry], by Catherine Jagoe

Nadine St. Louis, *Zebra*, Marsh River Editions, 2008, by Lou Roach

Alison Townsend, *Persephone in America*, Southern Illinois U Press [The Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition

Winner], 2009, by Judith Barisonzi

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Books Received Winter 2010

Publisher & author links available online—see p. 36 for Books Received Fall 2009

Ned Balbo, *Something Must Happen*, Finishing Line Press, 2009

Maryann Corbett, *Dissonance*, Scierter Press, 2009

Maira Egan, *Bar Napkin Sonnets*, The Ledge Press, 2008

John Elsberg and **Eric Greinke**, *Catching the Light: 12 Haiku Sequences*, Červená Barva Press

Eric Greinke, *Kayak Lessons*, Free Books of Lowell, MI, 2009

David Gross, *Pilgrimage*, Finishing Line Press, 2009

Kenneth P. Gurney, *Greeting Card and other Poems*, 2008

Kenneth P. Gurney, *Writers’ Block*, 2009

Don Kimball, *Journal of a Flatlander*, Finishing Line Press, 2009

Tim Mayo, *The Kingdom of Possibilities*, Mayapple Press, 2009

Jeannie E. Roberts, *Let’s Make Faces!* Rhyme the Roost Books, 2009

Peg Sherry, *Life Lines from Extraordinary Abundance*, Holtz Creative Enterprises, 2008

Lester Smith (ed.), *Vampyr Verse*, Popcorn Press, 2009

Heather Swan, *The Edge of Damage*, Parallel Press, 2009

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pick the right brush

for the architecture, for the little
 people inside. For the wee white clouds

hatting their heads. For the way a hand
 touches another's body. For each eye

and the angle of light trapped within. Finesse
 your grip slightly to widen certain strokes—

a tree maybe. There is even a brush thin enough
 to capture the frail shadow trailing

each branch on a limb. Step back often. Discover
 the point of movement disappearing inside

the quietest composition. For the sky
 don't use any brush at all.

—BRENT GOODMAN, RHINELANDER, WI
visit VW Online for more poetry & audio by this author

If there are words today
 let them be loosened
 like dust motes stirred by fan

Let my pen dislodge them
 as a shovel dislodges garden dirt
 and oxygen flows in

Let them gather like exiles
 from their diaspora, the place
 of their humiliation,
 let them repopulate their city,
 begin to build its walls

Let words pour forth
 the way the dead will rise
 at the last trumpet, casting
 fierce glances of surprise

—RUTH GORING, CHICAGO, IL
visit VW Online for more by this author

 **The Telling of It**

was a necessary invention of
 something possibly apocryphal
 an allegory of an actual fiction
 etymologically suspect

luck like time
 working its own proportions
 metaphor with the effect of fact
 or exactly the other way around

the slope of reverie
 the pity of things
 the gist of it all
 declared in hard sentences of old

the dreadful rhetoric
 of a conventional ending.

—BRUCE TAYLOR, EAU CLAIRE, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Here's What He Said 

Out along the road he said
 's where he lived
 Sometimes a mess of fish he said
 's what he ate
 fried up in meal he said

Oh I like the woods he said
 's how he prayed
 Just the one cousin he said
 's who's his kin
 up toward St. Paul he said

All of 'em are passed he said
 's where's the rest
 I don't rightly know he said
 's who'll bury him
 in a blue suit he said

—RALPH MURRE, BAILEYS HARBOR, WI

Mary's Ideas: Queen of Jazz

From swing with bop elements
to a new style of Jazz
experimenting with boogies
then radical innovations of bop
that's how they call my movements.
I was expanding, growing wider
and deeper
like artists do when they are doing.
Boppish figures
turns and shifts
phrasings, voicing
I always had ideas
and chords way ahead of others.
Way ahead of official eras
because I needed a place to be musical
to experiment with innovation.
Men musicians borrowed from my gifts
then denied Mary Lou as the originator, the giver.
Mary's ideas could be loaned and shared
but not stolen.

—FABU, MADISON, WI

Ode to St. Cecilia

Another woman gone who was an artist
upon her passing this ethereal saint
sang as she transformed from earth to heaven.
The executioner tried three times to kill her
then he ran away swiftly on feet of thorns.

She sang into the ears of the sorrowful
whose crimson tears colored her dying bed.
She sang of sacred visions shining before her
then bent her neck back into eternal rest
martyred young for faith and song.

Cecilia the faithful intoned must become a Saint.
Patron saint for all artists
who create from the hallowed breath of the Divine.

Despite traveling through muck and mire
creativity frees artists from the stench of earth's shell
when St. Cecilia's prayers mount up to the third heaven
spreading wide like colors of Hibiscus
her prayers capture what the enemy stole; spirit and life.

Mary Lou Williams plays for this sainted woman
An ode of public praise, elevated music and feminine grace.

—FABU, MADISON, WI

Lost in the Begonia House

Nonstop scarlet, salmon, rose petticoat,
orange-edged yellow pin-up flames,

pastel and ruffled mix, rows of
hanging pots in bloom above you

just out of reach, so many
sunsets to fly into on jets

you can't seem to board,
the airport awash with tears

and strangers. Remember
last summer how the petals fell

onto the porch floor? How you
walked barefoot and they pressed

into your soles and left stains?
They'll fall again. Plush

as an anniversary blouse
still unpacked. Plush

and falling from you just in time
to welcome him home from Brazil

where it is winter, hot and humid
as a Wisconsin greenhouse in June.

And there you'll both stand
under the white begonia you carry

awkwardly out to the car. Each
blossom a cumulus building.

The rain beginning to dampen
the screens. The radio humming

news in the background. The world
as safe as it ever was. A samba

of trees all around you, perfectly
private, the wind picking up.

—KATE SONTAG, RIPON, WI

Lois in the Spring

She smiled yellow daisy sunshine
talked about what she was growing.
Finding terracotta shards among the pots
*I like them, she said. Their weight
feels right for my hands.
Not only now, with this cancer.
They always have. Always.*

In March with a shard in one hand
she read about living with cancer:
stomach and blood in medical books
ground where her own was growing.
Poison in fruit and in greens, fresh
water corrupt in the heart of the rock
disease in the walls of the schoolroom.

April, she put a shard in my hand
said, *What can I do for you?*
It's all going one way now.
She closed my fingers on splintered clay.
She held my hand in two of hers
their careful bones sharpened, visible.
She lifted our hands to her face.

In May, so small I could lift her
she lay in a streak of sunlight
at the open kitchen door. I washed
dishes, stroked her arms. I answered
the phone, saying no. I said *No, she can't
talk now, she's dying. She can't call back.
She'll be dying from now 'til she's dead.*

*It's eating my food, she said, pensive.
It's eating me. Don't feed it!* I said
in a rage. *Starve it!* She smiled.
She said *No*, put her hand on my lips.
*There's something in me trying not to die.
They're both in me, both. In me.
There's nothing I can do about it.*

We read the cards. Her death was there
and her life. This is not only true
when you turn the earth, find bones
in wet dirt, live bulbs like dead flesh
green shoots a surprise, a quick question
answered, sometimes, twice.
Not only then, but always. Always.

—JUDITH ARCANA, PORTLAND, OR
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Lois, Dying

Lois, we're driving back to Chicago
while behind us in Milwaukee
you're going down like the sun
clouds streak the sky out the window
the day's light is dying
like you, Lois.

Inside the car, headlights ride
over our faces, pulsing
with the highway's broken lines.
We put doo-wop on, sing loud
like dancing in the basement
like you with your angora bobbysox.

*let me go, you said; then
pick me up, hold me, give me your hands
and go, let me go; then, hold me, you said
put your arms under my shoulders
hold my head it's not working
let me go go just go.*

So we're letting you go
and we're going, we're just going.
The tires roll, the tolls are paid.
We're letting you go –
to the dark farms out the window
to the small light of first stars.

—JUDITH ARCANA, PORTLAND, OR
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Moments in the Tenuous Northern Spring

for Jim Wilkins

On hold to cancel a dental date, I rummage through March overcast for
anything real—a true quarter, a hard half-gallon. Overhead, Canada geese
honk *Oil Rig Lost*, the title song to the tear-jerker they're dragging up from
the Gulf. *Whenever I feel insecure*, the receptionist says, *I pass myself off as
Swedish*. I hold up color photos of my neighbor showing off her lamb chops,
bullet-proofing her hair in twilight's slow Dickinson. *Bring on balmy*, the
receptionist sighs. *I'm wild for that change of weather when you pull on a pair
of shorts you trust and you're good to go*. I catch the specter of the olive in her
voice. *Oh, random*, she goes on. *Ah, zaftig... Sweet mystery of life. This rate*,
I tell her, *you could go house-blind big time*. Heavy breathing somewhere on
the line between us. We listen hard. The definitive book on ice fishing lures,
I remember, has yet to be written. *Turkey*, she whispers after a while. *You
betcha, them's turkey*.

—DAVID STEINGASS, MADISON, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

Becoming

We walked together
to her door, my arm
around her.
She talked about
getting out to her garden
now that the weather
had turned. It seemed her
shoulders had breathed
the bones away, there
was that little of her
now. She worried
it would be too many
little steps to get
to the garden. As we
talked she grew
even tinier,
even her voice
that afternoon,
in that old room.
I said to myself, she
is disappearing,

when all along she
was becoming
something,

but back then
what did I know
about that?

—JIM HAZARD, WHITEFISH BAY, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Body World

Is it art or science or spectacle?
Novelty, exhibit, or display?
This show, shall we call it,
of body parts, the remains
of what was once demonstrably
human, all the fluids, the juices
removed, the small breath— the
soul, shall we call it?— snuffed.
Has immortality come to this?
The archer, the hurdler, the
card-player, the bride, the
spear-thrower, the equestrian –
plasticized®? Oh yes, there’s
the history of anatomy, posterred
on all of the walls, the public
displays of dissection centuries
past, the rapt crowds preening
for a closer look, an afternoon’s
grim entertainment. There’s
Leonardo carting the dead bodies
home, wrist-deep in fleshy debris,
death’s detritus, dripping with
vessel and nerve, intent on his
exquisite sketches. And Fragonard,
the darling of Paris, with his skinned
and shellacked, seventeenth-century
dead horse. And yet, they are
beautiful, in their own way, these
sculptures of muscle and ligament,
capillary, neuron, and bone,
stripped of all posturing and
pretence, these silent reminders
that heaven and hell are not so
far apart, that when art has its way
with science, their progeny might not
be unlike this – think *miracle*, think
divine intervention, think *Red Sea*,
think *pillar of salt*. Think Death with
His intelligent designs on us, with
only our best interests at heart.

—RON WALLACE, MADISON, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

A Physics Exam

Dusk hits our untidy street
and two scrawny boys
mount up, gliding into
coming traffic, playing chicken
against Toyotas, those eternal
shaggy haircuts shielding
squinting eyes from setting
sun. I honk and shout

but they will not be deterred.
Would you? These same boys
will spring like dandelions
from every cracked sidewalk
until the sun supernovas or
skateboards vanish, whichever
comes first. They haven’t yet

approached the simmering pack
of roving girls who tremble
with the terrible secrets
of fourteen: there’s time for that
when they trade stickered decks
for fastbacks, idle evenings
for overtime at the Dairy Kastle.

For now, all they know are empty
pillows left cool in the wake
of swing-shift Moms, those wild
hours between microwaved
dinners and Dad’s last call when

spring wind whips them
like ghosts through flickering
streetlamps: elegant as baby deer,
all legs and giant eyes, flirting with
my rushing headlights, beautiful
in their refusal, so I swerve first.

—ERIN KEANE, LOUISVILLE, KY
visit VW Online for more by this author

How a Poem Listens to Its Reader

by John Lehman

Picture this diagram in front of you. The word “Poet” with an arrow to the word “Poem” on the same line, followed by an arrow to the word “Audience.” We usually look at this from the standpoint of the first two and shake a disapproving finger at the third.

I want to state that this traditional approach is completely backward. A great poem doesn't tell us something we don't know. A great poem listens to us. The poem allows us to hear ourselves in a way that we otherwise wouldn't. Why is this hard? Because that inner voice is sometimes alarming. Certain poems allow us to feel things we do not dare admit. And sometimes they make us feel guilty for being happy in a world full of strife. Or maybe we live and work in a city and are in denial about how much nature should be a part of our lives. That's why we say poets speak for us. But they don't. Their work allows us to speak for ourselves. The poems listen.

Here's an example of how a poem listens to its author, using one of my own poems, “Licking the Plate Clean.” Here's the final version:

Licking the Plate Clean

My old dog—his seeing gone, his
hearing gone, his smelling gone—
licks a plate he already has licked
clean as I, once more, kiss Judy
Merrill the summer I turned
sixteen.

This came about one day when I was watching my ancient Norwegian Elk Hound, Flaubert, at his food dish. I wrote the first part of it, and then I wanted something that, like a Frost poem, would tie what I saw in with my own life. I happened to be reading a book by Agatha Christie at the time, and about three-quarters of the way through realized that I'd read it before. I remembered just enough to ruin the surprise of the ending. This is how I incorporated that into the first draft of the poem:

Licking the Plate Clean (original version)

My old dog licks a plate he already
has licked clean and I discover I've
reread a mystery just as the murder
is revealed.

The problem was that I really loved this old dog and I felt that my comparison trivialized his old age. So I thought, what really is comparable from my life?

Here's what's so astounding and I think illustrates what I said about a poem allowing us to hear ourselves in a way that we otherwise wouldn't. I hadn't said, or even thought of, that girl's name in over fifty years. Fifty years! And I probably never would have thought of it if it weren't for this poem. If it reminds someone of when they

were sixteen, or of someone they had a crush on, all the better. We never forget anything, really. It's all there and poems can be the little catalysts that bring these hidden details up to the surface. Or, like dreams, they allow us to deal with troublesome subjects by turning them into something less threatening.

In trying to discover how poetry listens to us, there are two other qualities unique to it that help answer that question. Novels and short stories love the past. Maybe it's because they're longer, but each piece seems to draw on a wider scope of experiences than an individual poem does. And that means the writer has to reach into experiences and observations that have happened over a longer period of time. It's why prose writers use the past tense. Poetry is more comfortable with the present. It is immediate, brief, intense. It may take advantage of poets' and readers' wide experiences, but it lives in the here and now.

When I look at today's contemporary poetry, I see it appealing to people in two ways. First, there is a strong narrative quality to it. It is as if we are entering a miniature movie theater and the poet will tell us a story in a very prose-like way, though shorter and using some musical devices that make it stick in our memory (like a catchy theme song). I'm not criticizing this. In fact that's the way I write. I'm saying that people today enjoy being entertained and have rediscovered that poetry can do this. A second appeal is that it either plugs into our emotions easily or we can easily plug into the poet's. We like poems we can quote at a graduation, wedding or a funeral, poems that offer solace when we feel lonely or courage when we need to strengthen ourselves.

But sometimes poetry asks more of us; it forces us to slow down. It reduces life to essentials in a way few things in our overwrought world do. It is demanding of us, but the result is we leave the experience with a sharpness and intensity that makes our own existence more precise.

What this means in terms of approaching poetry is that we need to set a different kind of expectation. For example, reading a page of prose might take two minutes, therefore reading a half of a page would take one minute. But if that half-page were one of Robert Frost's narrative poems laid out on a full piece of paper, we would probably devote



two or more minutes to it, even though it is half the number of words of a page of prose. That's because we give each line of poetry more "weight" and each word of its line more significance than we do to words of a line of prose.

Now to turn to a poet like Lorine Niedecker, she gives us poems that use twenty percent of the words of the average Frost poem. Rather than zip by them, because they're short, we need to allow them as much time as we would a page of prose or a narrative poem. And attention shouldn't be just to the words, but to what they represent. Most poets, like Lorine, stop us in our tracks. She forces us to block out all the distraction of our frantic, noisy world and experience life. If we are to get anything at all from her poems, it is first and foremost the gift of being deliberately in the moment. It's what Thoreau talked about in *Walden* and what the great teachers of the East have always reminded us of.

Edward Hirsch claims, "Poems communicate before they are

understood...Let the poem work in you as a human experience. Listen to the words and pay attention to the feelings (as opposed to meanings) they evoke." Reading a poem out loud is delighting in language; it's seeing how words taste. A lot of what is written appeals to our intellect. We try to understand the literal meaning of the words. But there is more to our experiences than "mind-things." Poetry seems unique in its appeal to all of those human facets. And we can feel a poem without intellectually understanding it because it's the fusion of three arts: music, storytelling and painting.

Poetry is not a journey to another place. It takes us neither forward nor backward in time. Rather, it's a journey into nearness and immediacy. If we take the time and the effort to make some poems our own, they can awaken us and make us more fully aware of our own lives.



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Lunch Date

The cancer's taking over,
thinning his bones
while relentless tumors bend him,
make movement awkward

as my words.
When I ask how
he handles the pain
he lifts the dewy glass

in trembling hands.
"Martinis are very helpful
to remind me
I'm still alive."

—NANCY JESSE, MADISON, WI

Traffic Tolls at the Lake

I suffer at the calm, low
space I try to navigate above
the crashing, chopping motor-craft
my enormous winged body defies
its weight gracefully
sweeping above the tanned intruder
my bird's eye view just inches
from his impulsive nature
Toll number twenty-six
Drop your bait sir

I peer through black smoke
of the boat landing barbecue
the blowing sand, sucked between
my feathers and their toes alike
near, so near to the coals
landing right by the fire's edge
my blue heron introduction
to the uninvited youth
Toll number twenty-seven
Drop your kabobs kids

I glance on the lakeside camp
and the ladies breakfast in pan
the poles propped, leaning
my stomach not yet satisfied
mealtime fish I expect
summertime living alone
my lakeside collection flights
for weekenders in red
Toll number twenty-eight
Drop your toast gals

—LISA ZIMMERMAN, WOODRUFF, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Warm Body

Someone has made a motion,
So – good – it will last a while, this meeting.
At crowd's edge, buddy to the township's space-

heater, he's happy. Soon in the space
of moments tongues and emotions
will fire, from a tinder of minds not meeting.

At home it was cold and lonely. Here he's meeting
old friends not seen in months, space
and time done in by winter's assault, slow-motion.

He waves through space: *Hey, Heidi, Joe*. He loves these
meetings, his going through the motions.

—RICHARD SWANSON, MADISON, WI

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets 2009 Triad Contest Winners

Vapor

the old men
at the Pow Wow
tap the dirt
that has held them
for how long
they draw circles
hearing fossil rhythms

soon the dirt
will let them go
then scudding leaves
free falling clouds
maybe the beating
of fox arteries

in the end
we become
what we love

the rain starts to fall
it's so much easier
to travel
as vapor

—MARYANN HURTT, ELKHART LAKE, WI
1st Place, Kay Saunders Memorial New Poet Award

Galileo's Heir

My world revolves around you
little god of sun, circa 1975
Revelation changes the fixed earth.

What shall I tell?
That a new sun will drop
into the crib you prepare

That the moon will settle
in the old rocking chair
and sing the stars to sleep

And your daughter—
new star, will turn
you in her universe.

— SANDRA M. TULLY, DELAFIELD, WI
2nd Place, Kay Saunders Memorial New Poet Award

Birth

Taking no breaths
outside of my body,
you were not born
into their world.

Whatever they say
you were alive in my womb.
You widened my girth,
kicked my ribs,
enlarged my breasts,
slowed my gait,
quicken my heart,
companions me these many months.
I named you.
You are

still.

— LUCY ROSE JOHNS, NEKOOSA, WI
3rd Place, Kay Saunders Memorial New Poet Award

Nosferatu's Garden

If Nosferatu were a gardener
he would raise beets
and beets alone,
fang-rooted Rumanian blood bulbs,
vampire of vegetables.

Sucking redness from radish veins
leaving its innards colorless.
Rutabagas, potatoes, parsnips
are no match for its red-robbing wiles.

Only the longer rooted carrot
has managed through the centuries
to cleave to a bit of orangeness.

There is an eastern European wives tale
claiming that before the beet bit
you *could* get blood from a turnip.

Bubbling in a borscht bowl,
the beet could sustain the fabled count
through long cold damselless nights.

— ED WERSTEIN, MILWAUKEE, WI
3rd Place, Theme (Food) Award

More Than Bread

That first night ever in Sweden, lulled
by landscape not so different from Wisconsin's,
enjoying late sun and murmurs of unfamiliar words,
I pick up the hotel menu—and set it down again.

I've seen *champignons* (a few
mushrooms would be nice, I think),
but accompanied by *kykling, grönsaker*?
No more helpful the special *köttbullar
med rödbetor*—the meat and potatoes
(*potatis*, surely?) of language smothered,
though ingenuity, a shameless pointing finger,
and a borrowed dictionary in time uncover
chicken and vegetables, meatballs with beets,
and, yes, potatoes.

Why am I thinking of this thirty years later
in Minnesota, waiting with restless patience
for my summons to take in hard x-rays,
harsh additives that sap rather than feed
my strength? I ponder yet one more vernacular
I'm starting to learn—*grays* now, not *rads*
or *roentgens*—and eavesdrop
on an Asian woman my age, her grown daughter
halting to translate as the nurse explains efficiently
what comes next, assures the younger woman
she won't need to return: "We'll just do
what we need to do, no conversation."

I think of myself, three weeks before,
walking into this unknown
alone but able to ask, to answer,
imagine having entered with nothing
but my name, the need for words
a great emptiness gnawing. I want
to beg the daughter, "Come anyway!
Don't let this woman who nurtured you
come mute to such a slender table.
Let your shared language be her food."

On Christmas morning in Sweden I eat
risgrynsgröt, rice pudding, creamy, sweet,
baked the long night in a slow oven.
I savor the complexity on my tongue.

— NADINE S. ST. LOUIS, EAU CLAIRE, WI
2nd Place, Theme (Food) Award

Visit www.wfop.org for information about
contests, conferences & becoming a member
of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

How to Get Through a Day When All the Talk Is of War

First you notice the mellow afternoon,
with the oak glowing bronze
by your front door and one last bee,
drunk on October and fallen apples,
weaving down your window screen.
Then you might try
frying an onion and lots
of garlic in some olive oil.
While that fragrance is luring
all manner of creatures to your door,
you could puree two cans
of Caribbean-style black beans
with about one half can of chicken broth,
then mix it all together, along
with the rest of the can of broth
to heat through. Add a dollop
of sour cream in each bowl and
serve with red wine, some olives,
a green salad with the hint of oil and vinegar,
and a fresh, crusty French baguette
that you must tear apart in the best spirit
of breaking bread—with an old lover,
or a friend who knew you when.
Alone is good, too,
with Bach and a book of poetry.
Indulge then, enjoy, surrender
to this moment that is all there is,
to the bee, the oak, the falling night,
to this prelude of smoky light,
golden against evening shadows.

— SHARON AUBERLE, SISTER BAY, WI
1st Place, Theme (Food) Award

Monkey Wheel

*Three little monkeys jumping on the bed,
one fell off and broke his head.*

Do not confuse this swing with a hang.
Do not confuse this fall with a drop.

Do not criticize the school for dangerous toys.
Do not criticize the husband for allowing the leap.

Do not compare the crunch of bone to dry leaves.
Do not compare the wet squeal to sing.

Do not kee as this small boy lies broken.
Do not kee as he is borne by another.

Do not covet the thin line between his grip and yours.
Do not covet the fat moment before.

Do not claim you can keep him from harm.
Do not claim this cast won't set forever.

You are the wheel that spun this.
You are the one who broke.

— CATHRYN COFELL, APPLETON, WI
2nd Place, Poet's Choice Award

But You Told Me So

The woods fill with the bell tone burble of a bird I never see.
Imagine regal; purple and red and obsidian, feathers flashing

among colossal leafed hickory trees, flicking after iridescent beetles.
Each one consumed, adds a note to the song, adds a color

to the plumage. I was supposed to believe everything you
whispered with your eyes closed, your limp penis glistening

in the moonlight. Because you would never lie, talking in your sleep.
You would build me a home, plant gardens, grow lilacs, peonies,

every blossom in the book of scented flowers. Then birds and butterflies,
dragonflies and bees would gather in worship, and I would be their queen.

Until you answer the ringing. A volunteer fireman has priorities,
has to follow sirens like Odysseus on odyssey, tied to a mast

made of those very same trees I climbed when I went looking
for things far away. I fell only after I saw a smoke column reaching

all the way to the sun. I wanted wings, dreamed of wings, prayed
for wings. Instead I crawl in leaf litter among centipedes and silent scurries.

— LISA CIHLAR, BRODHEAD, WI
3rd Place, Poet's Choice Award

Eyes

As long as my vision is okay I can go on with this life of mine but I had to think about it when my grandson asked me how did I feel being old knowing that soon I would die and I hadn't given it much thought because isn't that time wasted on the inevitable when there are so many endings that are unknown ambivalent or mysterious like movies that capture me in darkened theaters and I become someone on the big screen finding my lost love before I succumb to the weird virus attacking my writing and escape the gas chamber find water in the outback get to the air raid shelter before that one unlucky bomb lands on my house in a city in flames and one of the lucky ones lying on the marble floor of a bank while a ski-masked thief sprays bullets that miss me and a fire engine arrives with a ladder to reach the balcony I'm standing on while flames devour the building and the rampaging elephant's foot misses me as he stomps through the village and my pitons and ice pick save me from going over the edge of the precipice where the rest of my party has fallen and I'm hanging on to a dangling participle and I sail around the world alone in a fourteen-foot sailboat catching flying verbs to eat raw when I run out of food and fly over the Pacific in a two-engine plane with just a compass a radio and a friend and I parachute out of the plane with two million nouns strapped to my leg and I go to my favorite restaurant for spaghetti where The Mob is waiting to kill me and I'm running through fog on the moors calling Heathcliff Heathcliff while Aunt Pitty-Pat pulls me into her carriage to flee Sherman's March and how troubling movies can be like watching Sophie make her impossible choice or Dr. Zhivago dying of a heart attack as he's about to find his Lara or Hanna damning her life for her personal code and speaking of eyesight the books and poetry I haven't yet read and ones I have read that leave me weepy and drained or reflective and conscious like the last novel I finished that changed the way I think about dogs and talk to dogs and all this and more weighs on me now that I've been asked how I feel about my impending doom and I think I'd better get going so many more books and poems so many more movies it is indeed later than I think.

— ANN ARNTSON, MONONA, WI
1st Place, Poet's Choice Award

Visit VW Online to read two articles you won't want to miss...

The Poetry of Social Media

by Lester Smith

In *The Philosophy of Literary Form* Kenneth Burke famously portrays writing as an ongoing conversation in a roomful of people. Each of us arrives with the conversation already in full swing. We wander the room, listening to bits and pieces of what's being discussed until we find ourselves struck with something to contribute. Other people reply to what we've said, and we respond in turn, thereby refining our understanding and expression, adding our own unique imprint on the communal conversation. In the end, however, each of us has to say goodbye, leaving the conversation in the hands of new arrivals.

This seems an especially wonderful metaphor for poetry, partly because of the oral origins of the art, partly due to the intense way in which poetry illuminates its subject matter. In poetry, the sense of conversation is strong, whether in modern confessional lyric poems or in formalist poetry's inherent awareness of earlier works.

As luck would have it, the metaphor is also excellent for describing social media. Facebook and MySpace pages, Twitter posts, Weblogs, online forums and message boards, even email lists, all are best approached not as a means of advertising ourselves, but rather as an online party to which we have been invited. Treated as a party, social media can do wonders for a poet's exposure.

So put on your party shoes, and let's consider how to best use each of the aforementioned social media for your own poetic cotillion, so to speak.

"My card, sir!"

In an earlier age, all gentlemen carried a card to present wherever they arrived, announcing their presence. Today, business people continue that practice. In effect, a business card is the recipient's first introduction to its owner, the owner's opportunity to direct attention to desired facts and features, instead of leaving things to chance. The online equivalent of a business card is a profile page on a service such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Google, or an "About Me" page on a blog or Web site. Each of these services has a slightly different flavor, as we'll discuss in a moment, but each contains (or allows for) a profile space where you can provide basic facts about yourself.

What should you post? ...

Visit www.versewisconsin.org to find out!

What Is This Thing Called Genre Poetry?

by F.J. Bergmann

First, what is genre literature? Genre is generally defined as fiction that fits into the categories of mystery, suspense/thriller, horror, romance, western, fantasy, science-fiction, and all work that falls into the interstices between them—readership of genres frequently overlap....

...Fantasy and horror poetry antedate science-fiction poetry by centuries, if poems about what was understood to be science fact at the time of their writing are excluded from the definition of SF. One of the oldest poems in English, *Beowulf*, clearly dwells beneath the fantasy aegis (swordsman vs. monster? C'mon!) So do folk tales and myths, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and old ballads, folk songs, and poems too numerous to mention. Edgar Allen Poe is celebrated as the father of horror and its poetry in the U.S. But science fiction had few manifestations before Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and, even later, the novels of Jules Verne, and only came to full flower toward the middle of the twentieth century, at which point science-fiction poetry began appearing. The Science Fiction Poetry Association (<http://www.sfpoetry.com/>) was created in 1978.

Poetry has had a habit of ignoring or transcending barriers that exist in other forms of literature; for example, the question of whether a

poem is fiction or nonfiction, i.e., "true," is normally never raised. By the same token, aspects of genre have long been incorporated into mainstream poetry without raising eyebrows or provoking disclaimers. Love poetry is a traditional part of mainstream poetry, although it rarely enters the rigorous constraints of artifice that define romance fiction's deviation into genre. Mystery and suspense are far less common in poetry, though they do occur; John Hollander wrote a book of thriller/spy poems, *Reflections on Espionage* (with a master spy named Cupcake!), and best-selling mystery writer Martha Grimes wrote a delightful detective novella-in-verse, *Send Bygraves*. But science-fiction poetry is seen manifesting simply everywhere: in 2008 the august *New Yorker* published a wistful, blatantly science-fictional poem, "The Future" (http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/poetry/2008/02/04/080204po_poem_collins), by Billy Collins, which subsequently won third place in the annual SFPA Rhysling Award competition. ...

Read the article, which includes examples of Wisconsin's genre poets, as well as information about publishers of genre poetry and science-fiction conventions held in Wisconsin, at *VW Online*.

Available at www.versewisconsin.org

American Players Theatre's *The Potency of Poetry*

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID DANIEL

by Sarah Busse

American Players Theatre has always had a strong educational component to their mission. In 2008, they received funding to develop and test a new offering in the schools, called "The Potency of Poetry." Through this new program, APT invites students to confront language and discover what it has to offer them. "The Potency of Poetry" goes beyond "decoding" language to make it personal, purposeful, provocative and entertaining for the students. It is a dramatic experience that allows them to explore the printed word's total range of possibilities. "The Potency of Poetry" is offered for students in third grade through high school. The three levels are "The Potency of Words" (elementary), "The Poetry of Me" (middle school), and "The Poetry of Us" (high school). I asked David Daniel to describe the different levels and offerings to me. Learn more about APT, its plays & educational offerings at <http://americanplayers.org>.

In "**The Potency of Words**," we talk about the necessity, the need for words—where they come from, how they got here. It's fun to look at the different stories behind where language came from.

Then we get into how words are created—I pick words I think they'll have fun with, like *nausea*, which comes from the Greek word meaning "seasickness." Now if you have a ship full of seasick Greeks, what happens when they're all seasick at the same time? From there you get *noise*, and *noisome*... The kids really reach back to the roots of those words, where they sprang from, and they enjoy grabbing onto that.

So you're getting them to look behind the words?

No. And this is a question of teaching style. I don't get them to look *behind* something. I show them what's in front of something. Does that make sense?

No, it doesn't. Explain it to me.

Okay, take the word "alphabet." I would say, "The Phoenicians! They developed this way of communicating with each

other, writing things down. They had this symbol for their ox, that looks like a head with antlers, and they called that an alph. They also had a house, and that was their bet. It looked like the hump of a camel. All we're doing is drawing pictures. Now look what happens when we turn that symbol around. *Oh*... that looks like a letter A. And the light comes on. But we bring them to that. We show how words grow and grow into what they are now.

Then we get into suffixes and root sounds—so they're finding those parts of the words, playing games, let me see if I can guess what this word is, what that word is. And we have them create words. The first step in creating a word is identifying, what needs a word?

So they're actually creating a new word of their own?

Out of the need—so what *is* the need? The need is... I'm leaning back in my chair and I fall backwards? How does that feel? Embarrassed... scared... hurt... that needs a word. So they take the suffixes and prefixes, they add things in compound words, they squish them all together and come up with a word. Or...what about when you're really excited and you know the answer? Or you're at the drinking fountain and water splashes up your nose. These are experiences that they have every week routinely, it's going to happen. So let's make a word for it. A word they can use.

Then we've got these new words. How do we record them? How can we remember them? We need to make something – rather than me telling them "This is a dictionary and this is what it's for," they come at it out of a need. It's real for them.

So with this age group you're looking at words, more than particular texts?

Yes, and the *potency* of them. After they've made up their own words,

they've had fun with that, then we give them some vocabulary words, we try to use the vocabulary they're already working on, and I like to try to throw in some vocabulary that's way advanced for them. The teachers will tell me, that's high school. But these kids can see the pieces of each word, this inside-of-that-inside-of-this. So that's the elementary level.

At the middle school level, we have "**The Poetry of Me**," about language and poetry as expression of the self.

Which is very relevant at that age.

At that age, that's all there is. And so on the first day, we look at why there is poetry—why is the writer writing about this? I need to get this out, I need to show it to somebody, I need to look around and see, there's someone else like me too.

And then, second day, we look at how we are involved, as readers, inside the word or the image or the idea. This is something we developed six or seven years ago, called **metaphor theater**. It's been a very successful workshop on its own, which we've had the privilege of teaching at the Kennedy Center. We take a very dense

Under the Ashes

How they thrust order into that world of theirs
With lines
Slicing away along courses
No river ever followed

Someday
Others will come from afar
Dusting, probing, picking at those lines
Revealing
How a people once moved ahead
Always, always ahead
With the precision of a troupe of nightcrawlers
Slicked out on pavement
After a summer rain.

—DENNY MURAWSKA, HUMBIRD, WI

piece of poetic text, like a passage of Shakespeare, where just getting clear what it says is tricky.

So we go into the classroom, and we take a dense piece of text and build it:

*Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
(Romeo and Juliet, Act III, scene 2)*

So Juliet says, "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,"—And here I am in the classroom: Don't tell me what it means. What does it say? Gallop: what is gallop? *It's running...* Just running? Can anyone gallop? Can the track team? *No, no, it's gotta be horses...* Okay, it's got to be horses. What is the sound of gallop? *It's like this* (drums on table). Okay, so now we have gallop great! "Gallop apace..." W h a t

is apace? *It means how fast you're running.* Great, so we get kids up here, three horses, galloping apace. Now, "fiery-footed"—what is that? *It means fast?* Wrong! That's what it means! Tell me what it says? *Their...feet are ... on fire?* Yes! I just want to know what it says!

So you're keeping them at the level of just what it says on the page?

Exactly what it says. It comes out of my experience as an actor. Anyone can tell you what something means. *To them.* Very few people can tell you what it actually says. In metaphor theater, we actually build metaphors using kids to act out every piece of the text... We're working towards a physiological connection—

It gets back to the body. You actually want them to see, feel the physicality—
With our words, where we come from. Language is the body, speaking. Then you

have this huge thing, you have these people acting—and we're theater people so we like levels and staging, they're all around—standing on top of the desks, five people over here doing the galloping horses, and I see this moving, living, breathing, fully rich image all around me. And then I can compare it to Juliet's "Gallop apace you fiery-footed steeds..." and they're being crazy and having so much fun...

And then I say, "Or she could have said, 'I wish it was night.' What's the difference?" *Not* which do you like, or which is easier, but what's the difference. And every time, the students will say, "This way is more rich, it's more exciting"—and I'll catch them and say, "Did you just say this was exciting?"

You actually verbalize that?

Absolutely. It's not to say which version I prefer. It's about making that distinction—the need and necessity. We're always getting at that need. So, then, third day, it's the teaching artist performing poems. Now, by performing I mean... (interrupts himself) I believe that classical poetry, and most modern poetry, with maybe the exception of modern spoken word poetry, lives complete and whole on the

page. All by itself, without any assistance from anyone else other than the reader. But I also believe that a modern reader, especially younger readers, need assistance, need to hear and feel a connection, to model for them what that could be. So the third day, the artist models the connection to the text. And it could be anything from a poem about being locked in a locker looking out through the slats to a poem about having a crush on a boy in science class but he's more interested in science and he doesn't notice me and I feel really

In Line

That man and his daughter,
a competitor in line, slow
or fast, perhaps divorced
with his weekend custody,
each another step forward
toward buying tickets
to a hit movie, nearly
sold out, so I don't care
about his quality time or
daughter's need for a father's
attention, just so they don't
buy the last two tickets,
and I get mine, and they
can return to being strangers
with their own private lives.

—RICK DINGES, LINCOLN, NE

weird and then you do a third poem "I can't breathe and my heart races"—and they love it, asking, who did that one? Sappho. She was writing in BC. And they say, *Wait, what?*

So this moves us from "The Poetry of Me" on to the high school level, "**The Poetry of Us.**" One of my personal missions when I was developing "The Potency of Poetry" was to help kids connect not only with themselves and not only with people like them, or people like them from different places and different countries, but with people like them from different times. That's the big one for me, being a fan of Shakespeare.

It's a hurdle to get over.

Youth looks at anything in the past as a stepping stone to where we are now. Not as whole and complete in itself. They think that we're, now, at the top. Everything now is better than what was yesterday.

I don't think it's only youth that have that attitude.

Good point (laughing).

So when you perform these poems, you're choosing texts by various writers, and you're reading them in front of the class? With the page in front of you?

Some of them. I try to do a mix because, one, I just memorize them and I enjoy

Rose Bushes in Early March

All winter the thorns
were their flowers.
They had them
to themselves.
Soon they will wish
they could turn around
on their stems,
twist themselves
to face inward
instead of out,
welcoming the roses back.

—J.R. SOLONCHE, BLOOMING GROVE, NY

them, and two, part of what we're doing is modeling good interaction with literature. Part of that interaction is memorization, making it a part of you. It's really fun to perform the texts—it doesn't mean we're jumping up and down. Sometimes we are, but think of Billy Collins's "The Lanyard." I love the opportunity to perform that poem. To take time. Students, when they're reading to themselves, often don't know how—it doesn't occur to them—to take time to read it, time to speak it. (He speaks a few lines from the poem, taking plenty of time for emphasis):

*She gave me life and milk from her breasts,
and I gave her a lanyard.*

And they just go *Wow...what was that?* So when we perform a poem, it's not because the poem needs something. I truly believe the poems are complete and whole. It's that the reader, the listeners, need something that they don't know they need.

The way you gave the poem space. If you perform it, then the kids can get it—oh wait a minute. Just because I moved my eyes down the page doesn't mean I actually read it. I didn't give it the time Mr. Collins wanted me to give it.

Right. And then there are some poems that want the opposite of that. They need to be read rhythmically, sped up... And the students, when they hear those rhythms come out, they say, *Wow, when you say it like that, that's different.*

A Crow

A crow
takes off
just ahead
of a swirl
of starlings,
making me
look up to see
if the sun
has broken
into a thousand
pieces to make
that many
shadows of crow.

like poetry, but maybe you don't like this, or that, or this, but you like this one over here. There's always something out there. And like music, there are different genres, different instruments, and like music even within the same genre, the same instrument, there are different performers. And even those performers have their sides. ...so you can always find someone something.

So do they get to react, during your day of performance?

No! No—which is torture! They hate it! They get mad because they can't talk about the poems.

And they suddenly want to?

They want to! And I had to make the decision as the education director, do we do that? Or is that an opportunity for the teacher? We try to leave the talking to the teachers. ...As an actor, we have that spark, that passion. That's our job! To take texts that people think of as "the fiber cereal of literature." Everyone wants the sugar nuke-em pops. No one wants the fiber cereal. The people who say fiber cereal is good for you are the same people who say Shakespeare is good for you. Not a good connection. So we come in and we try to give expression to the life that we think is in that poem, and we do that from hip-hop all the way to Sappho and everywhere in between. And they hear that every poem has its own life and voice.

It really is key for me to find those poems that touch students, that engage them that way. Not every poem engages every student, but it is my belief and my guide that I am reaching out, and every one of these poems lands on someone, at some point. That's all it takes. Just one.

No one ever says, I don't like music. What they mean is, I don't like loud music, or fast music, this music or that music, but there's always a music you like. With poetry, it's not that you don't

The fourth day, now they're coming in, and we tell them, "Okay, we didn't tell you this before, but on Friday, tomorrow, everyone is going to be performing a poem." So Thursday is about me helping them find one. Anything goes. In this particular venue bad poetry is just as wonderful as good poetry, because for us it's about inspiring them to engage with the written word.

Then that last day is a performance, either in the classroom, or in assembly for English Nine section, or it can be a schoolwide assembly, which is the best, because then it's family. And the other students who don't have poetry classes are hearing these students, and so everyone's really engaged. It's great. Because we are applauding—we do the snapping thing—it's goofy, it's fun, and it's not clapping. So we snap after every poem. We don't snap for the poet who wrote the poem, we don't snap for the person speaking the poem. We snap because someone had the courage to get up there and do it. Even if I didn't understand them, it's not a public speaking class. It's not a writing class. It's just a sharing poetry—I've been inspired to share poetry with you. I want to celebrate that.

That act.

That act. Just that act. Yes. Can they speak better? Could be. Should we get a microphone? Maybe. Can you help them enunciate? I sure could. But that's not what I'm here for.

I want to get back to—you said something about doing creative writing exercises. Is that part of this program?

It isn't.

As an actor, you deal with plays... this is a program about poetry. A poem on a page is different from a script...I'm wondering—they do two different things? Or maybe they don't? Could you talk about the two different kinds of texts? In your mind, what is a poem doing versus what is a play doing? Is there a difference there or are they more similar than people might think?

It's a great question. I think—a poem is complete and whole. There certainly are poems that are written to be performed, and there are plays that are written to be read. But I believe that poetry on a whole

stands by itself on the page. That's it. But a play absolutely needs more people. It needs people to speak it, people to watch it.

But a play, okay, I have all of August Wilson's plays at home on my shelf just because I love his language. And I read them, and I just rock out on the language.

But seeing Levi rip open

his shirt to show his scar is very different

from reading (flat toned): "Levi opens his shirt, revealing his scar." (He takes on a deep, resonant voice): "That's why I don't trust the white man." Conviction. Conviction. Hard raw stinking conviction in the air.

Then to get back to poetry, somehow, the poet has to get all of that stinking, sweaty conviction right onto the page?

Yes!

And that's where

poetry is self-sufficient?

I don't think, finally, that "The Potency of Poetry" is really about "poetry" or "Shakespeare" or "literature." It's about language.

Yes, and that's why I am not a poet. That's hard.

That's why you break down those texts, making it all physical again for those kids, to help them see that it is all there, in the language.

That's right. If there was a real—not an appreciation, but an absolute knowledge of the necessity and practicality of the need of language, we wouldn't need to do that. But I don't think, for whatever reason, and however many generations forward and back you care to say this is endemic of, I think students don't engage with language. That's why I don't think, finally, that "The Potency of Poetry" is really about "poetry" or "Shakespeare" or "literature." It's about language. 

Jeremiah

The farmhouse was old, root cellar for storage, cistern for rain water, pump-organ in the parlor. He was old, walked with a cane, ran for public office at 88. Well known in county government, he served as chairman of the board. His letters appeared on the editorial page of the local paper. He spent evenings electioneering, visiting farmers at milking time. He needed a housekeeper: she cleaned and cooked and drank his brandy, replacing what she drank with water. Aware of her fondness for his liquor and her sleight of hand, he kept the good bottle in the granary.

—JANET LEAHY, NEW BERLIN, WI

Scantling

Driving north on a country road
I sight a man
sidling along a second-story beam,
the timeworn studs,
dark skeleton of an old house
in late afternoon half-light;
perhaps a buyer inspecting beams
for rot; a veteran timber framer
eyeing restoration;
or Abenaki ghost
pondering fields
overgrown with snow,
the river showing its teeth.

—DON KIMBALL, CONCORD, NH

a friend has written

when she was nineteen

I used to shout out her name
tonight an owl hoots

below the shore pines
the dune moves slowly inland
grass waves at the lake

two lovers disrobe

they think to hide in tall grass
a hawk shrills above

—MARINE ROBERT WARDEN, RIVERSIDE, CA

Yulie

It's twenty-ten, and Yulie's smile
Is out of date by fourteen years.
She hadn't grown into brassieres

When she was spotted, half a mile
From home, being bundled (someone said)
Into a car.... Above her bed,

Cleaned by Florinda night and morn,
A grade six photograph (her last).
Zealous as any scholiast,

She'd set her sights on I.T., sworn
To make a million, move *mamá*
Out of that slum in Bogotá

To where were peace and gentillesse....
When the police shrugged shoulders, bored,
Florinda scraped up a reward,

Offered it in the local press.
Somebody called: "It's Miguel Mouse;
Back off, bitch, or we burn your house."

Today is Yulie's birthday. Scads
Of parcels (every year two more)
Are mounded on her bedroom floor.

Florinda makes obeisance, adds
The latest Harry Potter tome
Against the day she comes back home.

[Yulie Farfan Chacon was kidnapped
in February 1996, at the age of eleven.]

—PETER AUSTIN, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Blowback

By a Second Lieutenant named Hurtado
The Accomarca massacre is staged,
Who, with his customary bluff bravado
(That blowback is unlikely having gauged)

Bullyrags the detachment, as it rouses
Villagers out of bed at break of day,
Herds them into two contiguous houses,
Begins, with grim delight, to rape and slay....

Among the still warm cinders, Paco's sister
Maria looks for something that was his,
Lights on a hand that's one unbroken blister,
Knows by a scrap of shirt cuff whose it is....

For this, she gnawed her knuckles in vexation,
Crouched in a cellar, under piled-up wood,
Cursing the guns, the screams, the conflagration....
Hurtado, laurelled, earns his captainhood.

[In the Andean village of Accomarca, in 1985, 69
unarmed women, children and elders were mas-
sacred as suspected supporters of Shining Path.
Major Hurtado (retired) now lives in Florida.]

—PETER AUSTIN, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

a poor setting

on a mountain slope
remembering the shivering jetty
& far past all that were the
diamond knuckles of bones rapping
deep within the black mountain.
several bodies were taken in by the trap
of the mine, having fallen
into the blue of its insanity.
fury created mixed colors
& dead omens.
then came the skinny voices
of those crumpled many feet below
earth worms that moved thru luminous features
making flesh a floodlight
that slowly fell into decay.

—GUY R. BEINING, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

Ecliptic

Think of him as the stone:
Some days you're running late.
A novel slant of light
or different height of sun

grazes the side of a church,
and limestone undergoes
alchemy: gold and rose,
in a moment's step from a porch—

That's how it was for them.
Her sun, blood-orange, struck
his life in a shaft of luck
and dazzled back from him

briefly. A tiny change
of angle spoiled the vision;
a change in her position
brought stony dark. Not strange,

the seasonal surprises,
the heart in retrograde.
The shift from sun to shade
depends on where she rises

on any given day.
The light's all wrong these days.
It's moved again. She'll blaze
new paths across the sky.

—MARYANN CORBETT, ST. PAUL, MN

After Seeing Vermeer

Outside the diamond window
damp hills shrug, subsiding
into muscular dreams. Light breaks
into corners & crescents, falling.

Hundreds of children
have prayed here, fidgeting
with nickels in their pockets,
asking not to fail, not
to be left alone.

Dragging a chain
of voices, I stumble to
the window seat. My rosary
is heavy, but with each link
the patterned tiles recede.
Quietness comes home slowly
to my bones, my eyes:
I catch blue moments like feathers
scattered in shards of light.

—RUTH GORING, CHICAGO, IL
visit VW Online for more by this author

If I Am the Dream

I am the predator in the hotel.
If I am that man who smells

of rancid almonds, I will stalk me.
If I am the hotel, I am the reversing

tunnels, cells with secret
abrasions, two-way terrors. If I am

the oak staircase that leads
nowhere, I am accomplice.

If I am the sunken bed, I collude
with the sloughed skin of sleepers.

If I am the sleeper, I am
the insomniac whose therapist

serves cats baked in tin foil.
If I am the undercover, I will

bump my elbow on the landing,
say *Pardon me* in a Cary Grant

voice. There should be no
pardon for what I double-agent.

—JARI THYMIAN, AURORA, CO
visit VW Online for more by this author

Dear Baby Star, Dear Little Astronaut,

Night's asterism in the southeast sky: bluish Vega, Altair, Deneb, a ghostly band of Milky Way (our own galaxy!) smack through the summer triangle's middle—I walk loud with ghosts. The trees breathe crows that collect in roosts and murders. The ventriloquy of waves. In my head I am always trying to move the moon with soft scold swears & jetty happy desecrations. Another asteroid crashes into Jupiter causing a hole the size of Earth. Words keep me—parade me through Jupiter's debris. What will happen now Dear Baby Star, Dear Little Astronaut, now that backwards orbiting planets have been discovered? I build cairns of hope from collected words and lake stones. Morning, a cicada drops from the purple chokecherry. I leave it where it lands, square on my right shoulder, my own strange-dark-winged-lopsided epaulet.

—SUSAN FIRER, MILWAUKEE, WI

The Regency

Sleep splinters into shards of pain: a child in terror: hapless, scalding cries. You page the duty nurse, reporting what you've seen and heard: disturbed; frail ribs like wicker work, back weeping blood. She doesn't blink. "We'll move you straightaway. Don't fret, you're not the first. Place used to be a workhouse years ago. This bit was where the naughty boys got birched.

Some talk of fearful noises, others tell of ghosts. It only happens now and then. Perhaps you're more suggestible than most." You've paid to lose your worry lines, the years beneath your chin. While counting down from ten, watch crimson stripes appear on smooth white skin.

—PETER BRANSON, SOUTH CHESHIRE, ENGLAND

What I did with the insurance settlement

When I became alone, things were quite different. I usually remembered to empty the litterbox and I could wear my Attila the Hun costume whenever I wanted. Someone arranged for direct deposit and home delivery.

I decided to let the cards tell me what to do but all I dealt myself were Minor Arcana which it seems quite oxymoronic to capitalize

and then before I could shuffle the deck again the little people inside climbed out hoisting themselves over the white border

like sewer workers coming out of a manhole except they weren't saying the words you can't say on tv there was just this sort of twittering

but when I listened carefully I was surprised to find that they spoke English in a rather Liverpudlian accent with a Southwestern twang.

Soon they were juggling with their cups and beating each other with sticks and things got much more disorderly than I like my surroundings to be

until the ones with the money paid the ones with the swords to kill all the others and now they're just sitting on the edge of the kitchen table with their little legs dangling.

I tried feeding them lunch meat chopped up into tiny pieces but they don't seem to like it. One or two are missing; I blame the cat.

I'm not sure whether I had breakfast today. I have to watch my diet; I'm allergic to the Krebs cycle. I am made of sugar and spice and jellied gasoline.

Could you blow in my ear please, sir? I think some dirt has gotten into the machinery.

—F.J. BERGMANN, POYNETTE, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

Glass Under Glass

*On Dale Chihuly's glassworks exhibit at
the Phipps Botanical Gardens, Pittsburgh*

Ladies and gentlemen, what you suspect is true:
alien botanists from the Planet Vitreous
have landed, they have parked their Prisms
somewhere behind this crystalline hangar
and seized horticultural control. As you can see,
the Tropical Forest has been booby-trapped
with conglomerations of twistiferics,
curling and looming like cobras—
while the Desert Room is skewered now
with purple spikes and periwinkle spindles,
humbling the resident platoons of pale saguaros.

Watch your step, please, as you pass
the Sunken Gardens, where gaping clamshells,
scarlet and cerise (possibly carnivorous)
are either yawning or trolling for trespassers
to pluck and swallow whole. Still further on,
note that a galaxy of miniature suns and planets
has been set afloat—cosmic flotsam on black,
motionless water, lit from above
by a yellow thistle's exaggerated rays.

Go now. Thank you for coming. Spills of ribbed
and ruffled zinnias will direct you to the door.
But be forewarned: although in here the ferns
and stalks have made way for these immigrants
with their infinite variations on the literal—
the city waits outside, bathed in ordinary sun.

—MARILYN L. TAYLOR, MILWAUKEE, WI

Ode To The Nation State

As the nation we had belonged to was destroyed, things that had
once seemed accomplished now needed to be done all over again.
Boundaries needed to be drawn, allegiances proposed, forged, and
broken, kings elected and presidents crowned. But first, before doing
anything, we would need to compose a new national anthem so we
could discover through its various interpretations who we are. I came
up with the following, the easy part, the words. Now who would supply
the melody?

If we were to rest a moment here, in this field
of ideas and dogs, we wouldn't be able to sleep
without waking up hungry.

If we could paint the millions of souls
loosed from the wreckage of our orthodoxies
would parrots then land on the shoulders of scribes?

—GREG GRUMMER, SHOREWOOD, WI

Consider the Mirror

Take the mirror. Steal it,
fingers bleeding, leaving a trail
clearer than breadcrumbs.
Broken it's better, it's more.

Hold onto the mirrors. Clasp them
in the purse. Reach in, reach out.
Numb everything else.
Outnumber yourself.

—JESSY RANDALL,
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Morning Fog

She was torn on whether to wear
the blue of the sky or the blue
of the ocean. She tried each on
for a day in public and all her
friends and relations declared
she looked better in sky
as they were fascinated
by the white, animal-shaped clouds
that constantly crossed her irises.

—KENNETH P. GURNEY,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Panic

The room's too small. The lights are dim.
A black mouth yawns up lazily.
Voices float like music, long and thin
As kite strings lost in August haze

The black mouth's languid yawning sings
A bright and distant canticle.
A kite lost in the August haze brings
Voices from some other place. The pull

Of water underfoot. The bright and distant
canticles
And thunder waves that wash away the fear
The voice from somewhere else that pulls
The water, sand and faces far, then near

The thunder waves that rush between the ears
Your name comes on a swell, a distant call
A voice that pulls you back from there to here

The lights are dim.
The room seems very
very small.

—PETER SHERRILL, FORESTVILLE, WI

Checklist

remember shoe horns ✓
bathe peonies ✓
sprinkle red maple samaras
 over head ✓
put out people on fire,
 if they want ✓
visit the boulevard of gold
 thoughts ✓
dust off the academy of
 ancient loves
straighten your dunce cap
 of light ✓
let life prepare us for ourselves ✓
avoid cathedral Boo hoo ✓

—SUSAN FIRER, MILWAUKEE, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

The Uncapping

A friend once told me this story
as I was on my way to a wedding.
It happened deep in the woods
on a ridge somewhere west of where
he lived: a woman he once loved
led him there down path after path,
reading signs only she could see,
to show him a secret place in the earth,
shown to her many years before.

It was capped with a nondescript rock
no one would have ever noticed,
which still took all her small weight
to push aside showing the entrance
to an ancient beehive chamber.
Inside: a circular stone wall
rose from the earthen floor, then arced
inward to form a dome making it
seem impossible to scale back up.

He couldn't *believe they climbed in*,
so that small opening—its light—
became the only link between them
and the outer world, that they stayed
waiting in the dark, as long as it took,
to see how the buried past hunched
its earth and stone shoulders over them,
and then, they made the difficult
climb out into the rest of their lives.

—TIM MAYO, BRATTLEBORO, VT
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Each

All of her familiar love words, the ones he knew because she had given them to him, were threaded on the air as he worked to return them. His tongue grew heavy and his lips parted but wouldn't form the "I" and "ove" sounds he knew she wanted. She'd had a map while searching for him, knew of a small place at the top of the hill where he would appear eventually if she waited quietly. But he hadn't seen her coming, hadn't prepared for her arrival, hadn't counted the moments on his fingers, toes, the strands of his hair. And when he left her, it was in a used bookstore where she was wrapped in other stories. *We either hear the language of love in our environment or we do not. Either we learn the verbal symbols necessary to relate with each other or we do not.* He had meant to return for her but tripped over excuses and excuses, kept himself from going back to where he had already been when he was lost.

Or.

He had gone first when they were trading promises, spelling out the letters of his love.

—MOLLY MAGESTRO, MILWAUKEE, WI

Late Life Love

They like the new them, two into we,
their synchronized mission, him down the street
for Chilean Syrah, her 'round the corner for brie.

They've taken to foreign travels, the zest
of runway takeoffs. Also domestic excursions,
hops to the bedroom, for naps and the rest.

Their kids are calling: Ca-ching, ca-ching.
Neither one answers, everything's ready:
The veal Prince Orloff, the bubbly's zing.

—RICHARD SWANSON, MADISON, WI

Engagement Photo, Miami, 1931

John Jarrett Clinton & Natalie Blanche Mathews

On Their Own In Lyme Regis

The single time she stretched her hand
to stroke his cheek is at the chapel
before his body tumbles, burns. After he is ashes
the mourners linger, mingle, scatter,

several to gather in brassy pubs off the High Street
where they hoist a pint, throw darts, tease out
the secret of a knee. Novice couples practice their patter;
by last call they shag in car parks or under the boardwalk.

Most of the bereaved board the London train,
some to follow the Sheffield-Bristol match alone
in cold flats. Others shuffle through porn or flush a lover's letter
down the loo. On the Isle of Dogs a foghorn groans.

—RICHARD MERELMAN, MADISON, WI

Divorce Poem #99

I thought I knew everything
there was to know about Anna Nicole
Smith until the *E! True Hollywood Story*
in which Howard Marshall's nurse
says Anna wouldn't sleep
in the same bed with her husband,
even for a nap, because he peed himself.
The nurse was disgusted with Anna
for being disgusted with Howard.
Now that you're gone, I'm relieved
that you'll never put my humanity on trial
when you're old. That I'll never have to push you
in a wheelchair or feed you with a spoon.
You thought I loved everything about you.
You thought you knew everything
there was to know about me. Go ahead,
you can believe your own story.

—DENISE DUHAMEL, HOLLYWOOD, FL
visit VW Online for more by this author

*My mother never forgave my father
For about almost everything,
But especially for leaving her so broke,
Her hands, raw from all those washings,
You'd think she lost her skin.
What was it like to stand
Arm in arm back then,
Knowing nothing of where you'd end,
Eyes looking more into
The camera than into each of you.*

*But even more,
For turning into an old infant
All puke and nonsense, the same
Poor genes I suppose that ride around
In my poor brain, synapses leaping
Out into space so often, sometimes
It seems like I'm slowly moving
Back into what I always was.*

*Now both lie in each other's grave,
Ashes drifting down onto
An old mahogany box
Of use to no one anymore
Only a black flower rack
Should any one of us come by,
But that would be almost never
Now that you're nestled
Into a long dark wormy sleep.*

*The screaming has subsided some,
At least for awhile, and the wild babies
Who crawled around the nursing home
Have found someone else to craze
For now, though we get postcards
Asking where you've been and when
You'll come back and sing those hymns.*

Yet all I wonder about

*Is how the two of you
Ever found something warm &
Lovely to talk about, that's all
I ever wonder about, and
As I hold this rusting
Photo frame, see you smiling,
I wonder how long it will
Take for me to find when I'll
Be forever inside the two of you.*

—DEWITT CLINTON, MILWAUKEE, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

June Evening

On the diminishing horizon of farms,
a curtain of rays falls coppery
from a long rift in rain clouds.

We stop at a bridge to watch the sun
pulse down, maraschino-red, throwing out
prisms in the darkening canopy.

Nine o'clock and home, the sky still
rioting smoke and salmon. Last light caught
in florets of the miniature lilacs.

We pull plastic lawn chairs up near
the bridal veil to breathe in the mealy
honey of cascading nonpareil blossoms.

The porch-light nebula's swarming gold:
Behind it, that small infinity the house
holds for us, in which to love and wonder.

In the garden, leaves are turning from
translucent to opaque, the pine boughs'
needle-clumps black stars in the early night.

—THOMAS R. SMITH, RIVER FALLS, WI

June

These nights, beads of humidity drizzle from every star. Even the self-righteous rosebushes seek relief from the heat, recruiting their overeager thorns. One morning I took a pair of shoes out of the washer. A half-dead toad was inside, drunk from the spin cycle. The wind bent the cornstalks like caterpillars, the rustling husks a familiar lullaby to the possums. I peeled him from my shoe like a squashed worm—held him up to my face, eyes flickering lavender confusion, skin oozing detergent and softener, a puddle of rainbows in my daydreaming hands.

—ROBYN KOHLWEY, GRAFTON, WI

Duke

The four-by-fours of his square cage
sealed with leftover hemlock green,
the wire checkerboard through which no child

should thrust a limb, and behind the wire
the gaunt black lab, pink tongued and volatile,
fangs wedged sleepily in the muzzle.

Dad dressed in khakis Saturday morning,
drove Duke to the parkway and hurled
a pocked rubber ball wet with slobber

to exorcise the menace that had gathered
in the bloodless life of a cooped-up hunter
trotted out once a year to a duck blind.

One afternoon, Duke ripped a hole
in the neighbor boy's arm.
Dad drove Duke to the country

unloaded him on a farmer, lean as a band saw,
one metal tooth gleaming above the chin stubble—
who put him down.

Workmen wrestled out the cage, enlarging
the backyard, which we filled with wild play,
perhaps to distract ourselves from the sudden chill.

—DAN BACHHUBER, ST. PAUL, MN
visit VW Online for more by this author

At Sunset

The dying cherry tree stands in rays of the setting sun.
Wind stirs the leaves on the branches still leafing.
You were brave to venture out
from the hard reserve of the cherry seed.
Brave to stand in one spot
through all the seasons
and let your fruit be plucked by birds.
Brave to be.
You'll go on living and dying a while longer.
The light won't forsake you,
though what does a cherry tree
mean to the light?
Above or below what we can see,
maybe everything is orchard.

—THOMAS R. SMITH, RIVER FALLS, WI

The Rabbit

I crowd my hole of moist dirt,
Wary of the hawk's eyes
Rip of dog bark, heavy
Fragrance of the old lady with a cane.

Outside the world is green
Grass and brazen action.
My friends browse and dart;
The fence bargains with our play.

All day long the same.
What's that cunning circle in the sky?
Whose vision charges down the lane?
When will my happiness be stolen?

Standing boulder still,
I pretend not to see the brutal wings
Calmly walking the sky.
Foolish bird, I know you.

—DAN BACHHUBER, ST. PAUL, MN
visit VW Online for more by this author

Under a bushel

Under a bushel
she hid the moon,
the neon city in a candle,
the year colored green, yellow, red.
A white-black wave of flash
exposed the switch,
and dimming the fire
of the night beam
she came, blinded, to the bright
and stepped into the ray.

—MARILYN WINDAU, SHEBOYGAN FALLS, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Henhouse Ethics

Just like the old man had shown us
grab them by the heads
three quick spins and a pop of the wrist
broke their necks. But sometimes
the heads didn't come off so easily
hanging grotesquely at their sides
as they ran blindly, flapping their wings
smacking chicken wire or shooting
through the autumn garden
thrashing through cornstalks.
But we sure didn't anticipate
the one that veered across the lot
into Mrs. Boswell's backyard
spouting blood that splattered
her freshly painted white shed
like an abstract expressionist
but I tried to explain anyway
fast-talking the old man
as he pulled the thick, black belt
out of its loops.

—David Gross, Pinckneyville, IL

Old Women Are The Best Travelers

Old women move from country to country like tireless trams.
They crawl up hills, traverse the lakes, and greet each other passing by.

On the move they keep on moving. Without a thought to hold them back they move to
rap and bugle calls.

Old women wish old men would stay in their own countries and play their games
without sending their children to war.

—MaryEllen Letarte, Lunenburg, MA

Drew late at night

My adult son enters, hot wound like copper in a motor
Running way too fast,
Words bursting forth in high frustration
And stories to tell, but only halfway,
And heartbroken hopes and fallen plans of
New cars wrecked and time to study gone and the leisure of a good wife's kiss
All scrambled by the balky customer
Quirky register eating its tape
Sick assistant leaving just before the bottom fell
My son holding the bag, mopping the floor, rebooting the program and coming late again,
Unplanned, out of control, and nothing he can do.

I know him then, I know the clear quick moment when
He comes to me and I hold him, the love I feel
As stilling as the love I ever felt with any woman I have
Held and known as holy.

I tell him how to breathe, to take in
Through his nose and out his mouth, and make the mouth last longer, how to
Count it out in rhythm which will calm him.
I watch him, breathing, like a
Child who hears the newest secret
And repeats it, over.
So dear. This is my child. He is not now too old or wise to be with me,
And me this little good advice.

—John Dubord, Milwaukee, WI
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Fortune Told

Nebraska lay before them like an open palm under a gypsy's eye, the Missouri River traced like a vein
across that wrist. They raced down the bridge from Iowa, this lifeline radiating out into the fingers, Omaha,
Lincoln, far beyond, out to the very tips, a town called Wilbur, little more than a thumb nail town.

Wheat silos arched higher than any he'd ever seen back home, narrow streets clogged with center
loading lanes. Hemmed in by high, historic homes, too valuable to eminent domain, fast forward to the future.

Stir in a pinch of Texas size heat. Blown straight up off the Gulf coast. A recipe for sweat: only breathe.
Way too much for an aw shucks, home grown Wisconsin boy.

Yet this was where they sought sensation, the nerve endings for travel-fogged bohunk brains. Lincoln
was an all night episode of "Cops." Those blaring sirens jerked him wide awake from fitful motel slumbers. He
felt his father's spirit in the room that same night. As if they'd finally made peace with the past by coming to a
place he'd never been.

—G. A. SCHEINOHA, EDEN, WI

Fallen Angel

It worried you, though the church
was deconsecrated, St. Michael
first cracked then fallen face down
in weeds, monumental, far heavier
than a man, your warrior archangel,
wings broken, stone sword lost:
you called the priest of the nearest
active parish, you called the diocese,
no one seemed able to approach the
difficulty, then he was no longer
seen

—KELLEY WHITE, GILFORD, NH

Hafiz has never seen a frog

or heard the word polywog.
He does know tadpole. They had eggs
in the science room and then tadpoles
and one was starting to have little legs
and lose its tail but Jamal killed it.
Put Play-Doh in the fish bowl.
I tell Hafiz all frogs were once tadpoles.
Shock: every little bittle one? Yes
Every tiddle niddle middle liddling one?

—KELLEY WHITE, GILFORD, NH

My Prayer of Becoming

Save me from the purposeful life
the narrowed path of have to and should

Uncage me at the crossroads
Let the unmapped guide me

Kindle my dry wood in scarlet
Flame my horizons in sparkly orange

Unmask my whorls my ridges
Let me savor all my seasons

Cast off my backpack of stones
Let chimes replace my chains

Allow my sharps my broken chords
Unshackle me from forms

Let me leap like Solomon's gazelle
Dance like a Sufi Dervish

Unclamp my wings untether me
Like Pegasus let me soar

—MARY JO BALISTRERI, WAUKESHA, WI

Ginkgo Tree

In spring long after others green,
knobby buds, protecting frail shoots, con-timed,
open into pale fanned parallels,
each new limb defining surrounding space.

Dali and Giacometti captured
your spatial lessons.
Naturalists, tracing your lineage,
find you rooted when upthrust masses divided,
witness at dinosaurs undoing,
resistor of man's harvest of pollutions.
Botanists pry the secrets
from your millennial cells.

In autumn after others fade,
suddenly,
below your bared limbs
heaped fans,
golden largesse.

—JOAN MARELLA, PRINCETON, IL

Ice

Every year, some schoolmate's drunken,
coked-up father slips through the sheet.

His family's income, his promises
to improve, everything about the man
disappears in cold white and blue.

It isn't luck, or the Fates.

It isn't a hungry earth cracking open.
They get drunk, drive a truck onto a lake,
slide around and cheer
throwing cans and spinning in circles;
then the ice breaks, and the truck sinks.

And after the last air is squeezed
from their lungs, the water calms,
and nature goes to repairing the hole.

Meanwhile, before the man is found,
his kids eat breakfast and get on the bus.

And every year, after the truck and man
are hauled up from the bottom,
all the children adopt the mourning attitude
that belongs to those boys or girls
while the adults share memories
as if they had lost their hero at sea,
noting how his age stands out
among the Obituaries column

buried behind ads
for their estate sales and church events.

—JON BOISVERT, CORVALLIS OR
visit VW Online for more by this author

X.

He used to walk only
on the edges of sidewalks
a sort of haphazard
dance of half running
half tripping but never
quite actually falling
each step was made
to catch the boundary
between safe and street
of course he was
meant to fall but
in keeping with his
unreliability he never
once kissed the pavement.

—CHLOE N. CLARK, NEW LISBON, WI

Introduction to Poetry Workshop

The young professor enters the classroom
on the first day of workshop, levels his best
crazed Robert Lowell gaze on a thin girl
twirling her cherry-red hair, crossing her legs
at the ankles and trying to channel Sylvia Plath.
Like a set of soft lips, the professor's last book
waits in her bag beside her own scribbled poems.

The young professor turns to the window and sighs,
as the class watches like patient pigeons
picking up crumbs on a trail toward a loaded gun.
"Always keep the poetry out of the poem," he says
as the gaggle of undergrads grab their pens,
carve this commandment into their notebooks
and wait on his next syllable, his next blast of breath.

—NATHAN GRAZIANO, MANCHESTER, NH
visit VW Online for more by this author

Back Beat

One tires of tears
 even hummingbirds'.
They evaporate so quickly
into what has been,
 condense again
into snowflakes of *je ne sais quoi*.

All I know is that there is air
 in heaven, dissolved in flood waters,
trapped in certain unleavened breads
 that smolder into toast
 like innocence into moments
 of experience.

And when birds find a crumb
 in city sidewalk cracks
 they peck at it
with beaks that could break bone,
 something you could actually feel.

—JOSEPH RADKE, GREEN BAY, WI

On The Care and Feeding of Avocados

Once, regret was my subject. Outside the window, autumn
drew decline in slim colors and broad lines. Spring was
nothing but an elegy for frigid solitude.

Now, there is a tree outside my window. All trees are outside
my window. Except if you count the three avocado plants you
sprang from pits, post-guacamole we ate with oily chips and
pecan pie the night you slapped me, not hard. It seems now
almost tenderly.

The avocados withered. It was bound to happen (I Googled it
later) unless you cut them let them grow, cut them again.

—JOSEPH RADKE, GREEN BAY, WI

Snapper

—for Franco Pagnucci's *Ancient Moves*

Sir Hand-to-Hand, Sergeant of the Guard, gruff in plate mail.
Crabwalks stiff on short joints, claws-first. Stands up to grub out
of black iron skillet. Grunts at the space where a finger's missing.
Growls, *Who cares?*

A bale of barbwire, he suggests inbreeding. Acts guilty, caught-out
like Nixon. People sweat when he grins, itch when he drools through
broken teeth. *We jolly him up*, they wonder. *He won't act the way he
looks?*

—DAVID STEINGASS, MADISON, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

Yard Sale

I am always looking to make use
of things of no use. Melting
an Elvis record to a popcorn bowl,
plastic beads to a coaster.

My eyes over folding
tables like smooth
stones over lake water.

The disparate objects
unified by the dust,
by the sloughing off
of old skin, for years.
Women's hands
full of quarters.

Baby clothes on the driveway,
unfolded, sifted through.

I know the dual purposes
of things, how dead
leaves can be moths
when you walk through
on the pavement, how quiet
can be tree roots growing,
can be worms through soil
with their dividable bodies,

how a kidney can be a heart,
so that when you feel the dull ache
of stones, you call it love.

—RENEE EMERSON, LOUISVILLE, KY

Ownership

Taking
no notice of me,
my living room furniture
makes good use
of the dusk's darkening shadows
and disappears from sight,
like the skin

I thought permanently mine
even as it vanished
from my body
when I was teen-young
and so sure I'd soon
possess a house
and all its furniture.

—ROBERT K. JOHNSON, NEEDHAM, MA

Hand-Me-Downs

Dead men's clothes haunt my closet,
Dick's sport coat, Paul's slacks,
and Grant's sweaters, Art's high
winter boots hang in the garage.
Widows never give me anything,
they offer to my wife, a go-between,
with words like, *Maybe this will fit.*

I often wear a blue whachamacallit,
a pullover with half-zipper front,
once worn by my friend, Grant.
He didn't give it to me,
his widow gave it to my wife,
and my wife said, *Try this on,*
and I asked, *Where'd you get this,*
and she said, *It was Grant's*—nice
fit, so I wear it while walking,
which makes me think of Grant.

The day he died, I crept out, left
his room, unable to watch him
shake, tossing in bed, out of it,
trying his best to die with dignity,
me, angry, cursing *sotto voce*,
asking if God was on holiday,
and our wives chatted on and on,
as though we were just visiting.

—JOHN L. CAMPBELL, BROOKFIELD, WI
visit VW Online for more by this author

Proximity

After too many washes
the dress has become as translucent
as my skin.

The blessing would have been
to touch that skin, to have
been born a creature that could
withstand sunlight.

Then been able to forget
how soon we will no longer
need that dress.

—NYDIA ROJAS, MIDDLETON, WI

Walking on the Ceiling

A curious child, who's
supposed to be
taking her afternoon nap,
inches forward
on her back
until her head rests
near the side of
her mattress where
she gazes wide-eyed
at an upside-down bedroom,
envisioning her quiet,
stealthy tip-toes
tickling the chilled
surface of smooth
ceiling plaster. She'd
chase scared spiders
from pristine webs
near the ivory doorway's
crisp upper ledge
then grab the end
of a ceiling-fan paddle,
spinning it fast
like a metal arm
on a merry-go-round
that disappears
in cooling whirs
of color and wind.

—MARIE LOEFFLER, WAUKESHA, WI

Divining the Future While Staring at a Half-Empty Glass on the Kitchen Counter

First to go will be the dusting—
no one plays the piano anymore
anyway. The pictures on the wall
will hang askew from many years of
doors banging shut
but I'll hardly notice because
my head tilts just right now

I mean then.

The single bowl on the kitchen counter
can be rinsed quickly when the need arises
and if I lift the edges of the garbage bag
I'll likely be good for another few
tenuously precious days.

Forgive me, these, my housekeeping sins,
I will whisper to the stained carpets
and graying walls
while padding through dim rooms
paper towel and bottle of Windex in hand
opening portholes
to a sea of uncut grass waving
in the cool November breeze.

—ROBERT NORDSTROM, MUKWONAGO, WI

Walking On Ice Fields

That
cracking

settling
beneath your feet

and away,
elongated crunch

lets you know
you're walking on nothing.

You drop
six inches,

convinced
it's an

immense
crevasse;

watching the
fracturing,

an avalanche,
rumbling back for you,

a low-flying jet
fast approaching;

acres of ice
dropping,

if you're lucky,
only a foot

or two,
echoing you.

—DON KIMBALL, CONCORD, NH

Recipes, License Plates & Greased Pigs: Titling Your Poem



by Angela Rydell



On a chilly winter afternoon in 2002, I entered a crowded lecture hall on Warren Wilson's campus and grabbed one of the last remaining seats. The room was filling up fast with curious MFA students excited to take Matthea Harvey's class on titling poems, a class with its own intriguing title, "Recipes, License Plates & Greased Pigs." She had us hooked before it even started.

At that time, Harvey had a first book out entitled, *Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form*. Clearly, this was a poet who had a thing for intriguing, quirky, provocative titles. And, as I knew from reading her work, Harvey's titles weren't just quirk for quirk's sake, but titles that enlarge a poem as you read it—often in surprising ways. Consider this sampling from her first collection: "Nude on a Horsehair Sofa by the Sea," "Paint Your Steps Blue," "The Festival of Giovedi Grasso," "Objective Fatigue," "More Sketches for a Beautiful Hat," "The Gem Is on Page Sixty-Four," "Image Case by a Body Intercepting Light," and "One Filament Against the Firmament."

After reading these titles, it's probably no surprise to hear that Matthea Harvey's class was unlike anyone else's I had taken, just like her poems were unlike anyone else's I had read. Quirky, distinctive, intricate, full of unexpected insights and unusual angles into familiar—and unfamiliar—ideas. She's a poet who's keenly aware that the first thing a reader sees is the title, so why not make titling itself an art.

If titles are the hand you extend in friendship toward your reader, as Ted Kooser says, then Matthea not only made friends with us all, but she revealed a secret handshake, and gave us clues on how to master it. She classified five types of titles, each labeled with an insightful, humorous metaphor:

License Plates: The classic title, one that gives important identifying information—speaker, setting, etc. (simple, direct).

Spot Lights: Titles that highlight one image in a poem (a white line, a clown's nose...). These titles spotlight an image or an idea.

Helium: Titles that expand the scope or dimension of a poem—often theoretical, philosophical, metaphorical.

Greased Pigs: Titles that evade obvious connection with the poem, yet still intrigue. As Wallace Stevens wrote, "A poem must resist the intelligence, almost successfully."

Not Wearing a Tie: Untitled poems. "Omissions are not accidents." —Marianne Moore

These metaphors provide an accurate, unique and memorable perspective on titling. Since taking her class, I have taught my own students how to operate a spotlight, make a license plate, release helium and handle slippery greased pigs, and enjoyed watching them delight in their new discoveries. I like to introduce the classifications after we've met for a while and have read enough poems to compare and contrast titles. What's the scope of William Stafford's helium title "Traveling through the Dark?" What was W.B. Yeats spotlighting in

his famous "Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven?" How does Emily Dickinson get away with not wearing a tie? Why does Elizabeth Bishop use a license plate title as simple as "The Fish?" How does Wallace Stevens finesse a greased pig title like "A Postcard from the Volcano"?

The classifications require you to think about the power a title has to focus a poem, to tease out relationships with images, sounds, metaphor and more. You can do this with poems you read, as well as with poems you write. Take a collection you love and puzzle out the types of titles you see. Take a handful of your own poems; see if you have any tendencies one way or the other.

My students often ask if there's one type of title that's better than the rest. Not necessarily. Each poem needs the title that's right for it, and it alone, and the right one may come from any of the classifications. Harvey herself likes to keep her readers guessing. Greased pigs and helium abound, but she's not shy about a title as direct as "The Oboe Player" or "Ornamental." Sometimes, though, titles that seem simple on first glance tease out complex meaning upon further investigation.

But what about the origins of those complex titles? Did a title like "Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form" come after complex, painstaking work on the poem? Often, it's actually the opposite. In an interview in *Tarpaulin Sky*, Harvey revealed that many of her poems are written after she comes up with the titles. And where do the titles come from? Anything from "something someone said ("I May After Leaving You Walk Quickly or Even Run" and "Bird Transfer"), [to] a phrase [that] appeared out of nowhere in my head ("Dinna Pig" and "Strawberry on the Drawbridge"), a dream (the title of my first book, *Pity the Bathtub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form*), a piece of art ("The Festival of Giovedi Grasso")."

When considering titling your own work, experiment with the different types and stay open to discoveries. And, as Matthea Harvey herself does, keep your eyes and ears open for intriguing phrases that inspire you.

SUGGESTED EXERCISE

A fun exercise, a version of which Harvey had us do in class, involves pairing up with a friend. For the first half of the exercise, bring five short poems, blank out their titles, and swap. You each fill in the blanks, creating your own titles for the poems the other provided. Then share the titles you've invented, and reveal the originals. What type of title did you invent? How is it similar/different than the one the poem originally had? For the other half of the exercise, do the opposite—give each other each five titles, with the poems "blanked out." Choose one of the five titles and write a draft of a poem based on it. Then have your partner reveal the original poem. How is your draft similar or different than the original? How did the title function for each version? 

Saterstrom, Selah, "Q & A: Matthea Harvey," *Tarpaulin Sky*, August 2006.

Delavan, Wisconsin

Barnum and Bailey left our town famous—
Circus Capital of the World. In the Old Square
a bronze giraffe reached out toward the belly
of the water tower, sniffing it for leaves.

The circus gave us a Hall of Fame for clowns,
its walls lined with amber photographs of men
with wide smiles painted over their faces,
a tiny hat perching on one's head like a bird.

The circus left railroad cars here for dead.
One has been resurrected as a dark tavern
where a nine-fingered bartender sells bottles
through a drive-thru window until midnight.

The circus left with Houdini, who had
run away from his home in Appleton,
destined for the circus town.
It carried him to New York where he stayed.

When the Circus Capital title was transferred
to Milwaukee, the statues became orphaned,
the Hall of Fame a furniture store.
The lion's head drinking fountains lost their paint
and faded into ghosts.

The circus also left a great monster here:
one winter, an elephant too sick to travel
any further was drug onto the lake and left
for the April thaw to bury it.

When the ice around it cracked and opened,
the ice-burnt giant floated slowly
toward the muddy bottom, and the bluegill
gawked at God descending upon them.

Rays of sunlight burst through the hole and sharpened
the body's expanding shape: the wide ears
unfolded like wings, and the long, thawing trunk
curved out peacefully, like a benediction.

—JON BOISVERT, CORVALLIS, OR
visit VW Online for more by this author

Eros The Archer

Sorrow does not pay the bills.
And money never cries.
There sits The Pacific Ocean off
To my left. Bleeding in her sleep.

The bus driver honks the horn.
But the sea does not look up from
Her book of dreams. And my life is
Out there underneath the glass ceiling.

Giving me back my dreams
The Pacific Ocean does not lie.
It presents the case of the ever-evolving
Cell. I turn away & note the flat

Surfaces of summer. The dead look
Of waterless sand. The clean grip of
Sky holding the flat ground to its place.
Cars & women & trees.

The omniscient postal trucks
Bearing the love letters of the nation
To the blessed eyes. And the telephone
Booths on the sides of roads.

Opening the lines of human speech.
Today is the first day of August, 2008
Before Eros the earth was dead.
But Eros The Archer let fly his arrows.

And the earth became instantly ripe
With trees & flowers & grass.
Life, chlorophyll, began to sing
Inside the veins of the green world.

—RL GREENFIELD, SANTA MONICA, CA

Matthea Harvey

author of *Modern Life*

Matthea Harvey's most recent book of poetry, *Modern Life*, won the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2008 as well as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is the author of two previous books of poetry, *Sad Little Breathing Machine* (a finalist for the Academy of American Poets' James Laughlin Award) and *Pity the Bathub Its Forced Embrace of the Human Form*, (winner of Alice James Books' New York/New England prize). *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake* (a fable for adults and children), illustrated by Elizabeth Zechel, was published in 2009 by Tin House Books. An erasure of a Charles Lamb biography, titled *Of Lamb*, illustrated by Amy Jean Porter, will be published by McSweeney's in 2011. Matthea teaches poetry at Sarah Lawrence and lives in Brooklyn. Visit <http://www.mattheaharvey.info/index.html>.

Wendy Vardaman's review of *Modern Life* is available at <http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2008summer/harvey.shtml>

WV: You spent much of your childhood in Wisconsin, and your husband is, I think, from Fond du Lac, but there's a kind of placeless/everyplace feel to your writing—it's nowhere & everywhere at the same time. What sticks with you, if anything, from your time in Wisconsin?

MH: Yes, from age 8-18, I lived in Whitefish Bay, WI. I think my childhood in England is more apparent in the landscapes that are in my poems, at least "In Defense of Our Overgrown Garden" is based on our house in England, and some of the characters in that poem actually lived in my village (Marnhull). That may be the closest I've come to autobiography in a poem! One recent poem that has a distinct, if hidden, Milwaukee inspiration is the poem "You Never Seemed So Human," a poem about two people getting married while they're also being abducted by aliens. My husband, Rob (who is indeed from Fond du Lac) and I got married at Calatrava's Milwaukee Art Museum, and there really is a wonderful UFO feeling to that main hall space. You've made me realize that I haven't really mined Milwaukee to the extent I might...stay tuned for poems including Winkie's (a favorite dime store), rabbits dashing through sprinklers, and walking

to school with wet hair and arriving with a headful of icicles.

WV: I love the idea of you being biaccental (English/American), as well as bilingual (German/English). What effect has that had on your poetry? Was it difficult to move from England to Milwaukee?

MH: Is that a real term? If not, how lovely that you invented it. It's really hard to know how my writing might be different if, for example, we had stayed in England, or moved back to Germany. All that doubling though may have affected my interest in hybrids, which really came out in *Modern Life*. I've also recently noticed that my children's books sound more English than my poems. None of us wanted to move to Milwaukee particularly, so yes, it was hard.

WV: Do you still have family in Wisconsin? What, if any place, feels like home to you?

MH: My parents live in Bayside and a large percentage of Rob's immediate and extended family lives in Wisconsin. My parents' house feels like home, because it's where we go for the holidays and because of all the traditions that we play out there (reciting poems in front of the Christmas tree, etc.), but New York felt like home to me the first time I came here.

WV: Do you notice differences between the poetry of different American regions—for example, New England versus West Coast versus Midwest? Do we write "regionally" at all anymore, or has the internet, and greater mobility as a culture, erased those differences or drawn new ones?

MH: I think there are people who do write regionally, because that's their subject matter—the way the sunset looks over a strip mall, memories of flirting at the ice rink, waking up to a deer at the window... Up to now, that hasn't been mine. Until your earlier question, I didn't think there was much place in my poems, but now I see a bit

more of England in them. In recent years, since I moved to an apartment across from Prospect Park, I have written more poems about parks, but, mostly, as is my way, the parks are imaginary, and one poem was written before I moved here. Maybe I was park psychic. I don't think that you can say by any stretch of the imagination that all Wisconsin or Brooklyn-based poets write in a particular way. Similar sensibilities can spring up next to each other in the flower bed, or across oceans.

WV: How does poetic success—the Kingsley Tufts Award or being a finalist for the 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award—alter your view of your work, or does it? How would you define poetic success? Did you have any poetic failures along the way?

MH: I have poetic failures all the time. Many failed poems. I try not to publish those, though some have slipped into each book, since I can't always tell they're failures until later... or I don't want to admit that they are. I'm thrilled and amazed by the response to *Modern Life*, but it doesn't change the fact that I'm already working on other projects. Poetic success is when you write a poem that makes you excited and bewildered and glow.

WV: In addition to your recent and very successful *Modern Life* (2007), you've just published a children's book, *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake*. What drew you to writing for children? Do you plan to do more work for kids? Is writing and publishing for children substantively different than writing poetry?

You Never Seemed So Human

So we married in the UFO:
they didn't know what we meant
when you said *pony* and
I whispered *mountain*
in the chilly Hall of Collectibles.

MH: I never planned to write a children's book. The first one I wrote, *Cecil the Pet Glacier*, (which will be published by Schwartz and Wade) came out of my writing a silly bio for *Volt*. I said something like "She has a pet glacier called Cecil," which in turn was inspired by having a friend tell me about having a pet snowball called Horsey when she was little. Then I started thinking about how fun it would be to write about a pet glacier! *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake* originated in a very vivid dream. I think the parameters of picture books and chapter books are a bit stricter than in poetry (I was a bit late in learning the rules), and it's a hard market to crack. I'm still learning. It's really thrilling to work with an illustrator (in the same way that having my poems set to music by Eric Moe has completely knocked my socks off)—your vision expands with the addition of someone else's artwork/artistic vision.

The Future of Terror/6

There were girls waiting at the gate but we were homonyms away from understanding each other, like halve and have, like "let me hold you" and "I hold you responsible." Hospital bed or house arrest were the idylls we lived for. I promised to name my firstborn Influenza for a better shot at the flu. A knot of spectators got killed and unraveled into the lake. We discussed the particular lattice patterns we liked to use in our lasagna, never mind that the party line was that we were lucky to get linseed cake. Oh the milk of magnesia *that* required—mouthful after mouthful from mirrored spoons. The die landed on a one-spot, which was exactly how far we were going to get—one step into the orchard opposite, then chalk outlines for everyone. The pep rallies were horrible. The only thing that helped with the palpitations was to hold a paper nautilus to your ear and listen to the sighing of its parallel seas. Somewhere in there were seagulls whose pinfeathers were starting to unfurl, families taking Polaroids of the piles of quahogs they'd collected, a shopkeeper opening his shutters while his space heater happily hummed with oil. In there, the Spite Fence had yet to be invented.

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I am working on two other children's books—*Sod Story*, a tale about a girl called Celia Greenstreet who lives on a turf farm and a leafcutter ant called Leon, as well as an alphabet book with Elizabeth Zechel, called *These Birds Don't Fly: An Alphabet of Absurd Birds*.

WV: You seem like a globally gifted artist—interested in visual art and music as well as writing. You took the photograph on the cover of *Modern Life*, and I read that you studied the flute but don't play any more. How do you make decisions about how to parcel out your artistic time? Do you

regret not having more time for other kinds of art or have other projects besides poetry writing that you would like to do or plan to do?

MH: I don't know about globally gifted—only if it's a miniature globe. Stopping playing the flute was part deciding to concentrate on poetry, part my cat's hatred for the piccolo, and part having a hard time deciding to be an amateur player. At one point, I wanted to play professionally. Nowadays, I'm pretty lenient with myself about time—if I feel like taking photographs of small things inside ice cubes (a current project) or making animal collages, I just do it. When I want to write, I write. It's all part of the same thing for me. I would love to collaborate on a graphic novel with an artist—I'm terrible at drawing but I really love that genre.

WV: What poets have influenced your work? What contemporary poets do you enjoy reading?

MH: I'm very bad at identifying influence, but some of the greats I adore are Wallace Stevens, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Bishop, Henri Michaux, W.

H. Auden, John Berryman...In terms of contemporary poets, I read anything and everything—Russell Edson, Tomas Tranströmer, Claudia Rankine, Anne Carson, Cathy Park Hong, Jen Bervin, Kay Ryan, Mary Ruefle, Timothy Donnelly, Brenda Shaughnessy, Terrence Hayes, Lisa Jarnot...

WV: I think of your poetry as imaginative, whimsical, witty, mysterious, cerebral, and

distant or private. Do you make the conscious decision to avoid the personal?

MH: No—it just seems to happen. I guess I'm a bit of a projector—my emotions tend to get translated into different, fanciful situations. I did recently write one very straightforward poem, but I'm not sure it's any good. I'll have to sit with it for a while. I don't find the "autobiographical me" very interesting—I work much more from my ideas than from my actual experiences. On the other hand, I'm often enthralled by other people's "Ts."

WV: Poets like Billy Collins and Ted Kooser have made a conscious decision to write to an audience. What do you think about the notion of "accessible poetry"?

MH: I think all poetry is accessible in a certain sense if you spend enough time with it. Poems tend to have instructions for how to read them embedded in their language. I don't think all poems need to be written in conversational language—those are often great poems but there should also be poems of incoherent bewilderment and muddled mystery.

WV: Although your work isn't "formal" in a traditional sense, you clearly have an interest in form. "The Future of Terror" and "Terror of the Future" series in *Modern Life* take the abecedarium/zebecedarium, a type of poem that Wisconsin poet Karl Elder (*Gilgamesh at the Bellagio*) has worked with extensively, but bend the rules considerably. What role does form play in your work?

MH: The “Future of Terror” and “Terror of the Future” series uses a modified abecedarian technique—moving alphabetically between the words terror and future (forwards and backwards). I love when form plots out a path you couldn’t have seen before—it’s like suddenly having to maneuver through a room full of laser beams—you’re suddenly doing a dance you couldn’t have invented without those restrictions. Usually form seems to find me in the process of writing a poem, though I have nothing against starting out with the form, as I did with a recent erasure. Erasures are exciting to me because they’re another way to let go. You have this one page of text and you have to find your poem in that selection of words. When I have my students do erasures, I’m always amazed by the way their voice comes through, whether they’re doing an erasure of a romance novel or an encyclopedia. Your sensibility will out. We humans have an amazing way of making everything personal.

WV: You’re a particularly skilled writer of the prose poem, and I love how that fits into your thematic program—half poem, half fiction. Do you view the prose poem as a form, and has it become more important to you than other kinds of poems? What, if anything, does it allow you to do that other forms don’t?

MH: I do love the prose poem because it’s such a perverse and provocative little box—always asking to be questioned, never giving a straight or definitive answer. I like how it gives a feeling of containment to the words within. It’s a form of sorts, but a pretty loose one. I let my narrative embroidering impulses take over in prose poems.

WV: Many of the poems in *Modern Life* could be characterized as science-fiction. Could you talk about your interest in that genre?

MH: Well, sci fi television shows like *Battlestar Galactica* and *V* seem to be on the upswing, and I’m all for it. Ditto for vampires. When I was younger, my sci fi interests tended towards Anne McCaffrey’s dragon series. One of my favorite contemporary sci fi novels is Jonathan Lethem’s *Girl in Landscape*, which I often assign to my poetry workshops. That book features creatures called Archbuilders who

Implications for Modern Life

The ham flowers have veins and are rimmed in rind, each petal a little meat sunset. I deny all connection with the ham flowers, the barge floating by loaded with lard, the white flagstones like platelets in the blood-red road. I’ll put the calves in coats so the ravens can’t gore them, bandage up the cut gate and when the wind rustles its muscles, I’ll gather the seeds and burn them. But then I see a horse lying on the side of the road and think You are sleeping, you are sleeping, I will make you be sleeping. But if I didn’t make the ham flowers, how can I make him get up? I made the ham flowers. Get up, dear animal. Here is your pasture flecked with pink, your oily river, your bleeding barn. Decide what to look at and how. If you lower your lashes, the blood looks like mud. If you stay, I will find you fresh hay.

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give themselves inspired names like Hiding Kneel, Truth Renowned, Gelatinous Stand and Lonely Dumptruck as well as little hard-to-see creatures called housedeer.

WV: What are you working on right now? Do you have an interest in hybrid forms?

MH: The last few months I’ve been obsessed with taking photographs of miniatures inside of ice cubes. I think I’ve ended up with two series, each of which is titled with an ice cube containing a scrap of paper with text on it. One series is titled “Help” and features tiny people and animals trapped in ice cubes. The other, “Stay,” is a series of topsy-turvy chairs frozen into place. I think they may be some kind of ice poem rebuses. So yes, I am pretty interested in hybrid forms. I love graphic novels and I think there should be more graphic poems in the world. I’m also interested in concrete poems—anything that complicates the line between the written and the visual. Some of the poems I’m working on now have photographs as titles and others have cutout silhouette titles—so, for example, a poem called “My Octopus Orphan” is a silhouette of an octopus with those letters cut out of the silhouette. I’m also working on a book called *Of Lamb*, with the artist Amy Jean Porter. It’s an erasure of a Charles Lamb biography and Amy is doing these wild and independent drawings to go along with the words. I’m also working on designing a two-sided poster with the artist Adam Shecter for a project called 2UP, where artists and writers co-create a poster. You can see more about the projects here: <http://twoup.org/>

WV: What else do you do when you’re not writing or teaching?

MH: This fall I’ve been on a reading tear—three or four books a week. Recently I read Audrey Niffenegger’s *Her Fearful Symmetry*, four novels by Lionel Shriver, and the letters between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. I’m taking my third photography class at the International Center for Photography, and loving it, though this week we are supposed to do self-portraits and I would rather pull out all my teeth. And lately, I’ve been planning a book party for *The Little General and the Giant Snowflake*. My illustrator and dear friend has made a giant stuffed lemming, which we’re going to raffle off, and I’m working on inventing a lemming cocktail called a *Lemming Fizz*. Lastly, I’m trying to write a poem about a kangamouse, for a website called *Underwater New York*, <http://underwaternewyork.com>. You pick an item that has been found abandoned on a beach. I love the kangamouse—it’s pink and speckled with rust. It has only one ear and a little heart-light. The problem I’m having is that it’s already a poem without words.



This is an excerpt from Wendy Vardaman’s interview with Matthea Harvey. Read the full interview at versewisconsin.org where you will also find extended content about Harvey, including an ice cube photo, poem animation & the recipe for a Lemming Fizz.

Contributors' Notes

Judith Arcana's recent chapbook, *4th Period English*, is a collection of poems in the voices of high school students talking—and arguing—about immigration. A native of the Great Lakes region, she lived briefly and visited repeatedly in Milwaukee and other Wisconsin towns, notably with her dear friend, Wisconsin native Lois Nowicki. She lives in Oregon. Visit juditharcana.com. **p. 6**

Ann Arntson, member of Stone Kettle Poets, lives and writes in Monona and in Idlewild, Door County. Her poems have appeared in *Free Verse*, *Echoes*, and *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. **p. 12**

Sharon Auberle has returned to her Midwestern roots after years of living in the Southwest, and she's very happy to be residing full time in Door County. Besides poetry, photography and paper arts are her passions. Samples may be found on her website, Mimi's Golightly Café (<http://sharonauberle.blogspot.com/>). She is the author of two recent books: *Saturday Nights at the Crystal Ball* and *Crow Ink*. **p. 11**

Over 150 of **Peter Austin's** poems have been published in magazines and anthologies in the USA and several other countries. As well as poetry, he writes plays, and his musical adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows* has enjoyed four productions. Sadly, he cannot claim any connection to Wisconsin, even geographical, because although Ontario is close to it, Michigan comes inbetween. **p. 18**

Books Received Fall 2009— Publisher & Author Links available online

Kim Addonizio, ed., *Best New Poets 2009*, Samovar Press, 2009

Sharon Auberle, *Crow Ink*, Little Eagle Press, 2009

Barbara Jordan Bache-Wiig, *Yoga Woman*, Poetry People Press, 2009

Mary Jo Balistreri, *Joy in the Morning*, Bellowing Ark Press, 2008

Cathy Smith Bowers, *The Candle I Hold Up to See You*, Iris Press, 2009

Jan Chronister, *Target Practice*, Parallel Press, 2009

Geraldine Connolly, *Hand of the Wind*, Iris Press, 2009

James Crews, *One Hundred Small Yellow Envelopes*, Parallel Press, 2009

Alice D'Alessio, *Days We Are Given*, Earth's Daughters, 2009

Philip Dacey, *Vertebrae Rosaries*, Red Dragonfly Press, 2009

Bruce Dethlefsen, *Breather*, Fireweed Press, 2009

Rob Eckert, *Pheromonal*, Desperado Press, 2009

R. Virgil Ellis, *Sing the Poem Electric*, Woodhenge Productions, 2009

R. Virgil Ellis, *The Tenting Cantos*, Desperado Press, 2009

Kathryn Gahl, *Life Drawing Class*, The Cottage Corollary, 2009

Ed Galing, *Tales of South Philly*, Four-Sep Publications, 2000

Sid Gershoren, *The Extended*

Words: An Imaginary Dictionary, Red Dragonfly Press, 2009

Edward Hirsch, *The Living Fire: New and Selected Poems*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2010

Karla Huston, *Inventory of Lost Things*, Centennial Press, 2009

Charlotte Innes, *Reading Ruskin in Los Angeles*, Finishing Line Press, 2009

Jim Johnson, *Driving Gravel Roads*, Red Dragonfly Press, 2009

Jesse Lee Kercheval, *Cinema Muto*, Southern Illinois U Press, 2009

Michael Koehler, *Red Boots*, Little Eagle Press, 2009

Judy Kolosso, *Aubade*, Durnford's Landing, 2009

Judy Kolosso, *In the First Place*, Durnford's Landing, 2009

Michael Kriesel, *Moths Mail the House*, sunnyoutside press, 2008

Estella Lauter, *The Essential Rudder: North Channel Poems*, Finishing Line Press, 2008

Linda Lee, *Celebrating the Heartland*, Jericho Productions, 2009

John Lehman, *Acting Lessons*, Parallel Press, 2008

Ellaraine Lockie, *Love in the Time of Electrons*, Pudding House Publications, 2009

Ellaraine Lockie, *Stroking David's*

Leg, Foot Hills Publishing, 2009

Daniel Bachhuber is a Montessori elementary teacher in the St. Paul Public Schools. He has published poetry in the *Iowa Review*, *Poetry East*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and many others, as well as a book, *Mozart's Carriage*, from New Rivers Press, 2003. He also writes educational articles for Montessori periodicals. **p. 24, 25**

Mary Jo Balistreri spent most of her life as a concert pianist and harpsichordist. With the death of her grandsons, she began writing to give witness and transcend grief. She has published in journals such as *Free Verse*, *Windhover*, *Passager*, *The Healing Muse*, *Echoes* and others, as well as in the anthology, *Empty Shoes* (Popcorn Press). Her book *Joy in the Morning* was published by Bellowing Ark Press in 2008. **p. 27**

Guy R. Beining has had six poetry books and 25 chapbooks published over the years, and appeared in seven anthologies. He is in the *Contemporary Authors Autobiography* series, Vol. 30, 1998 (Gale Research). He is also in the *Dictionary of the Avant Gardes*, 2nd Ed., 2000. Recent publications include *chain*, *epiphany*, *perspective* (Germany), *New Orleans Review*, and *The New Review of Literature*. **p. 18**

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. **p. 20**

Leg, Foot Hills Publishing, 2009

Arthur Madson, *Out of the Welter*, Fireweed Press, 2009

Robert B. Moreland & Karen M. Miner, *Postcards from Baghdad: Honoring America's Heroes*, 2008

Ralph Murre, *Psalms*, Little Eagle Press, 2009

Cristina M.R. Norcross, *The Red Drum*, Firkin Fiction Publishing, 2009

John Pidgeon, *The Formal Impulse*, Parallel Press, 2009

Andrea Potos, *Yaya's Cloth*, Iris Press, 2007

Anne Shaw, *Undertow*, Persea Books [Lexi Rudnitsky Prize Winner], 2007

Thomas R. Smith, *Kinnickinnic*, Parallel Press, 2008

Nadine S. St. Louis, *Zebra*, Marsh River Editions, 2008

Richard Swanson, *Eastern Europe 1989 (A Saga)*, 2010

Marilyn L. Taylor, *Going Wrong*, Parallel Press, 2009

Marilyn L. Taylor, Denise Sweet, & Ellen Kort, *Wisconsin Poets Laureate*, Marsh River Editions, 2009

Don Thompson, *Where We Live*, Parallel Press, 2009

Alison Townsend, *Persephone in America*, Southern Illinois U Press, 2009

Marine Robert Warden, *Finding Beauty*, Bellowing Ark Press, 2009

Jon Boisvert grew up in southern Wisconsin and now lives in Oregon. His work has been read in *Slipstream*, *Heartlands*, *Blood Orange Review*, *Dark Sky Magazine*, *Greenbeard Magazine*, and *Main Street Rag*. He is currently working on a collection of poems about body modification and performance artists, including those from the circus, classic and modern. **p. 27, 32**

Peter Branson lives in Rode Heath, a village in South Cheshire, England. A former teacher and lecturer, he now organises writing workshops. Over the last four years he has had work published, or accepted for publication, by many mainstream poetry journals in Britain. He has also had poems published in the USA, Canada, EIRE, Australia and New Zealand. **p. 20**

Sarah Busse is the co-editor of *Verse Wisconsin*. **p. 14-17**

John L. Campbell started free lance writing for business and trade magazines in 1995. His book, *Writing in Retirement* www.writingretirement.com, explains his evolution into fiction and poetry along with the profiles of thirteen other writers-in-retirement. His latest poetry chapbook is entitled *Smelling Older*. **p. 29**

Lisa J. Cihlar is Wisconsin born and raised. There was a short stint in Illinois, but that was done for love and she convinced him to come back north with her. Recently, poems have been published in *The Pedestal Magazine*, *qarrtsiluni*, and *Wisconsin People & Ideas*. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and selected to be part of The Other Voices International Project. **p. 12**

Chloe N. Clark grew up in North Central Wisconsin and is currently a junior at UW-Madison majoring in English with a Creative Writing focus. She dislikes writing bio statements. **p. 27**

DeWitt Clinton has lived with his wife and a menagerie of creatures for over thirty years in Milwaukee and Shorewood. This spring he is on sabbatical from his university (UW-Whitewater), writing a series of poems, *100 Poems by a Lake*, based on Kenneth Rexroth's *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese*. **p. 23**

Cathryn Cofell is the author of five chapbooks, most recently *Kamikaze Commotion* (Parallel Press, 2008). Her poetry can be found in places like *MARGIE*, *Oranges & Sardines*, *NY Quarterly* and *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, where she was selected for the 2008 John Lehman Poetry Award. She is a strong advocate for the arts, having served as founding Chair of the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission, on the board of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, and currently on the Advisory Board of *Verse Wisconsin*. **p. 12**

Maryann Corbett's work has appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Measure*, *Christianity and Literature*, and many other journals in print and online. It has received the Lyric Memorial Award and the 2009 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize. *Gardening in a Time of War* was published by Pudding House Press and another chapbook, *Dissonance*, is forthcoming from Scierter Press. For her, Wisconsin is the place just over the river, where colleagues live and friends teach, the first place she crosses when she's outward bound and the last stretch when she returns. **p. 19**

In addition to being an actor in the Core Acting Company at American Players Theatre, **David Daniel** also serves as APT's Education Director, teaching workshops on poetry and Shakespeare for students and teachers alike. David holds an MFA from the University of Delaware's Professional Theatre Training Program and is a proud veteran of the United States Army. **p. 14-17**

Rick Dinges has an MA in literary studies from University of Iowa, and he manages business systems at an insurance company. His poems have been published in many magazines and journals, including *Descant*, *Soundings East*, and *Free Lunch*. He has driven through Wisconsin twice, on the way to somewhere else, a statement often applied to his own home state, which gives him an oddly perverse pleasure to say about someone else. **p. 15**

John Dubord lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with Annette, his partner, and has retired from various kinds of work. He is the father of 3 and grandfather of 1. He can sometimes be spotted sitting on the curb in front of his house scribbling in his spiral notebook with an open bottle of MD 20/20 beside him for company. **p. 26**

Denise Duhamel's most recent poetry titles are *Ka-Ching!* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), *Two and Two* (Pittsburgh, 2005), *Mille et un Sentiments* (Firewheel, 2005) and *Queen for a Day: Selected and New Poems* (Pittsburgh, 2001). A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, she is an associate professor at Florida International University in Miami. **p. 23**

Renee Emerson has her MFA from Boston University. She recently won the Academy of American Poets Prize, and her work has been published in *Tar River Poetry*, *Room*, *Existere*, *The Blue Earth Review*, and various others. She lives and writes in Louisville, Kentucky with her husband, and is the author of *Something Like Flight* (Sargent Press, 2010). **p. 29**

Fabu is Madison, Wisconsin's third Poet Laureate. She has a published chapbook, *In Our Own Tongues*, and another forthcoming from Parallel Press: *African American Life in Haiku*. See <http://www.artistfabu.com/> **p. 5**

Susan Firer's most recent book is *Milwaukee Does Strange Things to People: New & Selected Poems 1979-2007*. She is curator of the *ExpressMilwaukee* online poetry column. The Poetry Foundation has included her poem "Call Me Pier" in its Poetry Everywhere animated poem series, available for viewing on YouTube or through the Foundation. She was Poet Laureate of Milwaukee from 2008-2010. **p. 20, 22**

Brent Goodman is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *The Brother Swimming Beneath Me* (Black Lawrence Press, 2009). His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Zone 3*, *Gulf Coast*, *Court Green*, and elsewhere. www.brentgoodman.info **p. 4**

Ruth Goring's collection *Yellow Doors* was published in 2004; her work has appeared widely. She edits for a university press, codirects Across the Americas, and writes many poems set in Colombia, where she grew up. But it was in Lake Geneva on New Year's Eve 2002 that she became engaged to her husband, Daniel; and in 2007 she thoroughly enjoyed the WFOP retreat near Baileys Harbor. In her book Wisconsin is a pretty cool place to be. **p. 4, 19**

Nathan Graziano lives in Manchester, New Hampshire with his wife and two children. A high school English teacher, he recently completed his MFA at The University of New Hampshire. He has published extensively. His third book of poetry, *After the Honeymoon*, came out in Fall 2009 by sunnysidepress. nathangraziano.com **p. 28**

RL Greenfield was born in Waupun, WI. He has lived in L.A. & Southern California since 1962. His poems & prose have been printed widely. He is the recipient of an NEA fellowship, and has produced and hosted a television series in Santa Barbara called *The Greenfield Code*, which consisted of 150 one-hour television programs featuring poets, novelists, performance artists & professors of literature. **p. 32**

David Gross lives in the foothills of the Illinois Ozarks. His work has been included in numerous literary and small-press journals and in four anthologies. He is the author of four chapbooks of poetry. The most recent, *Pilgrimage*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2009. **p. 25**

Greg Grummer has lived in Wisconsin on and off most of his life. He currently lives in Milwaukee where he owns and operates, with his sister, a small manufacturing company that makes and markets papermaking kits and supplies. **p. 21**

Kenneth P. Gurney lives in Albuquerque, NM. From 1995 to 2008 he edited *Hodge Podge Poetry* (print), *Tamafybr Mountain Poetry* (web) and *Origami Condom* (web) in succession. His poems appear mostly on the web, as he generally spends postage and reading fees on flowers for his lover (or dark Belgian chocolate for himself). He has two books available through Amazon: *Writers' Block* and *Greeting Card*. **p. 21**

Matthea Harvey's most recent book of poetry, *Modern Life*, won the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2008 as well as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Matthea teaches poetry at Sarah Lawrence and lives in Brooklyn. Visit <http://www.mattheaharvey.info/index.html> **p. 33-35**

Jim Hazard grew up in Indiana and the South Side of Chicago, moved to Wisconsin in '63 and has been here ever since, although he does have a passport he uses now and then. **p. 7**

MaryAnn Hurtt lives down the road from the Ice Age Trail. The Kettle Moraine and her work as a hospice care nurse keep her constantly in awe of poems walking by. She co-authored a hospice care planning book with Cynthia Frozena. Her poems have appeared in *Free Verse* and the *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. **p. 10**

Nancy Jesse taught English at Madison West High School before retiring in 2005. She grew up on a dairy farm in Barron County, moving to Madison in 1968 to attend the University of Wisconsin. She has published both prose and poetry and presently lives in Madison with her husband Paul. **p. 9**

Lucy Rose Johns, from Nekoosa, WI is a long time member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. She is grateful to the staffs of Rhinelander School of the Arts, Earth Wonders, and Home Brew Press for their poetic wisdom. **p. 10**

Robert K. Johnson is consulting editor for Ibbetson Street magazine. His poems have been published in *Main Street Rag*, *South Carolina Review* and *The New York Times*, among others. His most recent collections are *From Mist to Shadow* and *Flowering Weeds*. **p. 29**

Erin Keane has strained her eyes to see Wisconsin from the Michigan side of the great lake. In high school, she visited Milwaukee on a school trip and learned how warm and delicious Miller beer can smell during the brewing phase. She lives and writes in Louisville, where she directs the InKY Reading Series. She is the author of two collections of poetry, *The Gravity Soundtrack* and *Death-Defying Acts*. **p. 7**

Don Kimball is the author of two chapbooks, *Journal of a Flatlander* (Finishing Line Press 2009) and *Skipping Stones* (Pudding House Publications 2008). His poetry has appeared in *The Formalist*, *The Lyric*, *The Blue Unicorn*, and various other journals and anthologies, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. **p. 17, 30**

Robyn Kohlwey is a current resident of Grafton, Wisconsin and recently graduated from Carroll University in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Her work has recently appeared in *Arbor Vitae*, *Anthills V* and *Nerve Cowboy*. **p. 24**

Janet Leahy is a member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. Her poems have appeared in the *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar* and in regional and national publications. *The Storm*, her most recent chapbook, is a collection of poems about the Iraq War. She lives in New Berlin. **p. 17**

John Lehman is the founder of *Rosebud* magazine and the poetry editor of *Wisconsin People & Ideas*. This article is an excerpt from his Compact Disk of the same name, *How and Why a Poem Works*. It can be purchased for \$10 on-line at www.RosebudBookReviews.com. **p. 8-9**

MaryEllen Letarte has roots in Wisconsin that still tug at her. Her dad was born in Pepin, and matriculated at the University of Wisconsin. Her sister, Christine, graduated from Marquette University and lived in Wisconsin most

of her adult life. She occasionally teaches poetry to children in after school programs and to adults enrolled in ALFA-Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area. **p. 25**

Marie Loeffler is a Wisconsin poet, violinist, and private violin instructor who spends most of her free time practicing, writing, reading, and creating. Her poetry publications are current or forthcoming in *Echoes*, the WFOP Spring 2010 *Museletter*, and the 2011 *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. This is her first journal publication. **p. 30**

Molly Magestro has always lived in Wisconsin, even when she lived in Iowa, Michigan, and California, as her family, thus her heart, has always been here. Her PhD, forthcoming in 2011, will be from Wisconsin as well. **p. 22**

Joan Marella is a former English teacher who enjoys bird watching, singing and gardening. Her interests range from outer space to ancient history. She has been published widely and had a poem nominated for a Pushcart Prize. **p. 27**

Tim Mayo's poems and reviews have appeared or will appear in *Atlanta Review*, *Babel Fruit*, *5 AM*, *Poetry International*, *Verses Daily*, and *The Writer's Almanac*, among others. He has been a semi-finalist for the "Discovery"/Nation Award. His full length collection *The Kingdom of Possibilities* (Mayapple Press), was a semi finalist for the 2009 Brittingham and Pollak Awards and a finalist for 2009 May Swenson Award, and he was recently named a top finalist for the 2009 Paumanok Award. **p. 22**

Richard Merelman took up poetry writing in 2001. Previously, he taught political science at UW-Madison. He was born and grew up in Washington, D.C. and has lived in Madison on and off since 1969. His poems have appeared in journals such as *California Quarterly*, *Free Verse*, *Measure*, and *Wisconsin Academy Review*, among others. **p. 23**

Denny Murawska has been tramping the woods and streams of Wisconsin his entire life. He has been published in numerous small literary magazines and newspapers, although he is not a journalist. He currently resides on a pine-studded, sandstone mound in the inspiring country north of Black River Falls. Here, he paints fish as a taxidermist, gardens, and hunts in this backwoods environs that suits him just fine. **p. 14**

Ralph Murre, of Sheboygan, Milwaukee, Hubertus, Kewaskum, Maplewood, Algoma, Fish Creek, Sister Bay, Ellison Bay, Egg Harbor, La Crosse, Ephraim, and Jacksonport, now lives in Baileys Harbor. He's also had several addresses in California, Kentucky, and Florida, but prefers Wisconsin. **p. 4**

Robert Nordstrom is a poet, free lance writer, and school bus driver living in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. His goal for the school year is modest, though a bit subversive, and that's to teach high schoolers how to respond when an adult says *good morning*, *good afternoon*, or *how ya doin'*? Thus far, limited success. **p. 30**

Joseph Radke's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in several journals including *Boulevard*, *New York Quarterly*, *The Journal*, *REAL*, *Redactions*, *Copper Nickel*, *Ellipsis*, *Pear Noir*, and *Natural Bridge*. He teaches writing in Green Bay. **p. 28**

Jessy Randall's collection of poems *A Day in Boyland* (Ghost Road Press, 2007) was a finalist for the Colorado Book Award. She has never been to Wisconsin, but from what her friends tell her, she thinks she would like it. Her website is <http://personalwebs.coloradocollege.edu/~jrandall>. **p. 21**

Nydia Rojas lives and writes poetry in Wisconsin, where she also enjoys spring, summer and fall and frowns on winter. Her work has been published in the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, *International Poetry Review*, and *Revista/Review Interamericana*, in the anthology *Between the Heart and the Land: Latina Poets in the Midwest*, and in many other literary magazines. She is the author of the chapbook *Stealing Daylight*. **p. 29**

Angela Rydell lives in Madison, WI and teaches creative writing in the UW-Madison Continuing Studies Division. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poets & Writers*, *The Sun*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Lullwater Review*, *Poet Lore* and other journals. She holds an MFA from Warren Wilson College. **p. 31**

G. A. Scheinoha dislikes bio notes precisely because they are pretentious. Maybe this comes from a grounded Wisconsin background. Or just his view: the writer isn't as important as the poem. Still, if you must have his curriculum vitae, recent bylines include *Avocet*, *Conceit*, *Echoes*, *Fox Cry Review* and *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2010*. **p. 26**

Peter Sherrill's poems have appeared in a variety of state and national publications, but not recently. He's been occupied with airplanes, grandchildren, house projects and all the usual distractions. He's a past president of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. **p. 21**

Thomas R. Smith lives in River Falls, Wisconsin and is a Master Track instructor in poetry at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. His most recent collection is *Kinnickinnic* (Parallel Press), and a new book, *The Foot of the Rainbow*, is forthcoming from Red Dragonfly Press in spring 2010. **p. 24**

Joel Solonche is coauthor of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books). His work has been appearing in magazines and journals since the 1970s. He teaches at SUNY Orange in Middletown, New York. **p. 16**

Kate Sontag has most recently published in *Prairie Schooner* and has work forthcoming in *Seattle Review*. Her work has been featured in *Valparaiso Poetry Review* and appeared in anthologies such as *Boomer Girls*, *Are You Experienced?*, and *Sweeping Beauty* (U. of Iowa). She is co-editor of *After Confession: Poetry as Autobiography* (Graywolf) and teaches at Ripon College. **p. 5**

David Steingass is the author of six books including *Fishing for Dynamite* and *Great Plains* (Red Dragonfly 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. Besides reading and writing at his Madison home, Steingass presents writing workshops and residencies in schools. **p. 6, 28**

Nadine S. St. Louis, Eau Claire, has authored two books, *Zebra* (Marsh River Editions, 2008) and *Weird Sisters* (Wolfson, 2000). Her poems have appeared in journals and anthologies including *ByLine*, *Free Verse*, *Kalliope*, *A Peace of the Valley*, and in collaborative shows including Wisconsin's Epidemic Peace Imagery Exhibit. She is one of the founders of the Chippewa Valley Book Festival, just completing its 10th year. **p. 11**

Richard Swanson lives in Madison, Wisconsin where he reads, gardens, and writes. His previous volume was *Men in the Nude in Socks* (Fireweed, 2006). His latest book is *Not Quite Eden* (Fireweed Press). **p. 9, 22**

Bruce Taylor's latest collection is *Pity the World: Poems Selected and New*. Professor Emeritus at UW-Eau Claire, he is the editor of eight anthologies including, with Patti See, *Higher Learning: Reading and Writing About College*. His work has appeared in such places as *Able Muse*, *Light*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, and *E2ink-1: the Best of the Online Journals*. Taylor has won awards from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Fulbright-Hayes, the NEA, the NEH, The Council of Wisconsin Writers, and the Bush Artist Foundation and is the recipient of the Excellence In Scholarship award from UW-EC. **p. 4**

Marilyn L. Taylor is serving as the Poet Laureate of Wisconsin for 2009 and 2010, and enjoying every minute of it. Her award-winning poems have appeared in dozens of anthologies and journals, including *Poetry*, *The American Scholar*, *Measure*, *Valparaiso Review*, and *The Formalist*. Her sixth and latest collection, *Going Wrong*, was published by Parallel Press in July of 2009. She is also a Contributing Editor for *The Writer* magazine, where her

articles on poetic craft appear bimonthly. **p. 21**

Jari Thymian's poems are widely published and her chapbook, *The Meaning of Barns* (Finishing Line Press), was inspired by a barn raising at Common Harvest Farm near Osceola, WI. Some of her haiku can be found painted on the inside walls of that barn. She survived several afternoons on the Apple River in her 20s and is delighted that one of her poems was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. www.jarithymian.com. **p.19**

Sandra M. Tully (Delafield) is a poet and children's book author. Her poetry has appeared in *St. Anthony Messenger*, *Echoes*, and *Fox Cry Review* and is forthcoming in *Dream Network Journal*, *Daily Word*, and *Sacred Journey*. She was awarded the Jade Ring Award in 2005. **p. 10**

Wendy Vardaman, author of *Obstructed View* (Fireweed Press 2009), is the co-editor of *Verse Wisconsin*. Visit www.wendyvardaman.com. **p. 33-35**

Ron Wallace's most recent poetry collections are *For a Limited Time Only* (2008) and *Long for This World: New and Selected Poems* (2003), both from the University of Pittsburgh Press. He co-directs the creative writing program at UW-Madison, and serves as poetry editor for the Brittingham and Pollak prize competition. He divides his time between Madison and a forty-acre farm in Bear Valley, WI. **p. 7**

Marine Robert Warden is a retired physician living in Riverside, CA. Recent publications include *Canticle III* and *Finding Beauty, Selected Poems* (Bellowing Ark Press). **p. 17**

Ed Werstein spent 22 years in manufacturing, and the last 15 years as a workforce development professional helping job seekers. Ed has only recently started to write more regularly and to submit his work to public scrutiny. Ed's work has appeared in the 2009 Mark My Words collaborative art show in LaCrosse and in the collection *Vampyr Verse* published by Popcorn Press. **p. 10**

Kelley White's work has been widely published in numerous journals including *Exquisite Corpse*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and in chapbooks and full-length collections, most recently *Toxic Environment* from Boston Poet Press. She has also received several honors, including a 2008 grant for poetry from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. **p. 26**

Marilyn Windau was nurtured on Big Bend farms, in raspberry patches in Fremont, and by blue gills from Green Lake and books in Madison. Graduating from UW-Madison, she married a civil engineer from Wauwatosa and raised three daughters in Appleton and Sheboygan Falls. She teaches art to elementary school children in Oostburg. **p. 25**

Lisa Zimmerman is an antiques dealer, book collector, and poet. She lives and writes in the Northwoods. Founding member of the five-year-old Eagle River Writers Group, Lisa was first published in *Free Verse*. **p. 9**

MISSION STATEMENT

Verse Wisconsin publishes poetry and serves the community of poets in Wisconsin and beyond. In fulfilling our mission we:

- showcase the excellence and diversity of poetry rooted in or related to Wisconsin
- connect Wisconsin's poets to each other and to the larger literary world
- foster critical conversations about poetry
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