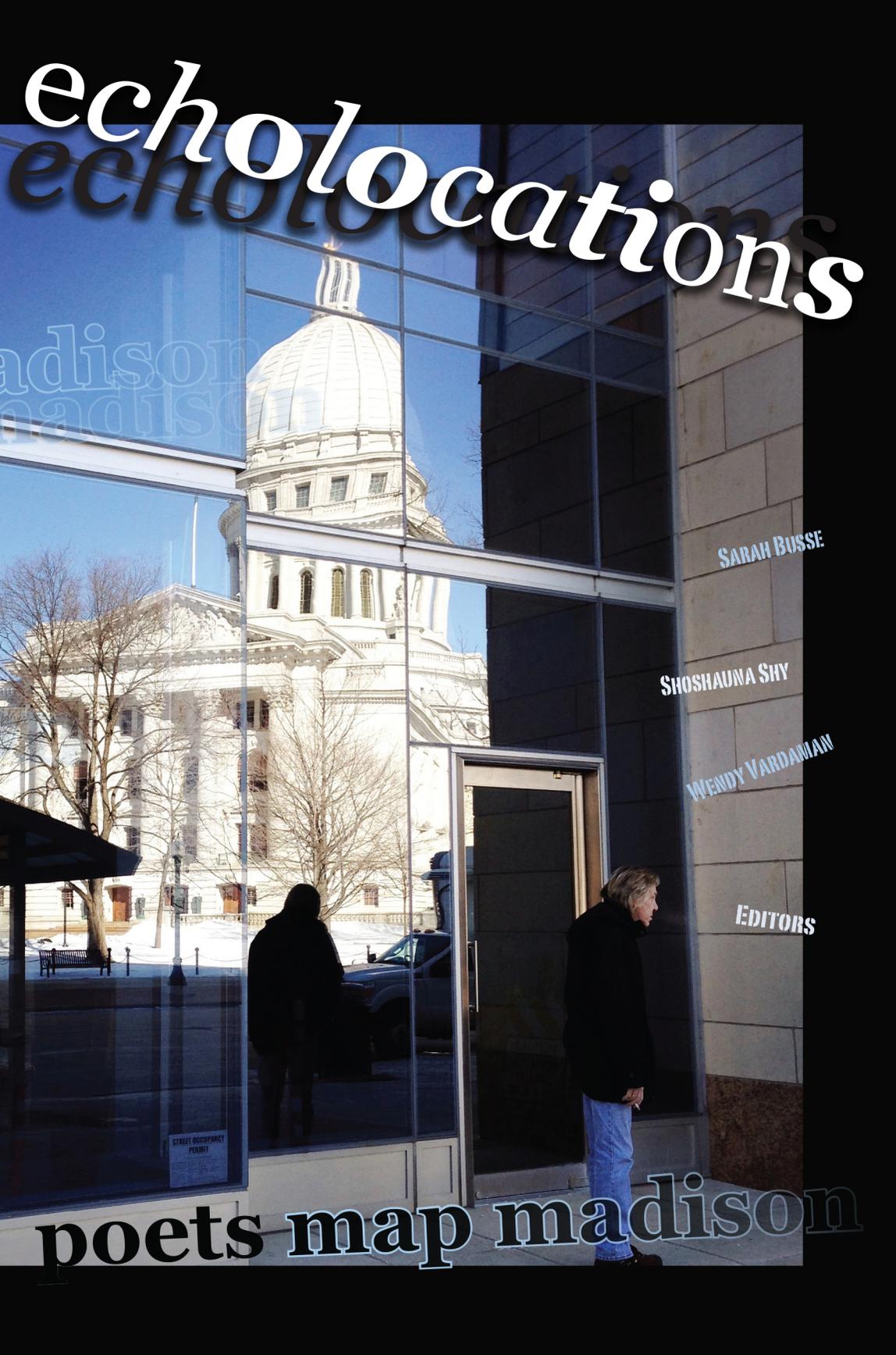


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SARAH BUSSE

SHOSHAUNA SHY

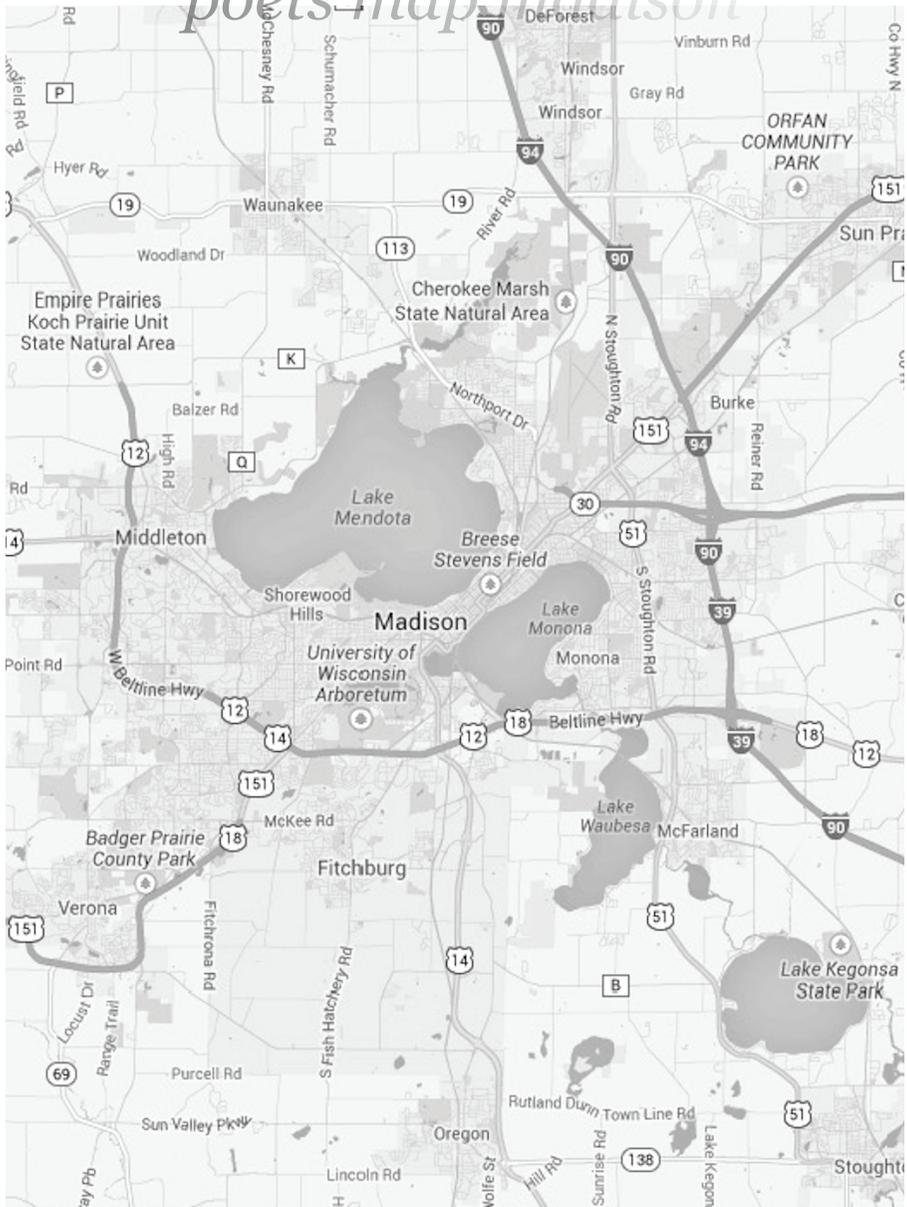
WENDY VARDAMAN

EDITORS

poets map madison

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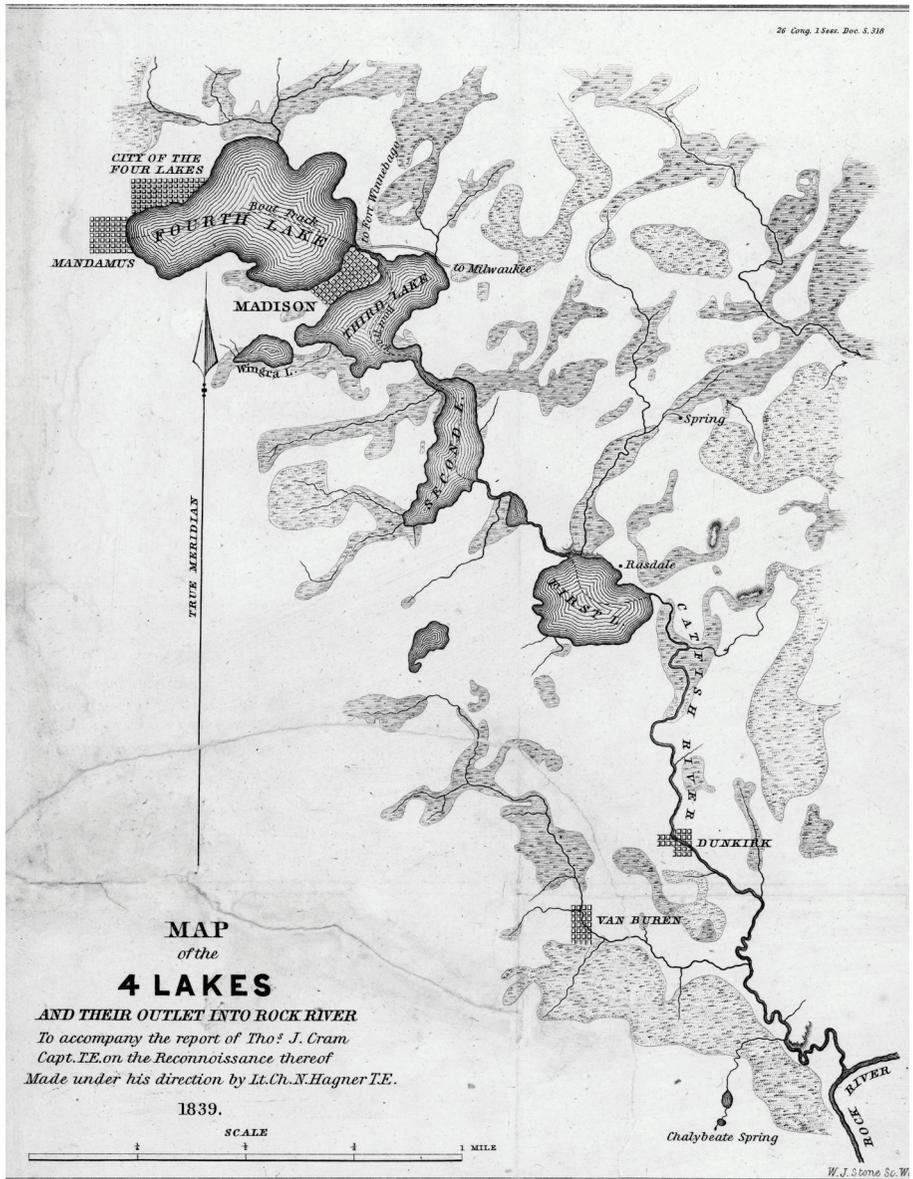
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“Four Lakes”: Map of the 4 lakes and their outlet into Rock River (1839): to accompany the report of Thos. J. Cram Capt. T.E. on the reconnoissance thereof. Used by permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID 10584. Numerous other historical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

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FLASH FOREWORDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cynthia Lin
Portland, OR (for now)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Geoff Gilpin
DeForest, WI

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

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

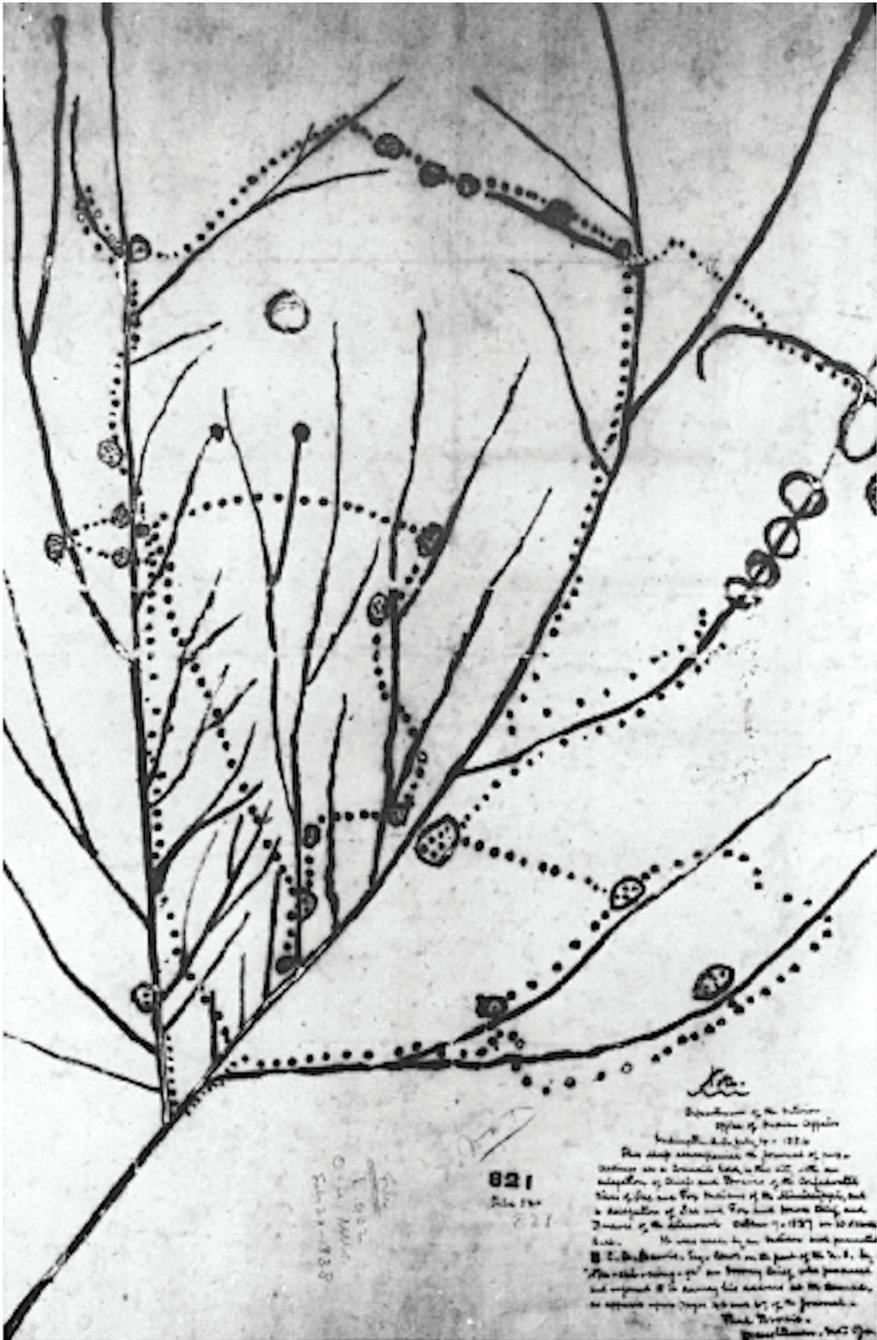
The stories proposed in this work are about my story but are not about my story. Nor are they the story of other immigrants whose contributions go almost unnoticed on a daily basis, those who cook, clean, and milk cows far away from home in their new home; their work makes our lives convenient so we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

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

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

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

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



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

NOTHING RHYMES WITH ISTHMUS, OR NOTES FROM THE FLYOVER

from Wendy, February 27, 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*So he said
on the radio*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

from Sarah, June 12, 2013 8:13 AM

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

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

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

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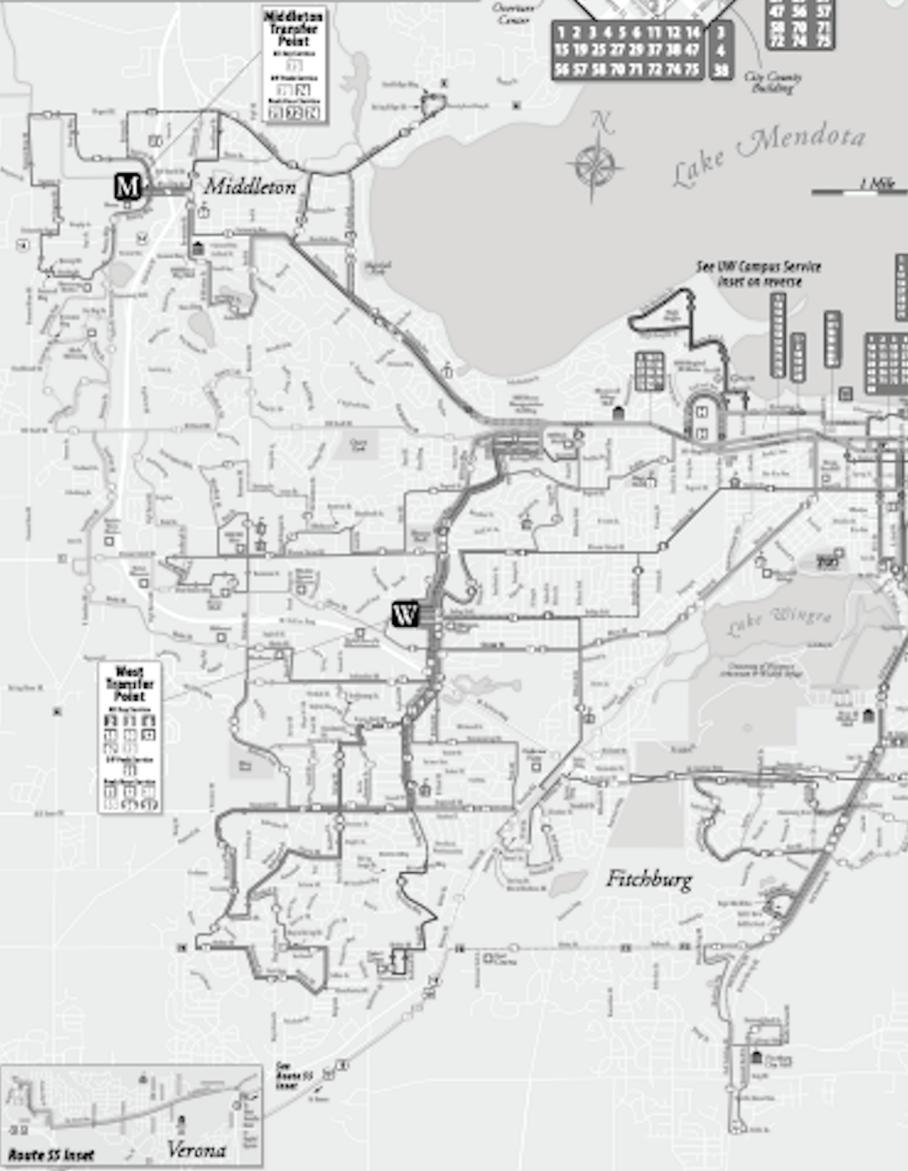
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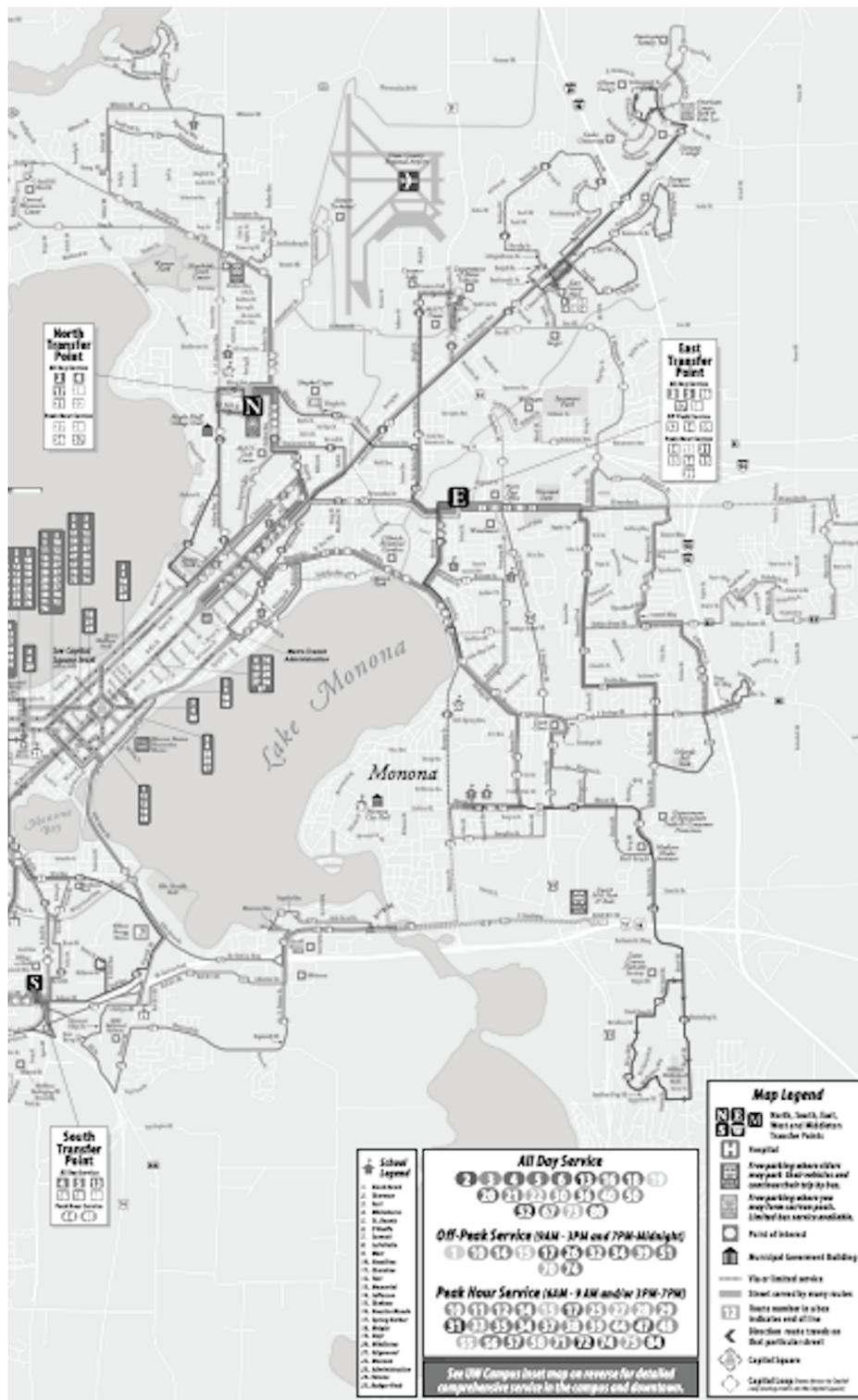
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ARBORETUM WALK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROSEMARY ZURLO-COVA

STATE STREET, LATE NOVEMBER

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

iridescently gold on wet
pavement, marks a line

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

in hand, our shoulders hunched
towards winter. Low

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

like a small animal rushing
towards shelter.

WAITING FOR THE TORNADO

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

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

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

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

ORANGE CUSTARD CHOCOLATE CHIP

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

So worth the Memorial Union
ice cream line.

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

BEFORE THUMBIN' TO MADISON

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

It was a beautiful summer day—
but not anymore.

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

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

We nearly made it to Madison this time.

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

"Strip this bus and sell it, Ray.

Its memories are all done being made."

CHINESE SILENCE NO. 19

After Billy Collins, "Kathmandu"

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

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

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

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

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

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

1970 BIPOLAR

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

Is to medicate the only solution?

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

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

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

THE PARK, MARCH THAW

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

THE WILD SWANS AT WINGRA CREEK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TIMOTHY WALSH

AT THE ASIAN IGA BY MONONA BAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

RONALD WALLACE

EARLY BRASS

For Emily

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

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

ANGELA VORAS-HILLS

ALARM

When the apartment's pool gate
was padlocked, we'd crawl over the fence

with a bottle of Cab, listen to sirens
screaming down Johnson. Strangers

were fighting in the street, a neighbor played
bongos on his balcony. We learned

to replace batteries, test our detectors
early. We left a broomstick

in the sliding door track. For a week,
water dripped into our bathroom

from the third floor, filling our cups
in fifteen-minute increments.

The yard was consistently littered
with contents from the same third floor unit:

a milk glass lamp without bulb
or shade, "The Good Son" on VHS, pink

carnations with wire stems in a tangle.
She must've pulled the alarm

before throwing herself onto the lawn.
We stayed in bed, watching neighbors

stumble around her body in the dark
until the firemen knocked, calling us out

to stand pajama'd with everyone else
in the parking lot,

where once a doe ran through,
her white tail raised.

ANGELA VORAS-HILLS

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

was afraid to fall asleep.

RAZONES EN EL INVIERNO

Para Erik, Flavio, Gustavo y Oracio Sosa Villavicencio

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

MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

REASONS IN THE WINTER

For Erik, Flavio, Gustavo and Oracio Sosa Villavicencio

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

MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

MADISON

Para Erin Teksten

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

MOISÉS VILLAVICENCIO BARRAS

MADISON

For Erin Teksten

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

SATURDAY FARM MARKET

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

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

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

ANGELA TRUDELL VASQUEZ

FAIR OAKS AVE: AUGUST, 2009

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

Ariel/Live or Die/Necessities of Life sky

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

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

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

ODE TO THE CROSSING GUARD

For Russell, who watches over Edgewood & Monroe

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

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

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

THE SEARCH

now the street
is filled
only with faces—

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

faces slashed and scared—

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

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

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

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

PERSEPHONE AT THE MALL

Sleepwalking.

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

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

ALISON TOWNSEND

PERSEPHONE, PRETENDING

Madison, Wisconsin

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

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

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

THE LIBRARY AT MIDTERM

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

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

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

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

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

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

LISTENING TO BLUES AT THE BARRYMORE

It's not so much
the notes he hits

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JEANIE TOMASKO

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

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

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

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

I KNOW A BANK WHERE THE WILD THYME BLOWS

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

EXPLICATION OF A TRUE STORY

For Lani, my college roommate

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

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

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

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

THE GHOST ON JOHNSON STREET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MORNINGS AT RESURRECTION CEMETERY

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAHOOTS: WISCONSIN MAKES A HOUSE CALL

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

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

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

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

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

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

HEATHER SWAN

EARLY MORNING ON LAKE WINGRA

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

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

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

LIFE LIST

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

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

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

SPRING

511 Sheldon Street

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

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

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

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

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

LAST POEM

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

MATTHEW STOLTE

MADPO

This is a black & white reproduction of Stolte's image, which can be found in color at cowfeatherpress.org/echolocations.html.



MATTHEW STOLTE

MADPO

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A MAP FOR THE DAY OF THE SPIDER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANIMAL EFFIGY MOUNDS

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

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

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

GIRL WALKING HER DOG IN VILAS PARK AT DAWN

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

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

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

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

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

THE 2011 WINTER REVOLT

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

SANDY STARK

OUT OF THIN AIR

For John Ribble

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

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

ALWAYS, IN DREAMS

In memory of Gary Van Den Heuvel

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

REAL MIDDLE CLASS

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

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

DANEZ SMITH

AFRICAN-AMERICAN

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

FROM MY WINDOW

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

FADE

for Lucky

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

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

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

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

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

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

good.

SHOSHAUNA SHY

CURSIVE DISCARDED FROM GRADE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

October 2006

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

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

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

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

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

—*Eric, will you marry me?*—

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

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

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

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

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

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

CROSSING TRACKS, FORDHAM AND COMMERCIAL.

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

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

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

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

Micro-habits of economy.

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

CELEBRATING THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

Madison, Wisconsin, January 26, 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARY C. ROWIN

THE STATE OFFICE BUILDING, ONE WEST WILSON

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

SALSA AND DANCE AT THE JAZZ FEST, UNION TERRACE

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

WHEN I WROTE MY NOVEL I BORROWED MADISON

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTMAS NIGHT OUTSIDE TEMPLE BETH EL

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

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

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

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

FRAN RALL

ALEXA

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

WISCONSIANA

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

BRIAN POWERS

THE RUN TO PICNIC POINT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIRST FALL SEMESTER

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

JAMES POLLOCK

EXCERPT FROM "QUARRY PARK"

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

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

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

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

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

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

BEFORE EAST TOWNE MALL.

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

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

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

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

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

MICHAEL PENN II

FOR RUDOLF

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

Black works.

yet we're still self-convincing.

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

self-defense is relative.

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

can everything be said in nothing?

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

Chazen Museum of Art

SARA PARRELL.

MARCH IN WISCONSIN, 2011

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

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

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

SARA PARRELL

FRAUTSCHI POINT, DECEMBER

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

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

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

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

HELEN PADWAY

FLOWERS KEEP COMPANY

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

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

TIMES CHANGE

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

THE MAJESTIC

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

THE ORPHEUM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AN OCTOBER NIGHT ON THE BELTLINE

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

IT DIDN'T FEEL DANGEROUS

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

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

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

AERIAL CHOREOGRAPHY

Cycropia Performs at Orton Park—August 2007

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

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

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

And sudden horror:

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

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

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

RALPH MURRE

IT WAS ALREADY CLEAR

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

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

lovers all around.

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

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

ARTISTIC LICENSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

GEORGIA'S INHERITANCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DANCING WITH LIBERTY

Madison, Wisconsin, February 19, 2011

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OSCAR MIRELES

THE ALMOST 9 MINUTE CAR RIDE TO MADISON, WISCONSIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AT THE MESH FENCE

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

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

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

TOO BAD HE WUZN'T A WHALE

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

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

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

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

God bless America, I mean God Bless America.

The man picked up his remote and changed the channel—

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

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

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

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

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

The man's wife changes the channel—

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

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

JERI McCORMICK

ONE BY ONE BY ONE

At the Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled

Today my daughter
prepared three bodies
for the morgue.

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

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

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

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

TAKING OFF

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

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

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

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

JOHN LEHMAN

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

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

THE ANGELIC BREWING COMPANY CLOSES ITS DOORS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAYA ANGELOU AT THE UNION THEATER, 1990

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

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

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

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

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

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

JON K. LAUCK

PROUD SON IN THE STACKS

It was open country, voiceless

But Lyman Draper gathered
memories

Then you came, proud son of
Portage

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

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

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

And the century has heard more voices

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

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

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

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

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

THEY HANG PEOPLE, DON'T THEY?

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

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

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

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

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

ON FIRST READING *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL*

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

1-900-CHAT

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

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

SELF-PORTRAIT ON YOUTUBE

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

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

BLUE PLATE

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

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

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

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

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

Amazing, I thought, sad pie.

STRANGERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not in the toilet," I groaned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“One room or everything?” I ask.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s my turn to laugh.

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

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

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

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

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

Lucky, in the divine sense.

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

ANCIENT RITES

Winter Solstice in Glenway Park

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and sages whisper fortunes through the smoke.

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

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

VOICING THE CITY STRANGE

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

The moon over Monona
(the lake) bellows tonight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Will there be shelter in this city?

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

MARTHA KAPLAN

WINSLOW LANE NEIGHBOR

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

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

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

MIDLIFE CPR

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

BECOMING LEGEND

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

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

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

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

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

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

EPITAPHS

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

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

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

A black expanse of parking space
covers the earth beneath.

THE WAR AT HOME

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

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

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

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

RONNIE HESS

THANKSGIVING OWLS

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

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

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

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

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

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

owl pin, beaded owl, barred owl bowl.

RONNIE HESS

DINNER AT THE SHISH CAFE

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

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

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

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

THE FARMERS' MARKET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALEX GUBBINS

MADISON SUMMER, 2005

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

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

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

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

ANDY GRICEVICH

EXCISED POEM

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

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

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

Handwritten notes:
 A M A P ?
 a moving bicycle
 THERE ARE NO UNDERGROUND
 easily rewritten, summer's
 #, 10/12/13)
 - Andy Gricevich
 22
 30
 32
 40
 43
 48
 72
 100-108

echolocations poets map madison

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

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

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

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

2

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

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

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

Q.77
How to practice
Savannah's
Capacity

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

Development is like cancer
Drowns the real
Metaphor
Capacity
6-17-14-14

WINTER KILL.

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

PRECISION

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

BRENT GOODMAN

STEAM

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

A NIGHT AT ST. MARY'S

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAX GARLAND

THE LOON

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

Morrison Park, Lake Monona

MACAJA REVELS CAMPED AT A STREAM OF WATER

In *Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin*

there is a notation that a Black man

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

Macaja traveled on to buy land elsewhere.

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

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

The land was cheap, fertile with plenty

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

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

who camped at a refreshing stream

eighteen miles north of the village of Madison

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

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

MR. JAMES BRAXTON: A MEMORY POEM

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

THE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL FOOD PANTRY STOMP

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

THE BOUNCER'S CONFESSION

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

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

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

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

FLYING WITH TWO BILLS

For Bill Stafford and Bill Rewey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AIR LOCK

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

◇

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



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



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

EVERY SPRING GROWS DEEPER

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

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

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

[THE MORNING SOMEONE TORCHED SAINT RAPHAEL'S CATHEDRAL]

March 14, 2005

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

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

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

FORM 15: AFTER BPNICHOL'S "JOURNAL 3"

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

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

FAITH WILL EMPHASIZE THE SECOND SYLLABLE

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

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

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

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

AT THE YOUNG SHAKESPEARE PLAYERS

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

THE GENTLEST EXCAVATION

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

Imagine for a moment they were raptured.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Imagine all of Montana full of our fossils.

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

MARNIE BULLOCK DRESSER

AUBADE ON ROUTE 51, LATE APRIL.

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

THE HUSBAND CONFESSES

State Street, Early February

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT I MEANT TO SAY

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

BRUCE DETHLEFSEN

GONE TO GROUND

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

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

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

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

BRUCE DETHLEFSEN

ANNIVERSARY

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

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

STILL HERE

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

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

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

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

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

WHY NO ONE SAW IT COMING

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

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

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

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

a life laboring to break
bewilderment's code

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

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

Maybe we're merely steps
from nowhere.

AMELIA COOK FONTELLA

THE WI FILM FESTIVAL

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

JAN CHRONISTER

TREE ON JOHNSON STREET

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

SUE BUSSEY CHENETTE

FOR TAIT SANFORD BARROWS, 1913-1995

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

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

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

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

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

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

you laughed, *just like a cadence.*

CONFESSIONAL: HIJACKED

Performance script for 2 voices

1.

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

breathing here *above us unstitches*
the boats
breaking

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

goodbyes stamped
eyes restricted

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

divination // erasure bird

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

my tongue if *Oakland* her song

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

my own unwillingness to give

2.

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

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

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

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

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

3.
songs in the city with the fiery sheen:

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

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

face melting into *what printed on chant sheet*

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

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

but every time you close your eyes Lies!

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

but every time you close your eyes Lies!

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

but every time you close your eyes Lies!

5. *war profiteers* cut halfway by a dull *Neptune Orient Lines Ltd.'s APL unit*
Stevedoring Services of America knife—takes up *of Oakland anti-war*
demonstration

in back of throat. *Oakland police* All *inch-thick wooden dowels*
 the voices lie with you down *concussion flash-bang grenades*
 there where the still *tear gas*
 birds migrate. my mouth *sting balls*
 a door where i keep *projectiles*
 my safe secret lovely. *grapefruit-sized welts*
 small girls sit *refuse to disperse*

there keeping score. Note

6.

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

the window, waiting for silver
 Promises are not enough

flame.

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

ROBIN CHAPMAN

TEACHING MY SON TO DRIVE

In the Forest Hill Cemetery

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

THIS WAS A GREAT DAY

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

DIALOGUES

For Freiburg, Germany

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

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

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

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

Möchtest du auch meinen Nachtschisch?

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

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

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

JOSEPH BRIGGS

EXPOSURE

For Teresa McGovern

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

*

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

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

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

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

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

FAUSTINA BOHLING

MY SIDE OF TOWN

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

You may think to overlook it

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

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

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

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

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

All lessons to be learned
Or unlearned

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

The East side

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

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

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

EXIT #135

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

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

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

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

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

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

KIMBERLY BLAESER

SURVEYOR, 1849

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

CHEAP AT ANY PRICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

SELF-PORTRAIT AS MORE THAN THE SUM OF MY PARTS

When the red yearning of Aztec snake
has gone away,

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

when the bees have taken leave,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OLIVER BENDORF

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, LELAND COOPER

Waunakee, Wisconsin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JULY: STORM COMING

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

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

*Quickquickquickquickquickquick IT RAINS!"

DONNA BARKMAN

FREEWHEELING

For Peter

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

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

Small folded stapled books:
Nosferatu Returns
Frankenstein's Secret
The Hunchback of Willie Street Stalks Again

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

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

LINDA ASCHBRENNER

UNDERGRAD

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

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

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

MARILYN ANNUCCI

AUBADE

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

eaves and porches,
trash cans, shady

shapes, your suitcase
lifted into our car's

back seat. Traffic lights
blink yellow all the way

down Johnson Street,
and the sky begins

its slow resolution,
whitening. Your hand

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

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

from your cell, take out
your book, gaze out

the window as the plane
noses into the clouds

and you look down
one last time—roads,

farm fields, loves.
Freighted into all this light.

WHOLE FOODS

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

THE NIGHT OF THE METEORITE'S LANDING

It basically got light as day here.

And it rumbled like a trolley car.

—Bob Dowr, bartender, Alley Oops Tavern, Livingston, WI, April 14, 2010

I must have been in the underground
garage at the time, thinking

my meter had run out, hoping
I wouldn't get a parking ticket,

then relieved when my windshield
was bare. Icarus could have fallen

into Lake Mendota for all the dumb
ox I was, plowing my way home

up University Ave., left onto
Franklin. I don't even remember

stars above trees. I barely
remember trees. And I was sober

as a pad of paper, while the guys
down at Alley Oops dropped

their beers and squinted out
into a night blasting with light—

God's trolley car sparking
on the tracks to take them

heavenward. And then not.
But they had a story to tell.

I pulled into my dark driveway
hurried up the front walk.

A bright light blinked on,
the way it does.

BACKSTORIES & COMMENTS

Marilyn Zelke-Windau: I was a junior at UW–Madison when my brother was a sophomore at Milton College. He and I had always been close, being born a year and a month apart. He would drive to Madison, pick me up and we'd spend a day together. We had grown up with old cars. I learned to drive in a Studebaker Lark station wagon in which my foot would sink through the rusted floorboards every time I depressed the clutch. My brother inherited my dad's tendency for junk vehicles. This poem relates a breakdown on Hwy 151 as Ray was returning me to Madison. I had a huge term paper due the next day.

Timothy Yu: This poem is part of a series called *100 Chinese Silences*, which parodies poems by well-known authors that use stereotypes of Chineseness or Asianness. I began the series after attending a reading by Billy Collins in Madison that was attended by over a thousand people. Collins read his poem "Grave," which alludes to the "one hundred kinds of silence / according to the Chinese belief," only to admit at the poem's end that these 100 silences were "just made up." I resolved to write these 100 silences, many of which parody poems by Collins himself. For this poem, I replaced Collins's exoticized setting of Nepal with the more familiar snowy landscapes of Wisconsin. The poem originally appeared in *SHAMPOO* (shampoopoetry.com).

Ronald Wallace: Some years ago I was sitting in my office in Helen C. White Hall on the UW campus, eating a McDonald's hamburger and french fries. A student passing by saw me and said, "Oh, Professor Wallace, I'm so disappointed. I thought you, a poet, would be eating watercress sandwiches and drinking herbal tea. You can't write a poem about McDonald's!" The student left, disillusioned; I finished my hamburger, shut my door, and wrote this poem.

Angela Voras-Hills: When we first moved to Madison, my family and I were living on the first floor of an apartment complex beside the Yahara River. Possums, skunks, and turkeys ran often by our sliding glass door. One day, I saw what I thought was a deer statue in the parking lot, but then it raised its tail and took off toward the road. Somebody was always pulling the fire alarm in that building. While living in Boston, I missed lakes, trees, and fields terribly. "Water, Water Everywhere" (the title taken from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"), is a response to returning home and realizing my memory of the place was based just as much on a dream as it was on reality.

Moisés Villavicencio Barras: When I moved to Madison from Oaxaca, Mexico, my eyes became the eyes of a child again. I started to re-discover seasons, parks, people and streets. My memories of places and people that I left behind began to grow in my mind. "Madison" tells about my experience of learning a new language, learning to love a new city and its people. Like my Madison poem, "Reasons in Winter" also came to my mind when walking during the winter. I was crossing one of the bridges over the Yahara River here in Madison when the poem started to grow. This poem tries to explain my personal reasons about why I write. It is dedicated to my family who were persecuted by the Mexican government for leading a popular uprising in the state of Oaxaca where I am originally from.

Angela Trudell Vasquez: We were hit by an inattentive driver head on at 110 miles an hour, we were going 40 and she was going 70. It was in a construction zone. We were hit

so hard we did a 360 in the air and ended up on the edge of the bridge over Fair Oaks Avenue. We almost went over. My husband was severely injured. The EMTs could not believe we were still alive. I could not roll over for a week in bed without great effort. He took much longer to heal and had to have knee surgery ultimately. But we are so THANKFUL to be alive!

Marilyn L. Taylor: I decided to write “I Know a Bank Where the Wild Thyme Blows” after returning to Madison briefly for a West High class reunion—I think it was our twentieth. I remember deciding to drive through the Arboretum to see how it was doing after so many years—and I found it as breathtaking as ever. I even drove past what may have been the same grove of magnificent lilac trees—or perhaps their descendants. That’s when I recalled doing exactly the same thing with my girlfriends when I was sixteen. We found the sight of them, and the scent of them, so irresistible that we piled out of the car and almost literally hugged them. When I realized in retrospect how iconic that episode was, the poem began to materialize. (The title, of course, is a direct steal from Shakespeare.) All I can think of to say about the impetus for “Explication of a True Story” is that it is quite literally a “true story,” except for some chronological compression. I wrote it years after I last saw Lani, and I have no idea what has happened to her.

Janet Taliaferro: The poem was taken from an exercise I did in Marshall Cook’s creative non-fiction class years ago. The vignette was inspired by my early morning walk in Madison where my father had spent his freshman year in college. He was so impressed with Wisconsin that his college friends nicknamed him “Wissy” because he was always saying, “At Wisconsin they do so-and-so.” When he was a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, the first to receive a Master’s in Chemistry, he bought an old farmhouse across from the campus, establishing a book store that would become the focus of Campus Corner there.

Jim Stevens: I came to Four Lakes Country on this particular day with the intention of visiting some of the sacred places I habituated in earlier years. I had in mind to recount this to my longtime friend Marion Moran, whom I had seen a few weeks previous and with whom I had shared them in the past. We had always felt a responsibility for their well-being. All of these spaces make reference to the Earth and to the stars. In this sense, they were the universe and part of Grandmother Spider’s web. I began the day at Eagle Heights Woods and then I completed my circuit in the Town of Madison and in the Arboretum.

David Steingass: I loved the idea of “echolocations” but my one Madison poem concerned the winter revolt of 2011. With only weeks to deadline, I decided to try also a prosepoem which fused the subject matter of the effigy mounds as well as the Iceman discovered melting in his glacier in the Swiss-Italian Alps. On a high after these two poems, my dog Marlowe walking through the park across the street from my house, spurred the third poem, “Girl Walking Her Dog...” All three poems slipped in somehow just before the deadline.

Thomas R. Smith: For a small-town-bred kid at one of the Wisconsin State University outposts in the Sixties, a weekend excursion to Madison was a true counter-cultural immersion. In my dreams, to this day, Madison represents some larger-than-life bohemian fantasy born of that time. “Always, in Dreams” is dedicated to my late friend Gary Van Den Heuvel, from my hometown of Cornell, Wisconsin, who earned his undergraduate degree in Madison and went on to become, before his too-early death,

an internationally recognized authority on the philosophy of Susanne K. Langer. “Real Middle Class” was born, of course, of the protests surrounding the passage of Governor Walker’s so-called “budget repair” bill in the late winter and spring of 2011. Once again Madison became the locus of a hope for change that unfortunately fell short of fulfillment. But I am still heartened by the memory of the immense warmth, goodwill, and common purpose of those enormous crowds around the Square. They convinced me that what is best of the Wisconsin tradition will survive greedy, short-sighted Walkerism.

Jo Scheder: The impetus for “Crossing Tracks” came when, some time after trading my 18-year old heap for an intact newer car, I approached the railroad tracks at Fordham and automatically reached to prevent the ceiling parts from falling. This happened at tracks across Commercial, too, and other places around town where streets were buckled or potholed. The learned response was a reminder of research on stress and health risks: of the kinds of daily hassles that accrue because of differential exposure. One benefit of privilege is buffering from the impacts of mundane aggravations. I had recently read Neruda’s meditation on his socks, and that opened a stream of consciousness about the political meaning of my car.

Mary C. Rowin: I met my husband Roger when we both worked for the Division of Corrections. He worked in Madison and I worked on a research project in a Probation and Parole office on the Eastside of Milwaukee. I came to Madison for meetings in the State Office Building at One West Wilson. I did not own a car so I took the Badger Bus to Madison. Roger started his campaign to win my heart by driving me to the bus terminal on South Bedford Street. After a year of commuting to see one another, I transferred to Central Office and moved to Middleton. I worked at One West Wilson for about fifteen years. I have very fond memories of our supervisor, Ted Johnson, who likely knew what we were up to, but kept it to himself.

Richard Roe: The dancers drew me in—their energy, their partnership, their joy, and precision—like the band’s rhythms. I took many pages of notes and could write several poems inspired by them.

Fran Rall: The poems in *Common Joy II* had their start with a 1992 Writer’s Place contest about outdoor art in Madison. The poems I sent in encouraged Frances Hurst to produce a second edition of her book of photographs with 18 of my poems.

James Pollock: This is an excerpt from a twenty-three page poem in terza rima which appears in my book *Sailing to Babylon* (Able Muse Press, 2012). The poem explores, among other things, the geology, natural history, prehistory, and modern history of Quarry Park, a seventeen-acre wood on the near west side of Madison, about a block from my house. The poem resembles a canto of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* because it tells the story of a hike in the woods on my fortieth birthday—though in this case my guide is not Virgil but my young son Felix. The poem also has much in common with the tradition of the ‘Greater Romantic Lyric.’

Darrell Petska: Many of my poems deal with time and place. Seeing a farm, a mall, a city, I find myself wondering what came before, what might come after. East Towne Mall has an air of permanence, but eons of history lie beneath it, and someday the mall will be history, replaced by...what? Looking back and forward in time is, for me, an enjoyable way to “know” the world.

Andrea O'Brien: I wrote “The Majestic” out of a desire to capture the rare experience of being in the moment. The actual moment took place at the Orpheum, but I thought the name “The Majestic” better suited to the poem because it described not only a physical location but also the characters in that mythical moment. My boyfriend-now-husband thought I took my poetic license too far. It has been a sore point since then, and I suspect it will continue to be for the course of our lives. In an attempt to make amends, I wrote the sister poem “The Orpheum.”

Gillian Nevers: The impetus for “It Didn’t Feel Dangerous” was an online prompt from the remarkable poet, Lisa Chilar. In 1965 my older sister returned from a trip to Europe and brought me *lederhosen*, which I wore every day that summer—to my painting class, my philosophy class, and, at night, to bars. I was an art student and *knew* I’d be forgiven sins of eccentricity and affectation. I was tall, skinny, long-legged and, apparently, noticed, because one night in the Pub a boy approached me. R.W. acted like we’d met before, like we knew each other. He was so convincing that I agreed to leave my friends and go with him, on his motorcycle, to Sun Prairie to a stock car race. Afterwards, he took me to his apartment in a complex off of Badger Road, where we ran into Marshall Shapiro in the parking lot. In those days Marshall had a TV show and was known as “Marshall the Marshall.” We engaged in a silly shoot-out, thumbs cocked, index fingers pointed. Later that night, R.W. realized I wasn’t “interested,” so he took me home. A few years later, 1968 to be exact, Christine Rothchild’s lifeless body was found behind some bushes at Sterling Hall. I don’t remember the earlier risk I took registering with me then, but when Lisa’s prompt appeared on my computer screen, all those years later, I thought of all the other girls murdered since Christine—girls who thought it wasn’t dangerous.

Ralph Murre: My poem is based on what I remember as real life, ca. 1965.

CJ Muchhala: Wisconsin poets were invited to visit the Chazen Art Museum (then called the Elvehjem) and write poems on artworks of their choice for a Public Reading/Anthology project. I’ve always admired O’Keeffe’s paintings, but had never seen “Turkey Feathers in an Indian Pot.” I was struck by its elegant simplicity (unlike her flagrant flowers) and felt a timeless- and human- connection among its elements. I was also impressed by O’Keeffe’s vision; it’s not often that “plain” turkey feathers are the subject of art. When I first saw “Undetermined Line” at the Chazen, the complete picture of this weary young wife came to me. I was surprised as abstract art rarely speaks to me that quickly or that fiercely. Her story cried out to be told. Of course, it’s fictional... [*Editors’ note:* O’Keeffe was born in the Madison area and attended high school here for two years.]

Norman Leer: When Grethe and I moved to Madison in 2007, we noticed the Angelic Brewing Co. on Johnson St. as we came in on the bus. We had developed a private symbolism around the figure of Clarence, the Angel from *It’s a Wonderful Life*, where he embodied our sense that any notion of transcendence or spirituality had to be approached with humor and mystery. When the Brewery closed about a year later, Clarence somehow landed in the poem.

Jon K. Lauck: Many historians come to Madison, Wisconsin, and they do so for an important reason. In the 19th century, Lyman Copeland Draper began gathering and assembling the memories of those who moved West to settle in states such as Wisconsin. He placed the vast amount of material he gathered at the Wisconsin Historical Society and made the institution the leading advocate of recording and remembering Midwestern

history. When the Wisconsin-born and educated historian Frederick Jackson Turner became a professor at the University of Wisconsin, he became famous through his advocacy of Midwestern history and by relying on Draper's large collections and the influential work of the Wisconsin Historical Society. When young historians work through the cartons of historical materials at the WHS and sift through its stacks, they are carrying on the legacies of Draper and Turner and giving voice to the American midlands.

Peg Lauber: Our kids lived all over Madison for nearly ten years, our son on both sides and our daughter usually very near James Madison Park, but the place I liked best was our son's house right on Lake Monona where the ducks and coots would swim right up to the lawn.

Daniel Kunene: Well, they don't only hang effigies, they shoot people and are exonerated. A "forgiving," warbling system, wouldn't you say? Forgive me. It hurts.

John Krumberger: My last year in Madison I lived in an apartment above University Avenue. A McDonald's was next door and then the Badger Tavern. I was no longer a student. I worked at the McDonald's 30 hours a week or so, making just enough to support myself. I had studied compulsively throughout my undergraduate years so as to achieve high grades; nonetheless I was rejected from the four graduate schools I had applied to. After initially feeling stunned and ashamed, I developed a skill during that year of having fun and living in the moment. Sometimes I would read deep into the night. When I read *Look Homeward, Angel*, I remember weeping at the death of the protagonist's brother Ben, then overcome, going out for a walk even though it was almost 2 a.m. Though I longed for an answer to all the questions that couldn't be answered then—Would I become a psychologist? Who would love me? Would anyone love me?—I received instead an awareness that life was bigger and more mysterious than the narrow focus of what would happen to me. The snow, the haunting beauty of a novel about a young man finding his way in the world, that time of life free of any status or title, all of it contributed to a piercing awareness of how we all are just strangers wandering through this odd enchanted world. I had walked down Randall, past Regent Street all the way to the Vilas Park Zoo. Looking up into the sky I let out a howl. Later I would read about how Thomas Wolfe would walk the streets of Brooklyn howling sometimes after finishing a long session of writing.

Mark Kraushaar: I was so struck by the ad that inspired this poem, the idea of paying someone to talk on the phone and all it suggests about social isolation and then, beyond that, our struggle simply being here, living here, on Earth I mean, this trying to glean some meaning as we go.

John Koethe: *Editors' Note:* The bookstore referred to in the poem is Avol's. The reading of "R.O.T.C. Kills" took place at the 2010 Wisconsin Book Festival and is available on YouTube.

Martha Kaplan: "Ancient Rites" was written for the 2011 Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood Winter Solstice Celebration in Glenwood Park that runs along Glenway Street to Monroe Street. The park was created from an abandoned quarry and designed by noted early landscape designer Jens Jensen. Jensen, a Danish immigrant, advocated for the use of native plantings in public parks. He also designed The Clearing in Door County and many nature conservatories in the Chicago area. The solstice celebration includes bonfire, s'mores, music, poetry, sledding and good conversation after dark around a council circle within the glen.

Joan Wiese Johannes: Both “Midlife CPR” and “Becoming Legend” are fantasies inspired by visits to State Street during a time when I realized I was never going to trade my home and career for the thrill of spontaneously refocusing my life. An actual For Rent sign in a window was the springboard into “Midlife CPR.” “Becoming Legend” came from watching men wandering down State Street and imagining their connections to it. I had seen the ruins of Sterling Hall when I visited my brother, a student at UW, so I realized I was the right age to drift into legend with the other State Street people if I ran away from the tensions and responsibilities of my sensible life and just played my flute in “the only parking ramp that doesn’t reek of piss.” Of course, I knew there were no parking ramps near State Street that didn’t reek, but writing the poems gave me an enjoyable escape from my reality.

Catherine Jagoe: This poem came out of the sadness I feel as a cyclist, watching the countryside around Madison get swallowed up by urban sprawl. About twenty years ago I had a very visceral reaction of loss witnessing the developments then beginning along Seminole Highway, even though of course the road itself, and the farmland along it, were themselves disruptions of an earlier landscape.

Lowell Jaeger: I was a freshman in Madison fall of 1969 through spring 1970, a very tumultuous time. The university shut down a couple weeks early that spring semester because of rioting. That summer the Army Math Research Center [Sterling Hall] was bombed, killing a professor. I was just a kid from a backwater Wisconsin hometown. I got a real education that year in Madison.

Ronnie Hess: A good waitress and good food can be hard to find. When you do discover them, the combination can be inspiring.

Rob Harrington: My wife Lisa is a UW–Madison graduate and quickly made Saturdays in Madison a part of our life. The day always begins with a trip to the Farmer’s Market which I quickly came to love, not just for the food and drink, but for cross-section of individuals. There is no other place in Madison that captures the pulse and mood of the Madison community so amenably.

Alex Gubbins: I wrote this poem in reflection of my first summer back to Madison from a yearlong deployment to Iraq (2004–05) as an Army Enlisted Counselor. Before deployment, State Street in Madison was a fun place to go, but now I can only feel pain for all the homeless, some of them Nam vets. The most passion I felt from US citizens upon my return—aside from my mother, father, and brother—was from the homeless; they are the only ones I could relate to.

Fabu: I journeyed to Wisconsin in the 1980s because the UW–Madison was the only place in the US to study African Literature to the PhD level. When I arrived, I was told that Blacks in Wisconsin came from Chicago. My personal research has revealed a substantial and rich cultural history of Blacks in Wisconsin such as Macaja Revels and James Braxton. Both African American men, they came to Wisconsin searching for a freedom denied in the South. In Wisconsin they both found better, yet racism met them at the state line in a more subtle and complex form.

Martín Espada: *Editors’ note:* “The Bouncer’s Confession” is set at Club de Wash, Lou & Peter Berryman’s bar, though it never gets mentioned by name.

Sadie Ducet: *Editors' note:* The poet referenced in “Faith Will Emphasize...” is Shelly Hall, a gifted Waukesha, Wisconsin poet who passed away far too early, in 2010. For curious readers, her three books are available from Popcorn Press.

Marnie Bullock Dresser: I wrote “The Gentlest Excavation” in response to a story and picture, in the State Journal, I think, of the true story of the Sheriff’s Department bringing up the car that held Ronald Wick and Carl Stolz for 45 years. It’s such a compelling story—cold case, mystery solved, youthful indiscretion punished—it just really resonated with me.

CX Dillhunt: For “The Husband Confesses”: When I was working on campus I’d make my rounds of the bookstores; there were many more back then. The joke with my family for years is that I had a sixth sense for bookstores, could hear them calling and would inevitably be sucked in by some force therein...also, for years I’d keep a \$20 bill as “mad money” tucked away in my wallet for those days when I found myself wandering from store to store, many of them “used” with bargains to be had. Anyway, the poem is about passion, something I seemed unable to tell to others. The joking manner seems to free me to tell, to play with the concept of *husbandry* and its root husband and even going further back to the Norse of “hus” for *house* and the man as occupier and the tiller of the soil, the farmer. Maybe that’s not all in there; but it seems the entry into the poem for me, and I hope for the reader, is when poet says, “I confess I do not know to whom I confess.” I mean, at first even I thought the writer was apologizing to a spouse for falling in love with, of all things, dead women poets; but it’s much more. I am tending to their needs, they (the books!) listen to me and I to them. And, of course, I must tell you, this is a true story.

“What I Meant to Say” comes out of another true story. Lindfield does cross Muirfield, right at the bottom of the hill from our house; it’s actually a valley with roads running through. Muirfield is like the Colorado rushing through the Grand Canyon of traffic. Bikes have to stop, well, it used to say yield. I love the thrill of riding into the valley/canyon on my bike only a block from home. I seemed to get the same rush whether coming or going to work on my bike, sometimes counting out haiku syllables on the handlebars or pumping them out with pedals, the brakes when needed. Nothing like a car running through your poem on its way home or on its way to work to make you pay attention to reality—I felt the words “how they kept on going.” I knew as I slammed on my brakes the happenstance of my thoughts or the words in the haiku trying to find me, me trying to find it, the words flying on without me, as the poems says: “as if we had found each other by chance.” And I guess my attempt at a simple man’s *ars poetica*, the revelation which the poem took me to: “...that’s the way of haiku.”

Bruce Dethlefsen: My son, Willi, died in a moped accident just north of Madison in 2010. He lived on Admiral Drive in Monona.

Alice D’Alessio: I grew up in New York and had never been west of Pennsylvania when we first moved to Wisconsin. For the first year or so, I prefaced all my conversation with, “In New York, we always...” until someone kindly told me to shut up about New York. The poem is in the form of a reflection—an epiphany—that occurred some years later, when I realized how I had become converted to a Wisconsinite. I consider it a love poem and not in any way a putdown or criticism of my adopted state.

Ron Czerwien: The process of writing this poem began one evening while Susan Elbe

and I were browsing the fiction display at our local Borders Bookstore. One of us suggested that some of the book titles might make good titles for collaborative poems. I chose the title from that list and also submitted the first line. We then composed the poem strictly via e-mail. I wrote the first line, Susan the second and we continued to alternate lines. We decided not to edit during the process. The varying line lengths and freer use of white space were Susan's ideas. I followed her lead. Susan's poems are replete with words that are surprising but never arbitrary. My post-modern leanings stretched Susan's approach. Both of us think it's important to collaborate with someone whose work and sensibility you enjoy and respect, but having different styles makes it more interesting. We hope to do more together in the future.

Jan Chronister: I saw this tree from a bus window riding to my Write-by-the-Lake poetry class with Angela Rydell.

Sue Bussey Chenette: Tait was my piano teacher at the University of Wisconsin—a fine pianist, gifted teacher, and among the most important people in my life. I find myself writing more elegies these days. I think it comes with age. There's a desire to fix, in sounds and images, people and the places now gone or changed. I wrote the poem to keep a person, a place, a particular shared moment.

Ching-In Chen: Shortly after I moved to Wisconsin, Scott Walker became governor and I was busing to Madison every other day from Milwaukee, getting involved in the fight to preserve collective bargaining and other rights being taken away in my new home. At the time, I got requests to write about what was going on and I felt like I couldn't, I was too caught up in the rush and flow of what was happening, and I couldn't slow down enough for reflection. It was only in collaging my past experience of anti-war organizing and direct action in the Bay area that I could find an entryway into this poem.

Robin Chapman: These poems both came straight from experience to the page—in a burst of exuberance, in the case of “This Was a Great Day,” and from the assiduous notes I made in an effort not to panic while my 16-year-old first learned to master a stick-shift car.

Sarah Busse: “Dialogues” was written for Madison's sister city, Freiburg, at the request of the Mayor's office.

Joseph Briggs: I had ten days to write this poem because I heard about the call for submission late. I wanted to write a poem involving Madison for many years, but I just couldn't find a way to tell it properly. Deadlines, it seems, help. During Thanksgiving this past year, it was windy but unseasonably warm. I decided not to wear a jacket to Thanksgiving dinner. That night it got extremely cold and the story of Teresa McGovern popped into my head (if you don't know her story there is plenty of information about her online). I wrote a draft of this poem that night after everyone else went to bed. This poem isn't specifically about Teresa, but it does highlight details of her death. She did die of exposure. I wanted to write a poem about young people that come to Madison full of ambition, lust, and high expectations. I wanted to write an ode to those who've decided to take their own lives in the city I love so much.

Faustina Bohling: One of my fondest memories of my daughter is her joy in a field of dandelions at age 1 ½. At the end of this field was a playground which we never made it to. She found it more fun to toddle inch by inch picking the flowers and giving them

to me. We sat that afternoon making crowns for her hair and soaking in her joy. I think about how these flowers never have a chance to really get the recognition they deserve. Not really appreciated as a means to express love. From a child's perspective picking them is all the currency needed to express this rich emotion.

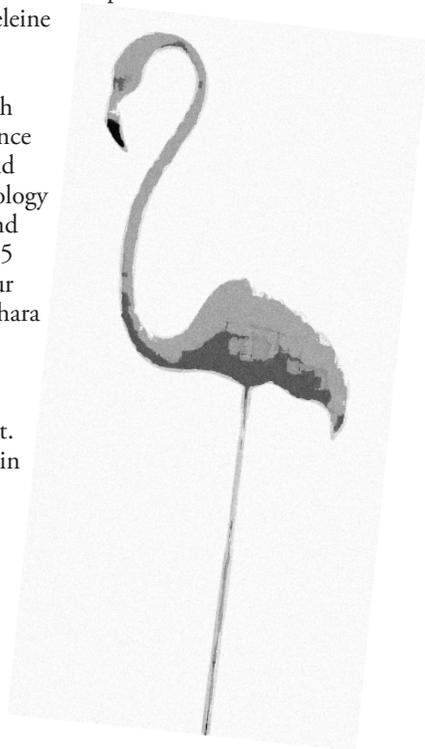
Kimberly Blaaser: The tenor of my two poems varies greatly because they stem from very different experiences of place. The "Exit # 135" takes a lighthearted look at my strange (and conflicted) fondness for Cracker Barrel. Despite chastising myself for succumbing to the company's nostalgic marketing, the Madison restaurant-cum-store became a regular stopping point on drives home to Minnesota with my young children. Now, even when they are not in the car, I admit the biscuits and honey draw me in. "Surveyor, 1849" arose from my always testy contemplation of English place names. Colonial claiming and re-naming of Indigenous territory and the notions of who has authority to own place by ascribing a name meets "Mendota" in this poem. In a reflective gesture, the poem itself plays on surveyor Frank Hudson's name.

Oliver Bendorf: It is true, in retrospect, about all the signage at Governor Nelson State Park. Also, I learned recently from an archeologist family friend that Leland Cooper is infamous among archeologists in the area, though the friend didn't elaborate.

Margaret Benbow: "July: Storm Coming" is grounded in my life as a UW-Madison student during the sixties. It was an unforgettably intense time to be young. In the same day you might be knocked senseless by tear gas in an Anti-Vietnam confrontation, and that evening laugh with joy at Andres Segovia's magnificent classic guitar in a Union concert. Throughout and always, there was the rich background of your friendships, and also a campus so beautiful, so welcoming, that it seemed to nestle you and nurture you like a friend. For a very young English major, it was also a magical time when you might actually catch an awed glimpse of Helen C. White herself, in her splendid hat! Or take a class from the much beloved Shakespeare scholar, Madeleine Doran, the "virgin professor" of the poem.

Donna Barkman: In the 1970s, I lived in Madison with my then-teenaged kids, getting a degree in Library Science at UW and subsequently working at College Library and Madison Public Library. When I heard about this anthology project, I interviewed each of my now-adult children and this is one of the poems inspired by those talks. Some 35 years later, we all have brilliantly etched memories of our residency on the Near East Side, one block from the Yahara and one block from Lake Monona.

Linda Aschbrenner: To heck with football! I was just happy to be away from home and in my own apartment. Adams Street was my daily companion as I, young and in love, walked to poetry classes.



LOCAL CONVERSATIONS, LOCAL PROMPTS

We hope some of you may want to share this book, or some of its poems, in classrooms, community reads, or writing and book groups. Here are questions to begin a discussion around the ideas of local writing, wherever you live, and writing locationally meaningful poetry:

1. Do you prefer specific language in poems? Why or why not? What places do you think should be named, and how? Do you like “the gym,” “church,” “the store,” or would you write “the ‘Y’ on Odana,” “High Point Church,” “the Jenifer Street Co-op”?
2. What do you think about the use of historical research in local poems? Some examples in this book are pieces by Fabu, Jim Stevens, Kimberly Blaeser, and David Steingass, and Darrell Petska. Local archives are great resources for poetry. Lots of material is available digitally and online, but what places would you suggest, in addition to or instead of a museum, library, or archive, to research a poem? What difference might that research make to the poem?
3. Be aware of and awake to local language—in our region, “Willy Street,” “bubbler,” and “Freakfest” are a few examples of local referents, to local celebrations and events, and to locally significant symbols. What are some of these in your local? How does their significance vary culturally within your local? What local symbols do/ don’t resonate for you and why?
4. Does an event that received news coverage outside your local represent the event accurately? When people outside your local refer to it, are they unrealistically positive or negative? How does that make you feel?
5. Be aware of local events and communities, and read local news, but observe for yourself when you can in order to witness what is local. Walk your neighborhood. Walk another neighborhood. Go to events you don’t normally get to in ways you don’t normally use to get there. Take the bus (or other public transportation), if you drive, or take public transportation somewhere new. Talk (and listen) to new people. Write notes about what you see, what surprises you, what you learn.
6. What does “Madison” mean? What’s our responsibility as writers (and readers) to name/create/present/challenge ideas around “Madison” (or the city or town you live) to outsiders and insiders?
7. What is a writer’s responsibility to represent their place accurately? Can we approach poetry this way, at least sometimes? Should we? Why or why not?
8. How is poetry different from ethnography, journalism, or other kinds of observation? Is there overlap? Of what sort?
9. Do you feel like you have some sense of Madison from reading these poems? What is it? If you’re from Madison, does the city that emerges here match your experience or not?
10. How might this anthology be different if we had focused on Madison poets, instead of Madison poems? Would the reader have a different sense of Madison, reading that alternate anthology?
11. What other places and locations and spaces might an anthology focus around? A county? A watershed? A neighborhood? A particular platted area? A river or coastline or culture? A gathering place? A festival?
12. What places do you love? What places do you spend a lot of time and don’t enjoy? What places inspire you? What places do you want to change/transform? How might writing poetry about these different places change those feelings, or would it?

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- Yu: "Chinese Silence No. 19" originally appeared in *SHAMPOO* (shampoopoetry.com).
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Jaeger: "The War at Home" is from *War on War*, Utah State University Press, 1988.

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Espada: "The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp" was published in *Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lovers Hands*, Curbstone Press, 1990. "The Bouncer's Confession" was published in *Imagine the Angels of Bread*, W.W. Norton, 1996. Reproduced by permission of the author.

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Dunn: The text found in "Form 15" was created using a restrained vocabulary selected from bpNichol's *Journal* (1978), as found in his collection, *The Alphabet Game* (2007).

Ducet: "Faith Will Emphasize the Second Syllable" first appeared in *The Progressive*.

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Moisés Villavicencio Barras is a Mexican poet, fiction writer and co-founder of *Cantera Verde*, a magazine which has been one of the most significant literary publications in Mexico for the last twenty years. His first book of poetry *May Among Voices* was published in 2001. His children's book *Urarumo* (2005) was published and distributed for the Department of Education in Oaxaca, México. His second book of poetry *Luz de Todos los Tiempos/Light of All Times* (bilingual edition) was published by Cowfeather Press in 2013.

The poetry of Lisa Vihos has appeared in numerous print and online journals including *Big Muddy*, *Red Cedar*, *Red Fez*, *Seems*, *The Camel Saloon*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas* and *Y.A.R.N.* She has published two chapbooks, *A Brief History of Mail* (Pebblebrook Press, 2011) and *The Accidental Present* (Finishing Line Press, 2012). She is an associate editor for *Stoneboat* and an occasional guest blogger for *The Best American Poetry*. She keeps a blog of her poems at <http://lisapoemoftheweek.blogspot.com>.

Angela Trudell Vasquez is a poet, writer and activist. Her work has appeared on stage and in print in the United States and internationally too. She was the featured poet for the Milwaukee Latina Monologues from 2009 to 2011. Her books of poetry, *The Force Your Face Carries* and *Love in War Time*, are available at artnightbooks.com, Woodland Pattern and the Riverwest Co-op.

Wendy Vardaman (wendyvardaman.com) is the author of *Obstructed View* (Fireweed Press), co-editor/webmaster of *Verse Wisconsin* (versewisconsin.org), and co-founder/co-editor of Cowfeather Press (cowfeatherpress.org). She is one of Madison, Wisconsin's two Poets Laureate (2012–2015) and coordinates conversations, readings, workshops and other events with Sarah Busse. Her blog *liveart(s)/artlive(s)* is at wvardaman.tumblr.com.

John Tuschen (1949–2005) was appointed Madison's first Poet Laureate by Mayor Paul Soglin in 1977. Tuschen served as Poet Laureate until 2000. He was the assistant gallery manager at Gallery 853, organized poetry readings, published other people's poems, performed in a variety of venues, and is credited by some for "bringing beat era performance poetry to Madison in unfamiliar venues."

Alison Townsend teaches at UW–Whitewater. Her books are *Persephone in America* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), *And Still the Music* (Flume Press, 2007), *The Blue Dress* (White Pine Press, 2003), and *What the Body Knows* (Parallel Press, 2002).

Robert G. Toomey taught college English at UW–Madison; UW–Whitewater; St. Ambrose University (Iowa); St. John Fisher University (New York); and Providence College (Rhode Island). He retired from the University of Wisconsin Memorial Library in December 2001, and devoted his waking hours to music, reading, and writing. Toomey died in 2005 at the age of 76.

Steve Tomasko thinks about the dust mites that live under the couch and the eyebrow mites that live on all of us. He muses about the 5,000 species of bacteria that live in our mouths. Someone has to. He's been published here and occasionally there. Steve lives in Middleton with his wife, Jeanie (also a poet), three cats and half an empty nest.

Jeanie Tomasko is the author of *Sharp as Want* (Little Eagle Press), a poetry/artworks collaboration with Sharon Auberle, *Tricks of Light* (Parallel Press) and the e-chapbook, *If I Confess Before 5:00* (Right Hand Pointing). *The Collect of the Day* is forthcoming from Centennial Press. Born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin, she earned her degree in nursing from UW–Madison and works as a home health nurse in the Madison area.

Marilyn L. Taylor, former Poet Laureate of Wisconsin (2009–2010) and Milwaukee (2004–2005), has published six collections of poetry. Her award-winning work has appeared in many anthologies and journals, including *Poetry*, *American Scholar*, *Able Muse*, and *Measure*. She has recently moved back to Madison after living for many years in Milwaukee, where she taught poetry and poetics at UWM.

Janet Taliaferro lives six months in Leesburg, VA, and six months in Hazelhurst, WI. She is the author of two published novels and a chapbook. She holds an MA in Creative Writing. A member of WFOP, she and three other poets have an online poetry critique group.

Australian-born Katrin Talbot is a violist, photographer, and author of *St. Cecilia's Daze* (Parallel Press). Her poetry has appeared in a number of journals and anthologies. Katrin's photo essay of Schubert's *Winterreise* was published as a coffee-table book and CD by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Denise Sweet taught Creative Writing, Literature and Mythology at UW–Green Bay. She has won several awards for her poetry including the Diane Decorah Award, the Posner Award, the Woman of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Women's Council and the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas First Book Award for Poetry. Sweet was Wisconsin's second Poet Laureate.

Heather Swan's poems have appeared in *The Cream City Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Iris*, *The Comstock Review* and *Basalt*, among others. Her chapbook *The Edge of Damage* was published by Parallel Press. She teaches writing and environmental studies in Madison.

Judith Strasser's poems and essays appeared in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Witness* and many other venues. Her chapbook, *Sand Island Succession: Poems of the Apostles*, was published in 2002 by Parallel Press. Judith's memoir, *Black Eye: Escaping a Marriage, Writing a Life*, was published by Terrace Books/University of Wisconsin Press in 2004. She died in 2009. Visit judithstrasser.com.

Matthew Stolte began practicing concrete & visual poetry July, 1998, in Madison. His work has frequently been in *Verse Wisconsin*.

Jim Stevens lived for thirty years in Madison. He is the editor of *The Journey Home: Four Centuries of Wisconsin Literature* and *Dreaming History: Native Writing of Wisconsin*. Since 1998, he has lived in Northern Wisconsin, where he edited *Yukhika latuhse* (She tells us stories), an annual journal of Native writing. In 2012, he co-chaired "Returning the Gift," a national Native writer's conference held in Milwaukee. "A Map for the Day of Spider" is from *The Book of Big Dog Town: Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around* (Fireweed Press 2013).

David Steingass is the author of six books including *Fishing for Dynamite* and *Great Plains* (RedDragonfly Press, Redwing, MN), which won the 2002 Posner Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers. He is interested especially in technical and stylistic possibilities among lineated poems, prose poems, and flash fiction. Steingass also presents writing workshops and residencies in schools.

Sandy Stark lives in Madison. She is the author of *Counting on Birds*, published by Wisconsin's Fireweed Press in 2010. Her poems have appeared in the Wisconsin Poets' Calendar, the *Texas Poetry Calendar*, the former *Wisconsin Academy Review*, and *Verse Wisconsin*.

Thomas R. Smith lives in River Falls, Wisconsin, and teaches at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. His most recent book of poems is *The Foot of the Rainbow* (Red Dragonfly Press). Some lines of his poem "Peace Vigil" appear in granite at the Elizabeth Link Peace Park on State Street in Madison. Visit thomasrsmithpoet.com.

Danez Smith is a proud Cave Canem Fellow, two-time Pushcart Nominee, Best New Poets Nominee, avid twerker, and graduate of the First Wave Hip-Hop & Urban Arts Learning Community at UW–Madison. Danez has taken his work to schools, community centers, poetry venues, and theatres across the country, as well as abroad, and is the 2013 Rustbelt Slam individual champion. He is an assistant editor for *Muzzle Magazine* and edits the Line Breaks Chapbook Series for First Wave. He thinks you look good today, now werk!

Shoshauna Shy is a member of the Prairie Fire Poetry Quartet. In May 2004, she founded Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and magazines including *The Seattle Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Rattle*, *Rosebud* and *Poetry Northwest*. Her collection, *What the Postcard Didn't Say*, won an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association in 2008.

Jo Scheder was raised in Milwaukee and moved to Honolulu for research and a professorship at the University of Hawai'i. There she also was an independent film and television producer/writer, and a theater lighting designer/director. An anthropologist, her research on health effects of stress and social inequality includes collaborations in American Samoa and with migrant farmworkers in the US. Email jscheder@terracon.net.

Margaret (Peggy) Rozga has published two books of poetry, the award-winning volume about Milwaukee's fair housing marches, *Two Hundred Nights and One Day*, and a collection responding to her Army Reservist son's deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, *Though I Haven't Been to Baghdad*. Inspired by her small garden, she is currently completing work on a new manuscript, *Justice Freedom Herbs*.

Mary C. Rowin writes poems and stories from her home in Middleton, Wisconsin. Her poems have appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Stoneboat*, *Solitary Plover*, and the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' *Calendar* and *Museletter*. Mary is a docent at the Chazen Museum of Art and a Literacy Network ESL tutor.

You can find Richard Roe, a retired Legislative Analyst, at jazz concerts, in dance classes, and lounges, taking notes, drawing diagrams, and thinking about his next book. His last collection is *Knots of Sweet Longing*, and his work has appeared in *Stoneboat*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and *Comstock Review*.

Julia Rice returned to her home town of Milwaukee after years of teaching high school English and of practicing law in Chicago. She has had poems published in *Korone*, WFOP's *Museletter*, *Songs of St. Francis*, the 2014 Wisconsin Poets' *Calendar*, *The Goose River Anthology 2013*, and *Alive Now!* She is a Franciscan sister and a member of Greenleaf Writers.

Carl J. Rasmussen practices law at the firm of Boardman & Clark LLP in Madison. He was among the first poets to publish in the *Madison Review*.

Fran Rall is 88 and still writing and submitting to the current WFOP Poets' *Calendar*. Her previous collection of Madison place poetry was *Common Joy II* with Frances Hurst, 1994.

Brian Powers is a lifelong resident of Madison. He has placed poetry and prose in several Wisconsin publications, including *Our Lives* magazine.

Andrea Potos is the author of four poetry collections, including *Yaya's Cloth* (Iris Press), and most recently *We Lit the Lamps Ourselves* from Salmon Poetry in Ireland. Her next book of poetry will be published by Salmon Poetry in 2015, tentatively entitled *An Ink Like Early Twilight*. Andrea has always felt grounded and bonded to the earth that is Madison, Wisconsin, ever since her first journey to the Bakers Rooms on State Street. She misses that place still.

James Pollock is the author of *Sailing to Babylon* (Able Muse Press, 2012), a finalist for the Griffin Poetry Prize and the Governor General's Literary Award in Poetry, runner-up for the Posner Poetry Book Award, and winner of an Outstanding Achievement Award

in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association; and *You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2012). He is an associate professor at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and lives with his wife and son in Madison, Wisconsin. Visit james-pollock.com.

Darrell Petska's poetry has appeared in *Scissors and Spackle*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Curio Poetry*, and elsewhere. Now retired, he worked for many years as engineering editor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Michael Penn II is a student and a member of the First Wave Hip-Hop & Urban Arts Learning Community at UW–Madison.

Sara Parrell was awarded first prize in the 2008 Poetry Center of Chicago's Juried Reading for her manuscript, *Psalms of New Orleans*, and received the Leo Love Poetry Merit Award in 2012. Her work has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *qarrtsiluni*, and *Verse Wisconsin*, and she co-curates The Bridge Poetry Series at the Chazen Museum of Art. Sara is faculty at the UW–Madison School of Nursing and a member of the Madison Metropolitan School District's mental health consultation team.

Helen Padway lives, writes, and laughs in Wisconsin. She is part of the Sparks and the Hartford Avenue Poets. Her poems have been published in a variety of print publications and most recently in the ezines *New Verse News* and *Your Daily Poem*. She is young enough to think that poetry can change the world.

Andrea O'Brien has recent or forthcoming poems in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, and *Verse Wisconsin*. She lives in Denver with her husband, who continues to ask her the tough questions about truth and the importance of names in poetry. Visit andreaobrien.net.

Jay Nunnery was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. His work has appeared in various online and print journals. Currently, he lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he attends college.

Gillian Nevers moved to Madison in 1962 to attend the University. She never left. She can't imagine living anywhere else.

Andrea Musher served as Madison's second Poet Laureate from January, 2001, through December, 2007; she taught English and Women's Studies at UW–Whitewater for twenty-six years. Retired now, she sings with the Raging Grannies, paints, and talks to her plants. Currently she is writing a musical dialogue entitled, FRIEDA AND CAROLINE.

Ralph Murre draws, writes poetry and occasional prose, and has been published in various periodicals, in several anthologies, and in his own books: *Crude Red Boat*, *Psalms*, and *The Price of Gravity*. He has had thirty occupations, more or less, and as many obsessions. Look for him near water.

CJ Muchhala's poems have appeared in anthologies, print and online publications, in art/poetry installations, and on CD-ROM and audio CD. Her work has been nominated for the Best of the Net award and twice for the Pushcart Prize. She lives in Shorewood, Wisconsin.

Patricia Monaghan taught literature and environment at DePaul University in Chicago. She was the author of four books of poetry, most recently *Homefront* (Word Tech Press). She was Senior Fellow at and co-founder of the Black Earth Institute, a progressive think-tank dedicated to reconnecting environment, spirituality and social justice through the arts.

Oscar Mireles has been writing poetry for the past 25 years. He is the editor of two anthologies *I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 20 Hispanic Poets* (Focus Communications, 1989) and *I didn't know there were Latinos in Wisconsin: 30 Hispanic Writers* (Focus Communications, 1999) and the author of *Second Generation* (Focus Communications, 1985). He has been the Principal/Executive Director of Omega School for the past nineteen years and is the father of four children, his greatest poems.

Richard Merelman writes poems because language is the only medium through which he can hope to achieve beautiful expression. Poems of his have appeared in *Main Street Rag* and *Measure*. Recent poems have appear in *Bumble Jacket Miscellany* and *Verse Wisconsin*. He taught political science at the UW–Madison until 2001. His volume, *The Imaginary Baritone*, appeared in 2012 (Fireweed Press).

Tim McLafferty lives in NYC and works as a drummer. He has played on Broadway in *Urinetown* and *Grey Gardens*, and in many other interesting places. His work currently appears in many fine journals, including *Forge*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Pearl*, *Portland Review*, and *Right Hand Pointing*. Visit timmclafferty.com.

Jeri McCormick, a Madison poet and long-time teacher in area senior centers and the Elderhostel program, is a recipient of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' Muse Prize and a Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship. Her most recent book, *Marrowbone of Memory*, was published by Salmon Poetry in Ireland.

Arthur Madson, born in 1925 and reared on an Iowa farm, left farming for the academic life. His fellow poets saw him as quick-witted, wry and unmatched in his nuanced portrayal of fellow humans. A veteran of World War II, Arthur earned his PhD at the University of Oklahoma and taught English for 36 years, mainly at UW–Whitewater. He lived until 2008. Two of his books are available from Fireweed Press.

Cynthia Lin moved to Madison in 2005 for graduate school, and it's been a very special kind of home for her since (despite moving recently and for a short while to Portland, Oregon). Madison raised Cynthia as an activist, organizer, and community educator; it is where she fell in love (with one of the poets in this volume) and found amazing family. She is not a poet (but sometimes fancies herself almost-one or about-to-be-one), and was surprised and flattered at the invitation to write a foreword.

John Lehman is the founder of *Rosebud Magazine*, former literary editor of *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, editor-in-chief of the digital magazine, *Lit Noir*, and founder of the Cambridge Readers Theater.

Norman Leer is Professor Emeritus at Roosevelt University, Chicago. He has published three books of poems and a critical study of Ford Madox Ford. In 1990, he received the Illinois Significant Poet's Award from state laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. In 1997, his collection of poems about music, *Second Lining*, was awarded the Burlington Northern Prize for best creative work by Roosevelt University. He and his artist wife Grethe live in Madison.

Estella Lauter's third chapbook from Finishing Line Press, *Transfiguration: Re-imagining Remedios Varo*, is scheduled for publication in 2013. Her poem "Gaza 2009" tied for first place in the 2009 Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Contest and was reprinted in *Verse Wisconsin* 110. She has been named Poet Laureate of Door County, WI 2013–2015. A Professor Emerita from UW–Oshkosh, she also taught for two decades at UW–Green Bay, and during 1989–90 at UW–Madison in Women's Studies.

Jon K. Lauck was born on a farm near Madison, South Dakota, in 1971. Lauck has a PhD in economic history as well as a law degree. Lauck practiced law and served as

a professor of history at SDSU and now serves as Senior Advisor and Counsel to US Senator John Thune of South Dakota. His many books include *Prairie Republic: The Political Culture of Dakota Territory, 1879-1889* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) and most recently *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (University of Iowa Press, 2013).

Peg Lauber enjoys retirement by reading a book a day if possible (sometimes two) and writing a poem often, as well as keeping up with grandchildren in New Orleans in the winter and St. Paul in the summer, feeding the birds, and fighting moles in her small garden in Eau Claire. She's just finished writing two Grandmother Remembers books.

Daniel Kunene is Professor Emeritus at the UW–Madison. He received his BA from the University of South Africa in 1949, his MA and PhD from the University of Cape Town, and a D.Litt. et Phil. (*honoris causa*) from both. In 2011 he received the International Karel Čapek Award for his translation of the Zulu novel *Mntanami! Mntanami!* by C.L.S. Nyembezi into English (*My Child! My Child!*), and recently published his first novel, *Dawn To Twilight*.

John Krumberger received an MFA from New England College in 2006. He lives with his wife Cris Higgin in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he works as a psychologist. A volume of his poetry entitled *The Language of Rain and Wind* was published by Backwaters Press in 2008.

Mark Kraushaar's work has appeared in *Best American Poetry* and the website *Poetry Daily*. His full length collection, *Falling Brick Kills Local Man*, was published by University of Wisconsin Press, as winner of the Felix Pollak Prize. His most recent collection, *The Uncertainty Principle*, Waywiser Press was chosen by James Fenton as winner of the Anthony Hecht Prize.

The author of many collections of poetry, including *North Point North: New and Selected* (2002), *Ninety-fifth Street* (2009), and *ROTC Kills* (2012), John Koethe also publishes and teaches philosophy. Koethe received the Kingsley Tufts Award for *Falling Water* (1997), the Frank O'Hara Award for *Domes* (1973), and the Bernard F. Connors Award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and a lifetime achievement award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers.

Jesse Lee Kercheval is the author of 12 books of poetry, fiction and memoir including the poetry collections *Cinema Muto*, *Dog Angel*, and *World as Dictionary*. She is currently at work on a bilingual Spanish/English collection of poetry *Extranjera/Stranger* and is also editing *América invertida: an anthology of younger Uruguayan poets*. She is the Zona Gale Professor in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Wisconsin. Visit jlkercheval.com.

Dasha Kelly is founder and director of Still Waters Collective, a Milwaukee-based outreach initiative utilizing the transformative power of the written and spoken word. Dasha has performed and delivered workshops to writers, youth, educators, co-eds, executives, inmates and artists throughout the US She is also an HBO Def Poetry alum. Her latest collection of work, *Hershey Eats Peanuts*, is available through Penmanship Books. She is currently working on her second novel and a new collection of poems.

Martha Kaplan has published with *Branch Redd Review*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Hummingbird*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Hospital Drive*, *Möbius The Poetry Magazine*, and *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*, among others. She was the 2011 winner of the Dr. Zelda Mapp Robinson Award, two Editor-in-Chief's Choice Awards, and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2012. Visit marthakaplanpoet.com

Joan Wiese Johannes has published three chapbooks, the most recent being *Sensible Shoes*, the 2009 winner of the John and Miriam Morris Competition sponsored by the Alabama Poetry Society. Her fourth chapbook, *He Thought the Periodic Table Was a Portrait of God*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. She lives in Port Edwards, Wisconsin, with her poet husband Jeffrey. More about her is available at bookthatpoet.com.

Catherine Jagoe is a writer, translator, and contributor to Wisconsin Public Radio's Wisconsin Life series. One of the poems in her collection *Casting Off* (Parallel Press, 2007) was featured by Garrison Keillor on The Writer's Almanac. She lives in Madison. Her audio essay about biking aired on Wisconsin Public Radio in May 2011, and the full version of the essay appears in *Apeiron Review*.

As editor of Many Voices Press, Lowell Jaeger compiled *New Poets of the American West*, an anthology of poets from 11 Western states. He is author of five collections of poems, including *WE* (Main Street Rag Press, 2010) and *How Quickly What's Passing Goes Past* (Grayson Books, 2013). Most recently Jaeger was awarded the Montana Governor's Humanities Award for his work in promoting thoughtful civic discourse.

Ronnie Hess is the author of a chapbook, *Whole Cloth* (Little Eagle Press) and a culinary travel guide, *Eat Smart in France* (Ginkgo Press). She blogs for MyFrenchLife.org. She loves to walk and bike around town, in all weather.

Rob Harrington is a soccer coach by trade. He lives with his wife Lisa on Milwaukee's east side, where there is enough character and characters to cure all ailments. He started writing seriously again after about a 15 year absence and doesn't plan on stopping.

Alex Gubbins studies poetry at Northern Michigan University's MFA program, where he teaches to flip the bill. For fun in the morning before coffee, and not for pay but passion (the best of motivations), he translates Arabic poetry. He has published in *The Progressive Magazine*, *Prime Magazine*, *Warrior Writers: After Action Review*, and *Metamorphoses* (translation).

Andy Gricevich founded or co-founded or collaborates in or on *Cannot Exist* (publishing a magazine, small books and text objects), the _____-Shaped Reading Series, utterly casual quasi-gourmet banquets, and occasional theater and music projects in Madison (most recently *Voices of a People's History* at Broom Street Theater). He has performed nationally with the Prince Myshkins and the Nonsense Company, and biked around a lot locally. His *A Book of Music* was published by Minutes Books. Andy is uncomfortably writing this in third person.

David Graham has taught writing and literature at Ripon College in Ripon, WI, since 1987. He is the author of six collections of poems, most recently *Stutter Monk* (Flume Press), and an essay anthology co-edited with Kate Sontag: *After Confession: Poetry as Autobiography* (Graywolf Press).

Brent Goodman is the author of *Far From Sudden* (2012) and *The Brother Swimming Beneath Me* (2009), both from Black Lawrence Press. His work has appeared in *Pleiades Sou'wester*, *Poetry*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Court Green*, and elsewhere.

Geoff Gilpin is the author of *The Maharishi Effect: A Personal Journey Through the Spiritual Movement That Transformed America* (Tarcher/Penguin, 2006). He received an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College in 2000. Geoff has been a professional writer for nearly 30 years, including a long career in technical documentation. He is currently serving as President of the Council for Wisconsin Writers, where he organized the first state-wide essay contest for Wisconsin high school students.

Max Garland is the current poet laureate of Wisconsin and the author of two poetry collections: *The Postal Confessions*, which earned the Juniper Prize for Poetry, and *Hunger Wide as Heaven*.

Mario Garcia Sierra was born and raised in Guatemala City. He is an alumnus of the University of Wisconsin Madison and has lived in Madison since 2003. He is an active community member seeking racial and social justice.

Fabu, as she is professionally known, continues to write poetry that offers a truer testimony of the lives of African people worldwide, as well as of African American women and children. Madison Poet Laureate (2008–2011), her widely-read poetry finds a home in Madison newspapers, buildings and on the sidewalk of Williamson Street. Visit artistfabu.com.

Martín Espada is the author of more than fifteen books. His latest collection of poems, *The Trouble Ball* (Norton), received the Milt Kessler Award, an International Latino Book Award and a Massachusetts Book Award. His book of essays, *Zapata's Disciple* (South End Press), has been banned in Tucson as part of the Mexican-American Studies Program outlawed by the state of Arizona. The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Espada teaches at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

R. Virgil (Ron) Ellis lives near Cambridge, Wisconsin, where he restores fifty acres of wetland and savanna. He is an Emeritus Professor who taught writing, literature and media at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. For an exploration of his work see poetrvellis.com.

Karl Elder received the 2012 Christopher Latham Sholes Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers. He is Lakeland College's Fessler Professor of Creative Writing and Poet in Residence and author of ten collections of poetry, including *Gilgamesh at the Bellagio* from the National Poetry Review Award Book Series.

Susan Elbe is the author of *The Map of What Happened*, which won the 2012 Backwaters Press Prize, *Eden in the Rearview Mirror* (Word Press), and two chapbooks, *Where Good Swimmers Drown* (2011 Concrete Wolf Press Chapbook Prize) and *Light Made from Nothing* (Parallel Press). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in many journals and anthologies, including *Blackbird*, *North American Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. You can learn more about her at susanelbe.com.

Jordan Dunn lives in Madison with his partner, Laura, and their two children. He supports bicycles, canoes, and the plant genus Brassica (among others). His chapbook, *Form 32*, is available from *Cannot Exist*.

Sadie Ducet's poetry is curated by Sarah Busse, whose bio appears elsewhere in these pages.

Greer DuBois lives in Evanston, IL, and Madison. She is an actress and a writer.

Marnie Bullock Dresser lives in Spring Green with her husband and son. She earned her MFA at the University of Montana and has taught at UW–Richland since 1992. She blogs at www.marniere.wordpress.com. A marnière is a sinkhole, a metaphor, and a plot device in Marnie's favorite Trixie Belden novel.

CX Dillhunt is the editor of *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*; he was co-editor of Wisconsin Poets' *Calendar: 2006*. His poems on teaching in China are in the international online journal *Studio*. CX is the author of *Things I've Never Told Anyone* (Parallel Press) and *Girl Saints* (Fireweed Press), and the recipient of the 2012 Wisconsin

Academy Poetry Award. CX teaches elementary school workshops and was named Commended Poet in 2010 by the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission. Visit dillhunt.com & hummingbirdpoetry.org.

Bruce Dethlefsen, Wisconsin Poet Laureate (2011–2012), has two chapbooks, *A Decent Reed* and *Something Near the Dance Floor*, and his full-length book, *Breather*, published by Fireweed Press, won an Outstanding Achievement Award in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association. His newest book, *Unexpected Shiny Things*, is published by Cowfeather Press. A retired educator and public library director, he lives in Westfield, Wisconsin.

Alice D’Alessio is the author of three books of poetry and one biography, as well as various articles and essays. She continues to delight in the challenge of creating poetry, as well as short fiction and memoir fragments. A transplanted New Yorker, she is enchanted by Wisconsin’s natural beauty and dedicated to conservation/restoration activities.

Ron Czerwien is the used-book buyer at A Room of One’s Own Bookstore in Madison, WI, and he also sells books online under the name Avol’s Books. His poems have appeared in a number of online and print journals. Ron serves as treasurer on the board of The Council for Wisconsin Writers. He hosts the monthly First Thursday Open Mike Poetry Readings at The Dragonfly Lounge.

Amelia Cook Fontella was born in Appleton, Wisconsin. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Minnesota and her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of New Orleans. After spending her twenties exploring warmer places like Honduras, Ecuador, and Tybee Island, she returned north to settle in to her third decade of life in her home state. She lives in Madison and spends her free time teaching, writing, having adventures, and drinking the hoppiest beer she can find.

Jan Chronister lives in the woods near Maple, Wisconsin. She teaches English and Creative Writing at a tribal college in Minnesota. Her parents, brother, sister, son and daughter all graduated from UW–Madison.

Sue Bussey Chenette, a classical pianist as well as a poet, grew up in Phillips, Wisconsin, and has made her home in Toronto since 1972. She is an editor for Brick Books and the author of *Slender Human Weight* (Guernica Editions, 2009) and *The Bones of His Being* (Guernica Editions, 2012.)

Ching-In Chen is the author of *The Heart’s Traffic* (Arktoi Books/Red Hen Press) and co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* (South End Press). They are a Kundiman and Lambda Fellow, part of the Macondo and Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation writing communities, and a past participant in Sharon Bridgforth’s Theatrical Jazz Institute.

Robin Chapman’s new collection of nature and climate change poems is *One Hundred White Pelicans* (Tebot Bach). Her poems have appeared online recently in *The Cortland Review* and *The Common Online* and are forthcoming in *Nimrod* and *Dalhousie Review*.

Sarah Busse co-edits *Verse Wisconsin* with Wendy Vardaman. They also share the Poet Laureateship of Madison (2012–2015). Her collection *Somewhere Piano* (Mayapple Press, 2012) received the Posner Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers.

Joseph Briggs gets lost easily in evergreen forests and has a difficult time not taking pictures of the Wisconsin countryside when he isn’t trying to write poems. His poetry has appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Mobius*, and *Black-N-Blue*. His photography has appeared in *Anti-*, *Red Booth Review*, *Prick of the Spindle*, and *Weave Magazine*.

Faustina Bohling grew up on the East side and has a strong affinity to the Williamson and Winnebago neighborhoods, and currently resides on the West side/Middleton. A graduate from UW–Madison, BA Sociology, a mother of three wonderful sons and one daughter, she has read at Genna’s spoken word scene, The Wisconsin Book Festival, UW–Milwaukee and other venues. She has also hosted The Speak Easy open mic at the Cardinal bar.

Kimberly Blaeser, a Professor in the English Department at UW–Milwaukee, teaches Creative Writing, Native American Literature, and American Nature Writing. Among her publications are three books of poetry: *Trailing You*, *Absentee Indians and Other Poems*, and *Apprenticed to Justice*. Of Anishinaabe ancestry and an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe who grew up on the White Earth Reservation, Blaeser is also the editor of *Traces in Blood, Bone, and Stone: Contemporary Ojibwe Poetry*.

F.J. Bergmann is living in Wisconsin for the fourth or fifth time. She dwells in what is shown as Leeds Center on the Wisconsin map but has no other official existence, in the Poynette postal delivery area (Arlington is across the road), and, it turns out, in the DeForest school district. A good deal of her time is spent in Madison.

Oliver Bendorf is the author of *The Spectral Wilderness*, selected by Mark Doty for the 2013 Wick Poetry Prize and forthcoming from Kent State University Press. His poems have been published in or are forthcoming from *Best New Poets*, *Blackbird*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Indiana Review*, *jubilat*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He recently earned an MFA from UW–Madison, where he is now earning an MLIS.

Margaret Savides Benbow is the only UW–Madison alumnus who won the George B. Hill Award in Poetry in four different years. Since then her poems have been published in numerous magazines and anthologies and won many prizes. Her collection *Stalking Joy* won the Walt McDonald First Book award and was published by TTUP press. Benbow has now completed a second collection, *Queen of the Dwarves*. She also writes fiction.

As a writer/actor, originally from Oshkosh, Donna Barkman has had her solo play “Hand-Me-Downs” produced in NYC and environs. In 2013 she wrote and performed in “Words that Paint” at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art. Her poetry has appeared in *Common Ground*, *Chautauqua*, *Boston Literary Review*, *String Poet*, *Per Contra*, *Adrienne Rich: a Tribute Anthology*, and others. She’s enjoyed two writers’ residencies at Brush Creek and Jentel, both in Wyoming.

Linda Aschbrenner is the editor/publisher of Marsh River Editions. She and her two sisters are working on a book about growing up in a Finnish American home.

Marilyn Annucci is the author of two chapbooks: *Waiting Room*, which won the 2012 Sunken Garden Poetry Prize, selected by Tony Hoagland (Hill-Stead Museum, 2012), and *LUCK*, which was published in 2000 by Parallel Press. Her work has appeared in a variety of journals online and in print; to see more, visit www.madpoetry.org/madpoets/annuccim.html.

About the Madison Poet Laureateship

Madison has had a poet laureate since 1977, when Paul Soglin named John Tuschen to the volunteer post, now overseen by the Madison Arts Commission. With Karin Wolf, Madison's Arts Program Administrator, Andrea Musher and Fabu, the city's second and third laureates, helped envision and establish a more formal program that has a four-year term and an application process. The John Tuschen Poet Laureate Memorial Fund was established to accept donations for the laureateship, which currently has no financial backing. Eventually, the Fund will help provide expenses for some of the projects undertaken by future laureates. Andrea Musher, who was instrumental in formalizing the position of the Poet Laureate of Madison, and who hopes that it will be a viable institution as long as the city shall endure, created, and serves as sustaining sponsor of, the John Tuschen Poet Laureate Memorial Fund.

Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman work together as the current poets laureate (2012-15). Their mission is to integrate poetry into the fabric of civic life, ritual, and the everyday, and toward that end: place poetry before the public in surprising places/spaces; create conversation about poetry; connect poets and groups of poets to each other and to other artists; build bridges between people using poetry. Poetry at Common Council Meetings, Metro Bus Lines (founded by Fabu), and the annual Olbrich Gardens Poetry Marathon (founded by Fran Rall) are some of their projects, in addition to the present anthology, the proceeds of which will be donated to the John Tuschen Fund. Visit cityofmadison.com/mac/poet.cfm for more information and to learn about applying to become the next poet laureate of Madison, as well as how to donate to the John Tuschen Fund.

About Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf

PJOS (PoetryJumpsOfftheShelf.com) is a program launched in 2004 by poet Shoshauna Shy in Madison, Wisconsin, with the mission of bringing poetry out of the libraries, bookstores and classrooms into the general public arena. Calls for submissions are conducted largely via cyberspace. PJOS published ten of these poems on decals that were affixed to Madison B-Cycles in April, 2013, for the riding season. Other projects have included poetry on specific themes published on java jackets, bookmarks, palm-sized books for glove compartments, postcards, and inside jawbreaker capsules. Partnerships for distribution included a wide variety of companies, businesses, and organizations all across the country.

About the Publisher

Cowfeather Press, founded by Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman in 2011, is a two-woman volunteer operation committed to developing a place for poetry in civic discourse, serving others through poetry, and expanding and connecting communities of poets and readers. At Cowfeather Press, we believe poetry matters, and we reach towards an aesthetic that represents the diversity of the upper Midwest. We encourage conversations on the page, the stage, and in public spaces which embrace, challenge, and explore both our differences and our common humanity.

Supporting materials for book groups & community reads are at cowfeatherpress.org.



echolocations poets map madison echolocations poets map madison

Here's a literary block party filled with both echoes and locations, as more than 100 poets who have crossed paths with the city, past & present, share poems that refer to specific Madison places. Long-time residents live next door to writers who passed through for only a while. Local streets intersect with myth, history, personal narrative and ecology. More than geography, more than chronology, what emerges is something akin to the shifting psyche of a city. Poem by poem, a new map evolves, folds back upon its own stories, and rewrites itself over and over through its sounds and its silences, taking into account a variety of perspectives, a multitude of voices. In the end these poets ask us,

How many Madisons are there?

poets map madison

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BY DAVID GRAHAMI
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