

14 Pebble Beach Circle
Madison, WI 53717

Madison Arts Commission
c/o Karin Wolf
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Ste. LL-100
Madison, WI 53701

October 3, 2011

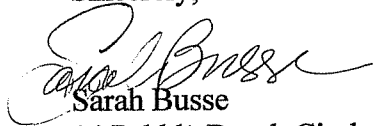
Dear Madison Arts Commission:

Enclosed please find an application for a co-Poet Laureateship. Wendy Vardaman and I are nominating ourselves to occupy the four-year position in partnership. We believe the current Poet Laureate, Fabu, has done a fantastic job in filling the position. We realize our nomination takes the role in a different direction.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need further materials. My contact information is included below.

Madison is a vibrant and lively community. It's an honor to be considered for this position. We thank you for your time, your attention, and your thoughtful deliberation around the idea of a Poet Laureate for the City of Madison.

Sincerely,



Sarah Busse
14 Pebble Beach Circle
Madison, WI 53717
(608) 831-0094
sarah.busse@tds.net
sarah@versewisconsin.org

PS—Congratulations also on the sidewalk poems just unveiled on Willy Street! Coincidentally, I went to college with Marcus Young—he was a senior when I was a first year. We sang in the same choir. Ever since I heard about his MN project, I've been thinking of ways to bring it to Madison. Nice to see you had the same thought!

Application for a Co-Poet Laureateship: Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman

- 1. Evidence of established presence as productive public poet in Madison, history of advocacy of poetry.** *See attached CVs.*
- 2. Evidence that the candidate possesses a body of work.** *See attached CVs.*
- 3. Selection from candidates' work.** *See attached poems. We have chosen to include poems we've written recently, as evidence of where our work is headed on a personal level. Our books are available upon request, as well, for proof of where we've been.*

4. Personal and professional references (maximum 3):

Bruce Dethlefsen, Wisconsin Poet Laureate bpdethlefsen@gmail.com

David Wells, Edenfred Arts/Terry Family Foundation
dwells.edenfred@sbcglobal.net

Jason Smith, Editor, *Wisconsin People and Ideas*
jsmith@wisconsinacademy.org

5. Evidence of candidates' current residency in Madison:

Sarah Busse
14 Pebble Beach Circle
Madison, WI 53717

Wendy Vardaman
2336 Monroe St.
Madison, WI 53711

6. Evidence of established relationships that will enable Co-Laureates to further develop the community partnerships necessary for effective service.

As co-editors of *Verse Wisconsin*, versewisconsin.org, we have worked with many Madison poets, leaders, businesses and institutions in a variety of ways. We have worked with editors at *Madison Magazine* and *Wisconsin People and Ideas* to help get information to the Madison community about poetry activities we're involved in. We have been invited repeatedly to appear on WORT's Radio Lit program as representatives of the poetry scene in Wisconsin. We have worked extensively with Avol's Books owner Ron Czerwien to set up multiple poetry events in town. Wendy has co-ordinated the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' marathon reading at Olbrich Gardens for 5 years. We have created, with Madison's Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf, a poetry vending machine which has been featured at Avol's and Orange Tree Imports, as well as further afield around the state. We worked with David Wells and the Terry Family Foundation to create an event for Wisconsin poetry publishers at Edenfred. We have worked with faculty and students at the University of Wisconsin and provided materials to the Odyssey Literacy Program, to correctional facilities, to community centers and libraries, and to teachers at MATC and UW-Extension. We have presented at the Wisconsin Book Festival for three years in a row, as well as festivals at UW-Madison, and in nearby towns and beyond. As editors of *Verse Wisconsin* we feature poets from Madison and Wisconsin, and bring their poems to a wider audience around the state and the nation. During the political protests this winter, we created a special section of our online issue where many poets from Madison sent work about their experience of the political events; we invited writers with a broad spectrum of views to submit work, and have created a space on the website for poets to enter into dialog about issues.

More information about our activities, ideas and philosophy can be found in a variety of coverage we have been fortunate enough to receive. All of these articles are available on our website: versewisconsin.org, and then scroll down to "Verse Wisconsin in the News."

7. A statement from the nominee expressing that they are willing and able to serve a four-year term.

We both look forward to serving a four-year term in Madison, as Co-Poets Laureate. We see the position of Poet Laureate as being an invitation to serve a community within the context of one's talents and art, which we have been doing for the past two years as co-editors of *Verse Wisconsin*. As Madison is an engaged and vibrant city, we look forward to exploring what the role of City Laureate might encompass.

The current Laureate, Fabu, has been an active and inspiring presence within the community, especially within the schools. We see our proposed service as Laureates as an opportunity to shift this role to better match our own talents, continuing the wide work that we do with *Verse Wisconsin* and Cowfeather Press. We will continue to make the poems of Madison and Wisconsin poets available to a broad variety of audiences in prisons, schools, libraries, colleges, nursing homes and retirement facilities. We will continue to reach out to a broad variety of communities, striving to represent the true diversity of Madison and Wisconsin. We will continue to reach out to the University, to partner with them in any way that proves helpful to all, building bridges between university and community poets. We will remind the community at large that poetry is fun, by working to find a wide variety of homes for our Verse-O-Matic poetry vending machine. And we hope to partner with the Little Free Libraries project to establish at least one Little Free Library in Madison devoted to poetry.

As publishers of Cowfeather Press, we hope to promote community reads of Wisconsin Poet Laureate Bruce Dethlefsen's current new collection, *Unexpected Shiny Things*. We look forward to partnering with libraries, book groups, and even grief counselors, to help find a wide audience for this book, and help more people discover that poetry can be fun, funny, provocative and of great comfort in difficult times.

We will also work to remind our fellow poets, and the larger community, that poets play a role in the public town square as well, and that poetry, and the arts, have value, whether or not that value immediately translates into dollars. Through our words, we recall the primary importance of the experience of the individual within society. We serve as witness, not replacing the historian or the journalist, but complimenting both with our third way of representing events, and the truth of large and difficult questions. As poets, we know that words have meaning and weight, and our examples serve as a public reminder of that fact and a rebuke to those who would use language lightly or dishonestly. Through the practice of poetry, we make a political statement, regardless of the content of our poems.

And finally, we both look forward to working with the Madison Arts Commission and the Mayor's office, to continue to define and explore what the role of a Madison Poet Laureate should be and become.

Wendy Vardaman, Ph.D.
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Madison, WI 53711
608 236-4116
www.wendyvardaman.com
www.versewisconsin.org
wendyvardaman@gmail.com, wendy@versewisconsin.org

Education Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania, 1990, English
M.A. University of Virginia, 1985, English
B.S. Cornell University, 1983, Civil Engineering

Work Administrator, 2009- & Volunteer Coordinator 2007-
Young Shakespeare Players, wendy@yvsp.org
Madison, Wisconsin
Lecturer
Interdisciplinary Writing
English Dept., University of Washington, Seattle, 1990-1994
Lecturer, Grader, Teaching Asst.
English Dept., University of Pennsylvania 1985-1990
Lecturer
American Studies
Helsinki University, Finland, 1988

Poetry Positions & Service

2011-12, Co-Editor, WFOP *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2013*
2011- Co-Editor, Co-Founder & Webmaster, Cowfeather Press,
cowfeather@versewisconsin.org
2009- Co-Editor and Webmaster, *Verse Wisconsin*,
wendy@versewisconsin.org
2009- 2011, Convener, Writing Workshop for high school writers
2007- Co-coordinator, WFOP Annual Invitational Poetry
Marathon, Olbrich Gardens
Fall 2004-2008 "Poetry Page" Editor, Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' *Museletter*

Poetry Collections

Obstructed View, Fireweed Press, 2009. Reviewed in *Wisconsin Bookwatch*,
Sept 2009, *Journal of Religion and the Arts* (Winter 2010), and *Square*
77 (June 2010)

Poetry Publications

Over 150 poems in anthologies & journals, including *Rosebud*, *Free Verse*, *Madison Magazine*, *qarrtsiluni*, *Breathe: 101 Contemporary Odes*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, *Riffing on Strings: Creative Writing Inspired by String Theory*, *Letters to the World*, *Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf*, *Poet Lore*, *Thanal Online*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Portland Review*. Translated into two other languages besides English.

Interviews of Wendy

Thanal Online, Jan 2009. [by Farrideh Hassanzadeh-Mostafavi]
Poemeleon: The Blog, The Habitual Poet #40 (Dec 2010)

Interviews by Wendy

Kimberly Blaeser, in *Verse Wisconsin*, forthcoming November 2011
Brenda Cárdenas, in *Verse Wisconsin*, forthcoming March 2012
Marilyn L. Taylor, in *Verse Wisconsin*, 105 (March 2011)
John Koethe, in *Verse Wisconsin*, 104 (Fall 2010) reprinted on *Poetry Daily*, Weekly Prose Feature March 2011. Excerpt reprinted at Poets.org

Martín Espada, in *Verse Wisconsin*, 103 (Summer 2010). Excerpt reprinted at Poets.org
Matthea Harvey, in *Verse Wisconsin*, 102 (Spring 2010), reprinted on *Poetry Daily*, Weekly Prose Feature July 2010. Excerpt reprinted at Poets.org.
Todd Boss, in *Verse Wisconsin*, 101 (Winter 2010)
Farrideh Hassanzadeh-Mostafavi, in *Eclectica* Jan 2009, and *Thanal Online* July 2009 [reprint]
Robin Chapman, in *Free Verse* 89, 2007
Marilyn Taylor, in *Free Verse* 84, 2006
Ron Wallace, in *Free Verse* 81, 2005

Review-Essays & Other Lit Crit

“Poetic Justice: Books for Troubled Times,” *Verse Wisconsin*, 106 (July 2011)
“Tradition & the Individual Sonnet, or Listen! Iambic Verse Has Variation in *Verse Wisconsin*, 105 (March 2011)
“god-xings: belief intersects Wisconsin poetry” in *Verse Wisconsin*, 104 (Fall 2010)
[reviews of Kay Ryan, *The Best of It*, and Maxine Kumin, *Where I Live*] in *Women’s Review of Books*, September-October 2010
[review of John Koethe’s *Ninety-fifth Street* and Edward Hirsch’s *Living Fire*] in *Verse Wisconsin*, 104 (Fall 2010)
bending the retina’s mirror to the world’s beat: new books by younger Wisconsin poets [reviews of books by Brenda Cárdenas, Brent Goodman, Nick Lantz, John Murillo, Matthew Schumacher, Angela Sorby & Bianca Spriggs] in *Verse Wisconsin*, 103 (Summer 2010)
Defamiliarize Yourself: The Halo Rule by Teresa Leo; *Sister* By Nickole Brown; *Ordinary Beans* By Gwyn McVay; *Bonneville* By Jenny Mueller; *The Gravity Soundtrack* By Erin Keane, in *Women’s Review of Books*, Jan-Feb 2009; reprinted in *Poetry Daily*, Weekly Prose Feature, 3-17-09
History and More [reviews of Martha Collins’ *Blue Front*, Leslie Adreienne Miller’s *Resurrection Trade*, Penelope Scambly Schott’s *A is for Anne*, Alaina Hairston’s *Logan Topographies*] in *Women’s Review of Books*, April-May, 2008

Poetry Reviews

More than 30 other reviews of mostly Wisconsin poets in national and state literary journals.

Other Articles

“The Essay That I Begin Writing While Walking to the Wisconsin Capitol Trying to Discern the Right Question, 2/24/11, in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Main Street* (2011)
“New Titles by Marsh River Editions,” in *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, September 2008

Awards/Honors

2010 At-large Pushcart Nomination
2010 Best of the Net Nomination for “Bill Mathews” [with Greer DuBois]
2009 *Madison Magazine*, “People of the Year”
2009 Judge, *Presence* Contest
2008 Pushcart Nomination for “Roosters & Hens”
2008 *Presence* Award, Honorable Mention
2007 Judge, *Free Verse* contests 88 & 93
2006 Pushcart Nomination for “Interview with Marilyn Taylor”
2006 Pushcart Nomination for “Sinking the Cat”
2006 Judge, Ekphrastic Poetry Contest, *Rosebud*

2005 Pushcart Nomination for "Interview with Ron Wallace"
2004 Lorine Niedecker Award, Honorable Mention, Council for Wisconsin Writers
2003 Best New Poet, 1st Place, Wisconsin Fellowships of Poets
2003 Muse Prize, Honorable Mention, Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets

Presentations / Conferences

Oct 2011, Lorine Niedecker Poetry Festival, Fort Atkinson, moderator with Sarah Busse, Nature of Wisconsin Poetry
April 2011, Lit Fest, UW-Madison, Pub Me Fair
June 2010, "Publishing in the e-text era," Panel, Southeastern Wisconsin Book Festival, Waukesha
March 2010, Convener, Publisher's Conversation, Edenfred, Madison
March 2010, Convener, *Verse Wisconsin* Launch Reading, Avol's, Madison
November 2009, WFOP Fall Conference, with Sarah Busse: "The New *Free Verse*"
October 2009, Wisconsin Book Festival, Madison, host with Sarah Busse, Publisher's Roundtable
October 2009, Lorine Niedecker Poetry Festival, Fort Atkinson, host with Sarah Busse, Publisher's Roundtable

Recent Readings

May 2011, Foot of the Lake/Windhover Center, Fond du Lac, Featured Reader
April 2011, Boswell Book Co, Milwaukee, Featured Reader
April 2011, WORT Radio, Radio Lit, Madison, Guest to talk about sonnets
March 2011, Crosshatch Series, Madison, Featured Reader
January 2011, WORT Radio, Radio Lit, Madison, Guest Reader
September 2010, Wisconsin Book Festival, Madison, Featured Reader & Convener
April 2010, Oakhill Prison, Guest writer
April 2010, Guest writer & reader, Ripon College
March 2010, Guest writer, 6th grade class, Fond du Lac
March 2010, Featured Reader, Red-Letter Series, Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee
March 2010, Featured Reader, Village Booksmith, Baraboo
February 2010, Participant, Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison
February 2010, Reader, WFOP Winter Series, Avol's Bookstore, Madison
September 2009, Featured Reader, Avol's Bookstore, Madison
September 2009, Featured Reader, Harmony Café-Fox Valley, Appleton
August 2009, Featured Reader, A Room of One's Own Bookstore, Madison
August 2009, Featured Reader, Folk-on-State, Madison
June 2009, Olbrich Gardens WFOP Invitational Marathon
February 2009, WFOP Winter Series Avol's Bookstore, Madison
June 2008, Olbrich Gardens WFOP Invitational Marathon
April 2008, Wom-po in Wisconsin, *Letters to the World*
March 2008, WFOP Winter Series Avol's Bookstore, Madison
August 2007, Barnes & Noble, WFOP Monthly Reading
June 2007, Olbrich Gardens WFOP Invitational Marathon
February 2007, WFOP Winter Reading Series Avol's Bookstore, Madison

Affiliations

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Council for Wisconsin Writers, Association of Writers & Writing Programs

Sarah Busse
14 Pebble Beach Circle
Madison, WI 53717
608-831-0094

www.sarahbusse.com
www.versewisconsin.org
www.cowfeatherpress.org
sarah.busse@tds.net sarah@versewisconsin.org

Education

MFA, Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont
BA, *magna cum laude*, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Recent Community Service

Co-Editor, *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2013*, with Wendy Vardaman
Co-Editor, *Cowfeather Press*, with Wendy Vardaman, 2011-ongoing
Co-Editor, *Verse Wisconsin Magazine and Verse Wisconsin Online*, with Wendy Vardaman, January 2009- ongoing

Honors, Awards and Prizes

Pushcart Prize, 2011
First Place, WFOP Chapbook Prize, 2011
Winner, REAP Food for Thought Festival Poetry Prize, September 2009
Day Fellow, Edenfred, Madison WI, Jan.-Feb. 2009
Runner-up, *Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Sciences* poetry contest 2009 (*Wisconsin People and Ideas Magazine*, summer 2009)
Runner-up, *Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Sciences* poetry contest 2008 (*Wisconsin People and Ideas Magazine*, summer 2008)

Publications

Books

Banjo Granny (children's picture book), co-authored with Jacqueline Briggs Martin, Houghton Mifflin (2006)

Quiver (chapbook), Red Dragonfly Press (MN) (2009)

Given These Magics (chapbook), Finishing Line Press (KY) (2010)

Somewhere Piano (full-length collection), Mayapple Press (NY) (forthcoming 2012)

Gauguin in California (chapbook), Desperado Press (WI) (forthcoming 2012-2013)

Poems published 2009-11

Print format

Adanna (#1) (2011)

"The Second Dream"

Anthills (forthcoming November 2011)

"Orphic"

Arbor Vitae (4.1) (Winter 2009)

"Allegretto"

The Dark Horse #23 (Summer 2009)
 "Improvisation with Borrowed Line"
Dogwood (Spring 2010)
 "Desire"
Dogwood (Spring 2009)
 "The Chinese Acrobat"
 "First Poem for Evelyn"
Free Verse #99-100 (2009)
 "Gauguin, Bored, Paints Another Self-Portrait"
 "Gauguin Learns Too Late"
 "Remembered"
 "Retrospective"
 "She Tells Him She Is"
Madison Magazine (March 2009)
 "Fourth Letter to Sylvia"
Madison Magazine (November 2009)
 "We Eat the First Tomato"
Off the Coast (Winter 2011)
 "Please Forgive the Pathetic Fallacy of That Chapter"
Off the Coast (Summer 2010)
 "Blossom is an Impossible Word, Like Sorrow"
Off the Coast (Winter 2010)
 "Big Man Walking Backwards"
 "High Heels in Winter"
Stoneboat (Spring 2011)
 "Magic Trick"
Think Journal 3.2 (Fall 2010)
 "Silhouettes"
Third Wednesday (Spring 2011)
 "Two on Beauty"
 "Islands with Mockingbird"
Wisconsin People and Ideas (Summer 2009)
 "Memories of Two Lights: Notes for a Quilt"

On-line Format

Cambridge Book Review(Spring/Summer 2009)
 "The Dreamer"
 "This Bed"
 "Two Postcards to Sylvia"
 "A Wish for the Bride and Groom"
Lucid Rhythms March 2011
 "Waked Early"
 "Toast"
Mezzo Cammin Volume 3, Issue 2 (Winter 2009)
 "Technologies of Windows"
 "The Mothers"
Mezzo Cammin (2011.1)
 "After the Last Residency"
 "Garden Center Madrigal"
The Nepotist (July 2010)
 "The Moon at Her Vanity"
 "Piano"
 "Source at Equinox"

qaartsiluni ("Health" issue, January 2010)
 "Girls on the Slide"
qaartsiluni ("The Crowd" issue, December 2010)
 "Predicament: Memorial Day"
qaartsiluni ("Translation" issue, March 2011)
 "Good Morning Green Bay"
 "Why I Should Be a Landscape Quilter"
Shit Creek Review (February 2011)
 "Phillippe Petit, New York, 1974"
Valparaiso Poetry Review (VPR) (forthcoming Vol XIII, No. 1, Fall 2011)
 "Folding the Clothes"
Whale Sound (December 2010)
 "The Mothers"
Your Daily Poem
 "Monogamy Among Mason Jars" (July 2010)
 "We Eat the First Tomato" (June 2011)

Anthologies, Blogs etc.

Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2009
 "After Reading Milosz"
Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2010
 "Fourth Letter to Sylvia"
Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2011
 "Calling the Poet to Account for Her Bio"
Wisconsin Poets' Calendar 2012
 "Blossom is an Impossible Word, Like Sorrow"

"First Letter to Sylvia," "Second Letter to Sylvia," and "Fourth Letter to Sylvia," will all be included in an anthology edited by Christine Hamm, featuring women writers responding to the work of Sylvia Plath.

"daughter I did see" will be included in the Accents Short Poem anthology, due out 2011

"The Sixth Sense," "Some Have a Taste" and "macerated" included in the anthology *The Hungry Dead* (Popcorn Press, 2010).

"Flicker" included in *Perfect Dragonfly*, an anthology celebrating Red Dragonfly Press's first fifteen years. (2011)

"Real Estate" was included in the "Virtue and Vice" portfolio at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, in 2010.

"Silhouettes" will be included in *Pushcart Prize XXXVI: Best of the Small Presses*, 2012 ed.

Book Reviews, Articles, etc. (2009-2011)

Review: "Midwestern Weather", a review-essay of Bruce Dethlefsen and Ralph Murre, *Verse Wisconsin* #102 (online)

Review: Kimball's *Journal of a Flatlander*, *VWOnline* #104

Review: Harriell's *Cotton*, *VWOnline* #106

Review: "Feather, Flesh, and Flight: A Review-Essay of Five Poetry Books", *VWOnline* #108

Brief reviews of poetry books also appeared regularly in 2010 in *The Wisconsin State Journal*.

Essay: "Jeanette and Justice: Skirting Oblivion" *Verse Wisconsin* #101
 Essay: "Discoveries: Lorine Niedecker's "marriage"" *Verse Wisconsin* #103
 Essay: "Beyond Happily Ever After: Working at the Endings of Our Poems" *Verse Wisconsin* #104
 Essay: "In the Beginning...Some Notes on Just That" *Verse Wisconsin* #105
 Essay: "Lorine Niedecker" Women's Poetry Timeline Project, mezzocammin.com
 Essay: "So Raw You Are Between Chaos and Calm" introduction to the work of Shelly Hall, published in *Alum* by Popcorn Press, 2011
 Essay: "Shelly Hall" Women's Poetry Timeline Project (forthcoming)

Readings, Panels and Presentations, 2009-2011

February 15, 2009 Participant Reader in Festival of Poets, Avol's Books, Madison WI
 March 2, 2009 Featured Reader, Conkey's Bookstore, Appleton WI
 May 7, 2009 Featured Reader with Lisa Kundrat, Sundance Theater, Madison WI
 June 11, 2009 Reader, West Chester Poetry Conference, West Chester, PA
 June 19, 2009 Featured Reader, Monkey See Monkey Read Bookstore, Northfield, MN
 August 1, 2009 Featured Reader, Folk on State, Madison WI
 August 9, 2009 Featured with Marilyn Taylor and Wendy Vardaman, A Room of One's Own Bookstore, Madison WI
 October 3, 2009 Host with W. Vardaman, Publishers' Roundtable, 2 PM Lorine Niedecker WI Poetry Festival, Fort Atkinson WI
 October 10, 2009 Host with W. Vardaman, Panel on Independent Poetry Publishing, WI Book Festival, Madison, WI
 November 15, 2009 Presenter with W. Vardaman "The New Free Verse" WFOP Fall Conference, Stevens Point WI
 February 5, 2010 Reader at MMoCA "Apple Pie: Symbols of Americana"
 March 12, 2010 Featured Reader with Wendy Vardaman, Bookstore, Baraboo WI
 March 20, 2010 Reader and Host, *Verse Wisconsin* Launch, Avol's Books, Madison WI
 April 18-19, 2010 Panel presenter "E-Publishing," Waukesha Book Festival
 June 9-12, 2010 Scholar, Women's Poetry Timeline Project, West Chester Poetry Conference, West Chester, PA
 August 18, 2010, Featured Reader w/ A. Nicol, Gibson's Bookstore, Concord NH
 September 30, 2010 Featured Reader w/ others, Wisconsin Book Festival, Avol's Bookstore, Madison, WI
 October 10, 2010 Featured Reader w/ others, Shining Oaks Poetry Festival
 December 9, 2010 Featured Reader on "Radio Lit" WORT FM.
 January 8, 2011 Featured Reader with Andrea Potos and Miriam Hall, Avol's Bookstore, Madison, WI "The Ladies of Finishing Line Press."
 March 17, 2011 Featured Reader with Wendy Vardaman, Crosshatch Series, Avol's Bookstore, Madison WI
 April 1, 2011 Featured Reader and host, Reading at Avol's Books, Madison, WI
 April 28, 2011 Featured Reader with Wendy Vardaman, Boswell Books, Milwaukee, WI
 May 10, 2011 Featured Reader with Wendy Vardaman, Windhover Center, Fond du Lac, WI
 May 15, 2011 Featured Reader with Maryann Corbett, Avol's Bookstore, Madison, WI
 June 7-11, 2011 Scholar, Women's Poetry Timeline Project, West Chester Poetry Conference, West Chester PA
 October 15 2011 moderator, WI Poetry Festival "The Nature of Wisconsin Poetry"
 October 22, 2011 moderator, WI book Festival "The Role of Poetry in Uncertain Times"

Three Poems by Wendy Vardaman

The Mother-Daughter Wars, or The Cuban Missile Crisis

Working sixty hours a week
on office accounts, fingers striking the 10-key like
well-aimed missiles, morning to night
and through the lunch hours as its tape unspooled, her mind's
tape unwinding, too,
considering the problem in 1962
of how and when to leave a no-account
husband whose faults
included drinking, womanizing, over-
spending. They could never get ahead, no matter how much over-
time she put in. No surprise that when she turns up pregnant it's as welcome an event
as any other sexual disease or warhead appearing on your door step one night.
Or that she ducks
and covers behind her desk
for nine months, first to arrive,
last to leave.
Or that she practices Containment: squeezes
even through the final days
into a full-length rib-flattening, breath-tightening, body-armoring girdle,
and always a little
heavy in the middle, manages by skipping
lunch to lose weight so that in the end, on the morning
when she straightens her desktop's
tacks and clips,
phones her husband to pick her up then takes
the year's two-weeks,
no one's the wiser,
including my mother,
who on the last day of this crisis, delivers me while the world waits,
holding its breath to see who'll blink at the earth's thick waist,
as a world-class philanderer and a drinker,
both spendthrifts, bring us all to the brink.

(published in *Poemeleon*)

Suburban Vampires

1.

Unlike the other
mothers, one look's all she needs
to calm wild children.

2.

The first grade teacher's
phone call wakes him up: *There's some-*
thing wrong with your son.

3.

She tries hard to fit
in—never brings friends home—wears
long, bite-hiding sleeves.

4.

Friday night—can't get
a date—Mom lies: *There'll be more*
like you at college.

5.

You think you're liberal
until your son confesses:
he's been one for years.

6.

Broken glasses, blind
as bats, she cracks her teeth on
a mannequin's neck.

7.

He always looks more
confident on stage—sinks his
teeth into each part.

(published in *Vampyre Verse*)

Relying on Your Imagination to Discern the Question, a Prose Sonnet
(at the Capitol, 2/25/11)

Because what's the point if you're not enjoying your life. Because neither of us is getting any younger. Because it is an unseasonably pleasant February day in Wisconsin. Because it is an unpleasantly seasonable February day in Wisconsin. Because my children are with me. Because who needs all this stuff this house these plates this bed these chairs. Because it all comes back to backstory: who we & why we. Because there is free Ian's pizza from Finland and Arkansas and Iran at the top of the hill where we listen to Rabbi Biatch.

Because you can read the news on Avol's Bookstore windows and on Facebook and in poems and on people's faces. Because Tammy Baldwin, my congresswoman, and Beth Kiser, my children's grade school cello teacher stand on either side of me. Because "ROTC Kills." Because my husband writes *Solidarity* on his sign in seven languages while my teenagers get out their magic markers. Because poetry and plays came from one place, and theatrical gestures aren't *stunts* or *tricks* or *mere* or even *just*. Because 14 senators are just enough to make a sonnet, and I am letting go of perfect all the time, and, sometimes, the performance *is* the poetry.

Three Poems by Sarah Busse

On Wednesdays, the Children Learn to Swim

Smack and splash of waternoise bouncing
off concrete walls and floors,
hiss of showers, thud of heavy doors,

the ring of curtains drawn and ringing voices
as teachers call across the water, all
echo with nowhere else to fall

but on our ears, caught under and over the indoor
light and water, sickly green,
the sharp smell of chlorine. That door again.

Pity the sealife painted on the wall:
clownfish, shark and manatee, pastel
and frozen above a diver's treasure chest,

cartoons with no way out. Like them,
I'm separate from the action, behind a watery
one-way glass. Behind me,

a Disney movie plays itself over and over,
a mermaid erupts out of the bosomy water
and like as not a toddler climbs on chairs.

I should be invisible, but the window's
not that good. I'm a shadow shape. The kids
look up; I wave.

(forthcoming in Melusine)

Faith Will Emphasize the Second Syllable

Tonight I'm driving 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 *may-be* 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 bullets someone left
to make a protest look bad, I move
in an opposite direction, layering it all on,
refuse to give up on *may-be*, on the lovely
human muddle, even though,
weather like this, visibility's usually poor.

Predicament: Memorial Day

the song should be
slow moody lyrical
pounding

Robert Schuler

It should be, but
so often it's not. Or
maybe the pounding
is right, but the rest?
It's a diddle-dee tune, it's Lassus
Trombone, it's Sousa, fer cryin out,
with bright brass and those comical
goldfinches, all the leaves
shouting and waving
on a summerday, sprinklers and pop-
suckles, plastic flags flapping
No No No we say, my uncle's
laid up, my bills are unpaid,
the gulf is dying and the cat's
marking the family room.
Dee Dee Dee sings the piccolo.
Inexorable, it carries us, the flare
of those marching hats, the boots,
the polyester pants.

(published in qarrtsiluni)

EDENFRED ARTS / TERRY FAMILY FOUNDATION

October 4, 2011

Madison Arts Commission
Department of Planning & Development
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
PO Box 2985
Madison WI 53701-2985
Attn. Poet Laureate Nomination

Dear Madison Arts Commission.

I'm writing as a reference for the nomination Sarah Busse and Wendy Vartaman as Poets Laureate of Madison.

Sarah Busse was a Day Fellow at Edenfred and has read her work at events at Edenfred as well as several events we held at Sundance Cinemas. Her poems are accessible, literate, and engaging and her manner is open and receptive. Reflecting everyday experiences, they bring a new or renewed perspective to many of the things we usually only casually observe as mundane.

Although I am less familiar with Wendy's poetry, my greatest recommendation of Wendy and Sarah is as ambassadors of poetry and I feel they will be excellent for the position. When Wisconsin's only poetry magazine closed, Busse & Vartaman decided to take on the challenge of remaking it and investing new energy across the state. They convened a conference of fellow WI poetry publishers at Edenfred and from that meeting decided on a course of action. After creating an editorial board, they launched a new magazine, *Verse Wisconsin*, in less than a year.

Motivated by the spoken word as well as the written word, these two women have created a poetry vending machine that has been installed in several places throughout the state. Because they enjoy working with the public to help create a better understanding and appreciation of poetry, they would be a dynamic and significant force as co-poets laureate.

I heartily recommend their application and feel they would greatly increase the visibility of the position and serve the city well.

Sincerely,



David Wells
Edenfred Arts / Terry Family Foundation

September 28, 2011

Dear Madison Arts Commission:

I have known Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman for years and strongly recommend them as Madison Co-Poet Laureates.


Sarah Busse holds a Master of Fine Arts degree and is the author of two poetry books, *Quiver* and *Given These Magics*. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize for Poetry. Her work has been featured on *Verse Daily* and *Your Daily Poem*.

Wendy Vardaman has a Ph.D. in English and is the author of the poetry book, *Obstructed View*. She has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. Her poems, reviews and interviews have appeared in numerous anthologies and journals, including *Poetry Daily* and *Wisconsin People & Ideas*.

Together, these award winning poets are co-editors of the prestigious *Verse Wisconsin* magazine, and co-founders of Cowfeather Press. They are bright and their energy seems limitless. They've presented many workshops on the craft of poetry writing and publishing. They are inspiring poets and tireless supporters of the arts in Wisconsin.

I highly recommend Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman as Madison Co-Poet Laureates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Dethlefsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bruce Dethlefsen

Wisconsin Poet Laureate (2011-2012)