

Interview with Diane Raptosh

Etruscan author Diane Raptosh's lecture "Poetry, Democracy, and the Hope of Sounds" was recently featured on TEDx Boise. Her collection of poetry, *American Amnesiac* (published by Etruscan in 2013), was longlisted for the 2013 National Book Award. It was also named a finalist for the 2013 Housatonic Book Award.

From a field of over 100 applicants, Raptosh and seven others were selected to speak at the first-ever Boise event. "TEDx talks are the latest incarnation of a public venue for spreading ideas," says Raptosh as she recalled the highlights of her TEDx lecture. "Poetry retunes language into angles of truth. Words really are supposed to mean something, and poetry is here to make sure that they do and that's why I write it."

Raptosh describes *American Amnesiac*, a book-length dramatic monologue, as a meditation on identity and on what it might mean to be a self. It is also a critical investigation of 21st century America. The book describes the struggles ordinary Americans of every race, gender, and class must face. Once she came up with the idea of having a character that represented the American as an "Everyman," Raptosh then started to get a feel for his voice and once she did that, she couldn't stop hearing it.

Known as an inspiring instructor, Raptosh teaches literature and creative writing while also serving as director of the program in criminal justice/prison studies at the College of Idaho. In the classroom, she focuses on the content of poetry, which she describes as the genre's forgotten element. "Poems have a lot of work to do in this lifetime – much more than a typical confessional narrative can usually allow." But Raptosh doesn't limit her teaching to the classroom. She often takes her class outside to spark the writing process, inspiring work that is infused with real world vitality.

Raptosh hopes to use poetry as a tool to unmap matters of social, moral and ethical importance. She also hopes poetry will maintain its playful character, the same one readers were used to as kids. "A lot has changed in the world of poetics since many people last read a poem," says Raptosh in an interview with Allison Linville from *CutBank*. "That poem was usually read in high school, and equally often, it was a piece by Robert Frost."

Using her experience in and out of the classroom, Raptosh is active in the national poetry community conducting workshops, giving readings, and lecturing on poetry in locations that include high school classrooms, senior living communities, and maximum security prisons. Her goal is to bring poetry to communities that are overlooked or forgotten. At these events, she nurtures dialogue about what writing poetry in the 21st century might entail.

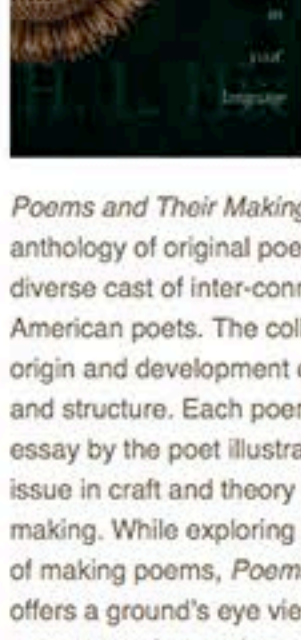
During a recent event at Book Passage in Corte Madera, California, when asked about the future of poetry Raptosh replied, "Poetry will never die. A better question to ask is how can we encourage and invite people to participate in poetry more effectively." This is why Raptosh inspires students to think in big terms about their work and at the same time to be playful. "If poetry ever were to die for a morning, it would be reborn by noon," she says.

Outside the classroom, Raptosh is drawn to literature that takes on big questions. She advises people to unmask reality. "The world as it is described by the news does not usually match the truth," she explains. "Each of us can quite easily imagine the world we wish to live in. These imaginings align with the world's dream for itself. These are stories we should heed. These teach us how to live."

Raptosh also judged the sixth annual Etruscan Prize this year, awarded to a Wilkes University Creative Writing graduate student for their writing excellence. This year's prize was awarded to Vanessa Taylor of Rosedale, New York, who graduated this month with an M.A. in poetry.

Brandon Gubitosa is a junior at Wilkes University majoring in business management. Brandon served as an Etruscan intern during spring 2015. When he is not in school, you can find him on a golf course.

New Releases from Etruscan

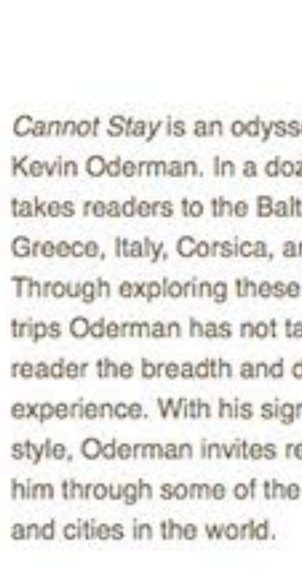


I'm Here to Learn to Dream in Your Language, a collection of short poems about pain, loss, and absence, was published by Etruscan on February 10. This is H. L. Hix's eleventh Etruscan book. *Publisher's Weekly* says Harvey's collection is "prolific and philosophically ambitious, offering some of his most beautiful lines in years." Wilkes Creative Writing alumnae Laurie Powers created the cover design, which features the image of Pine Ball II created by artist Kyoung Ae Cho.

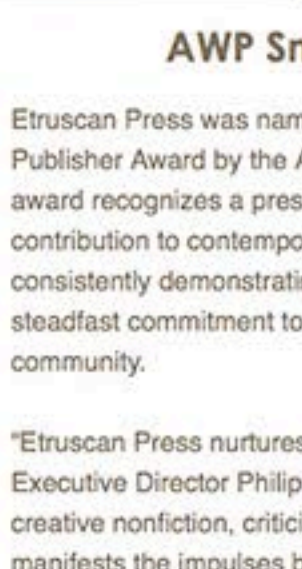
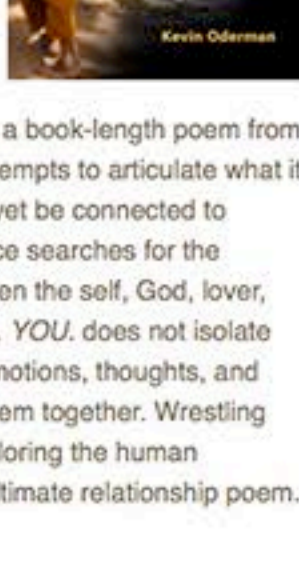
Poems and Their Making: A Conversation is an anthology of original poems and essays by a diverse cast of inter-connected contemporary American poets. The collection delves into the origin and development of poetic thought, line, and structure. Each poem is followed by an essay by the poet illustrative of some particular issue in craft and theory raised during the poem's making. While exploring the mysterious process of making poems, *Poems and Their Making* offers a ground's eye view of the variety of current poetic practices, and nurtures a dialogue between poetry and critical prose.



Contrasting poetry with visual art, *The Other Sky* probes the depths of the psyche: childhood roots, reveries, tensions. We find visual art and poems that respond, not as mere descriptions, but as speculative and emotional explorations, incantations, forces of resistance even, driven by strengths unique to poems. This book is unique by virtue of the power, virtuosity, and refinement of its images and the ways the poems work closely with them to create a symbiosis that is larger than either medium alone. Featuring poems written by Bruce Bond around paintings created by Aron Wiesenfeld, both artist and poet have a large following. This book represents the coming together of two communities, the worlds of poetry and visual art, to expand the range of what is possible for each.



Cannot Stay is an odyssey in travel writing from Kevin Oderman. In a dozen essays, Oderman takes readers to the Baltics, Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Corsica, and other exotic locales. Through exploring these places—and even the trips Oderman has not taken—he shows the reader the breadth and depth of the human experience. With his signature voice and vivid style, Oderman invites readers to walk alongside him through some of the most enigmatic villages and cities in the world.



Joseph Wood's *YOU* is a book-length poem from a single speaker that attempts to articulate what it means to be a self and yet be connected to others. The singular voice searches for the connective tissue between the self, God, lover, daughter, friend, and ex. *YOU* does not isolate relationships, events, emotions, thoughts, and experience, but glues them together. Wrestling deep questions and exploring the human condition, *YOU* is the ultimate relationship poem.

AWP Small Press Publisher Award

Etruscan Press was named one of five finalists for the 2015 AWP Small Press Publisher Award by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. The award recognizes a press or literary journal that has made a significant contribution to contemporary literature. Etruscan was nominated for consistently demonstrating excellence in production and design, providing a steadfast commitment to nurturing authors, and actively engaging in the community.

"Etruscan Press nurtures dialogue in a world of contemporary voices," said Executive Director Philip Brady. "Etruscan's body of work in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, criticism and translation subverts traditional boundaries and manifests the impulses beneath conventional modes. Since its founding in 2001, Etruscans regale, remember, wonder, complicate, and illuminate. Always, they sing," said Brady.

Planning to attend AWP16 in Los Angeles? Please visit the Etruscan Press booth. We will be front and center (Booth #1100) in Los Angeles (March 30-April 2, 2016). For a schedule of Etruscan author signings and panels featuring our authors and editors, please visit https://www.awpwriter.org/awp_conference/

About Etruscan Press:

Housed at Wilkes University and partnering with Youngstown State University, Etruscan is a non-profit literary press working to produce and promote books that nurture the dialogue among genres, cultures, and voices.

For the latest Etruscan events, please visit [our website](#).

About Etruscan Press:

Housed at Wilkes University and partnering with Youngstown State University, Etruscan is a non-profit literary press working to produce and promote books that nurture the dialogue among genres, cultures, and voices.

For the latest Etruscan events, please visit [our website](#).