



Brief Bio: **John W. Evans** is the author of the memoir, *Young Widower* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014), winner of the 2013 *River Teeth* Book Prize, and the poetry collection, *The Consolations* (Trio House Press, 2014), winner of the 2013 Trio Award. His poems and essays appear in *The Missouri Review*, *Boston Review*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Slate*, *The Rumpus*, and *Poetry Daily*, as well as the chapbooks, *No Season* (FWQ, 2011) and *Zugzwang* (RockSaw, 2009). A native of Kansas, John has worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bangladesh, a public school teacher in Chicago, and a college teacher in Romania.

Teaching Statement:

I like what Muriel Rukeyser said about the poem: rather than an object, it is a process. In my classes, I teach every poem, from the short writing exercises that begin our day to the published and anthologized poems we read together, as the combination of choices and limitations that realize a particular creative vision. I work to create a classroom where students learn to recognize those choices—formal, aesthetic, personal—and also to challenge their awareness and sense of limitation. Poetry, for its obscurity and penury, anxiety and inclusiveness, remains an essentially democratic act of creativity. I want my students to feel free to engage in the trial-and-error that leads to learning, and writing,

breakthroughs. At every level, I hope to foster an awareness of the formal vocabulary by which students will continue conversations about poetry outside of the classroom, and beyond Stanford University.

First Encounters:

I followed a fairly conventional early path to poetry—childhood rhymes for family pets and holidays, memorizing all six verses of Bob Dylan’s “Visions of Johanna”—but it wasn’t until I read Louise Bogan’s “Last Hill in a Vista” as an undergraduate that a poem made me feel simultaneously ambitious and inadequate. *The while an autumn night seals down / The comforts of the wooden town*. How was Bogan using “while” in the poem? Why was the town “wooden” How could I do...*that*...(I couldn’t yet name the mimesis) with my rhymes and syntax? A plainspoken poem that contained formal turns and narrative mysteries: here was my new benchmark. I spent years trying to steal into my own lines Bogan’s poplars and oak trees that, at the end of her poem, “loosen into a little smoke.”

Poems:**Part-Time***One Month*

The first job you take after your wife dies suddenly
will be mindless, easy to manage, with flexible hours:
the job you've spent your whole life avoiding.
It bores you to tears. You think, Ten hours a week
and it doesn't even cover the therapy, pills, and gas.
The clerks at the all-night grocery rotate shifts:
sunflowers shrinking into the vase on her desk,
an altar of trinkets, her photo in a simple frame.
In the end, what more is there to say
about these long afternoons when the sun
stands solstice in between the coming and going,
you in your black t-shirts and stain-resistant chinos,
as whole weeks announce the end of summer,
a full moon dimmed by the glow of the city,
these nights when the neighbors fire great floodlights
at the lawn beneath their windows?

Eclogue*Twenty-Two Months*

Rent in the neighborhood is dropping.
Rent everywhere is dropping. Can you spare
a little CHANGE,
asks the sign where my bank,
merging with the bank across the street,
fails. I want to own land in my country.
I want to make my place in this city certain.
The fish in the bar next to the laundromat:
do they know the limits of their translucent world?
When my wife died I thought,
All within us praise His holy name,
His power and glory ever more proclaimed.
Even then I knew that life didn't really end,
that it would fissure into two places,
inside and out. The woman I love now
distinguishes absence from loss.
When there is no fog on a nearby hill
we walk through her old neighborhood
to the city's highest point.

Zugzwang*Eighteen Months*

(n.) “Compulsion to move.” A chess term referring to a situation in which a player would like to do nothing (pass), since any move will damage his position.

Not that it mattered in the beginning
 but there were patterns. I saw three moves
 to your bishop, six to your rook, nine to your queen
 and then a slow game of pawns. Almost at mate,
 I forgot the axes running to the corners,
 failed to anticipate your casual sweep of the lanes,
 one side of my board plucked clean like a branch of wild
 anything. You opened a window to let out the heat.
 We started again. It felt good to keep playing,
 to do one thing well over and over again.
 Maybe that’s why I liked
 the pizza place around the block that burnt our crusts,
 why you could not wait to move uptown,
 away from the martinis, mochas, and Marc Jacobs.
 Our new home was several blocks from anywhere.
 Half a mile out the buoy lights shined like rosary beads.
 If we were quiet and mindful the trees around the lake
shook when we walked beneath them.

Courses Taught: English 92 (Reading and Writing Poetry), English 192 (Intermediate Poetry Workshop), English 292 (Advanced Poetry Workshop), English 91 (Creative Nonfiction), English 191 (Intermediate Creative Nonfiction).

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