

# Poetry Path



The Poetry Path is a project  
of the Stadler Center for Poetry  
at Bucknell University.



**Bucknell**  
UNIVERSITY

# Eating Poetry

MARK STRAND

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.  
Her eyes are sad  
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.  
The light is dim.  
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,  
their blond legs burn like brush.  
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand.  
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,  
she screams.

I am a new man.  
I snarl at her and bark.  
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

*In memory of Mark Strand, 1934-2014*

SITE 2

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

# The Gardenia

CORNELIUS EADY

The trouble is, you can never take  
That flower from Billie's hair.  
She is always walking too fast  
and try as we might,  
there's no talking her into slowing.  
Don't go down into that basement,  
we'd like to scream. What will it take  
to bargain her blues,  
To retire that term when it comes  
to her? But the grain and the cigarettes,  
the narcs and the fancy-dressed boys,  
the sediment in her throat.  
That's the soil those petals spring from,  
Like a fist, if a fist could sing.

# Here, Bullet

BRIAN TURNER

If a body is what you want,  
then here is bone and gristle and flesh.  
Here is the clavicle-snapped wish,  
the aorta's opened valves, the leap  
thought makes at the synaptic gap.  
Here is the adrenaline rush you crave,  
that inexorable flight, that insane puncture  
into heat and blood. And I dare you to finish  
what you've started. Because here, Bullet,  
here is where I complete the word you bring  
hissing through the air, here is where I moan  
the barrel's cold esophagus, triggering  
my tongue's explosives for the rifling I have  
inside of me, each twist of the round  
spun deeper, because here, Bullet,  
here is where the world ends, every time.

# The River at Wolf

JEAN VALENTINE

Coming east we left the animals  
pelican beaver osprey muskrat and snake  
their hair and skin and feathers  
their eyes in the dark: red and green.  
Your finger drawing my mouth.

*Blessed are they who remember  
that what they now have they once longed for.*

A day a year ago last summer  
God filled me with himself, like gold, inside,  
deeper inside than marrow.

This close to God this close to you:  
walking into the river at Wolf with  
the animals. The snake's  
green skin, lit from inside. Our second life.

SITE 5  
POST OFFICE BUILDING

# Eyes Only

LINDA PASTAN

Dear lost sharer  
of silences,  
I would send a letter  
the way the tree sends messages  
in leaves,  
or the sky in exclamations  
of pure cloud.

Therefore I write  
in this blue  
ink, color  
of secret veins  
and arteries.  
It is morning here.  
Already the postman walks

the innocent streets,  
dangerous as Aeolus  
with his bag of winds,  
or Hermes, the messenger,  
god of sleep and dreams  
who traces my image  
upon this stamp.

In public buildings  
letters are weighed  
and sorted like meat;  
in railway stations  
huge sacks of mail  
are hidden like robbers' booty  
behind freight-car doors.

And in another city  
the conjurer  
will hold a fan of letters  
before your outstretched hand—  
“Pick any card. . .”  
You must tear the envelope  
as you would tear bread.

Only then dark rivers  
of ink will thaw  
and flow  
under all the bridges  
we have failed  
to build  
between us.

SITE 6  
DOWNTOWN

# The Film

KATE NORTHROP

Come, let's go in.  
The ticket-taker  
has shyly grinned  
and it's almost time,  
Lovely One.  
Let's go in.

The wind tonight's too wild.  
The sky too deep,  
too thin. Already it's time.  
The lights have dimmed.  
Come, Loveliest.  
Let's go in

and know those bodies  
we do not have to own, passing  
quietly as dreams, as snow.  
Already leaves are falling  
and music begins.  
Lovely One,

It's time.  
Let's go in.

SITE 7

HUFNAGLE PARK

# Little Father

LI-YOUNG LEE

I buried my father  
in the sky.

Since then, the birds  
clean and comb him every morning  
and pull the blanket up to his chin  
every night.

I buried my father underground.  
Since then, my ladders  
only climb down,  
and all the earth has become a house  
whose rooms are the hours, whose doors  
stand open at evening, receiving  
guest after guest.

Sometimes I see past them  
to the tables spread for a wedding feast.

I buried my father in my heart.  
Now he grows in me, my strange son,  
my little root who won't drink milk,  
little pale foot sunk in unheard-of night,  
little clock spring newly wet  
in the fire, little grape, parent to the future  
wine, a son the fruit of his own son,  
little father I ransom with my life.



SITE 8

KIDSBURG PLAYGROUND

# Fake Tattoo

NIKKI GRIMES

My butterfly sits  
atop my wrist  
as if it's poised for flight.

My lovely tattoo  
no longer new  
will fade before the night.

Still, after it's gone,  
it will live on  
inside my memory.

This jewel of the air—  
beauty most rare—  
that once was plain as me.

SITE 9

LEWISBURG CEMETERY

# Poem with Two Endings

JANE HIRSHFIELD

Say “death” and the whole room freezes—  
even the couches stop moving,  
even the lamps.  
Like a squirrel suddenly aware it is being looked at.

Say the word continuously,  
and things begin to go forward.  
Your life takes on  
the jerky texture of an old film strip.

Continue saying it,  
hold it moment after moment inside the mouth,  
it becomes another syllable.  
A shopping mall swirls around the corpse of a beetle.

Death is voracious, it swallows all the living.  
Life is voracious, it swallows all the dead.  
Neither is ever satisfied, neither is ever filled,  
each swallows and swallows the world.

The grip of life is as strong as the grip of death.

(but the vanished, the vanished beloved, o where?)

SITE 10  
7TH STREET AND MOORE AVENUE

# Subject to Change

MARILYN TAYLOR

— *A reflection on my students*

They are so beautiful, and so very young  
they seem almost to glitter with perfection,  
these creatures that I briefly move among.

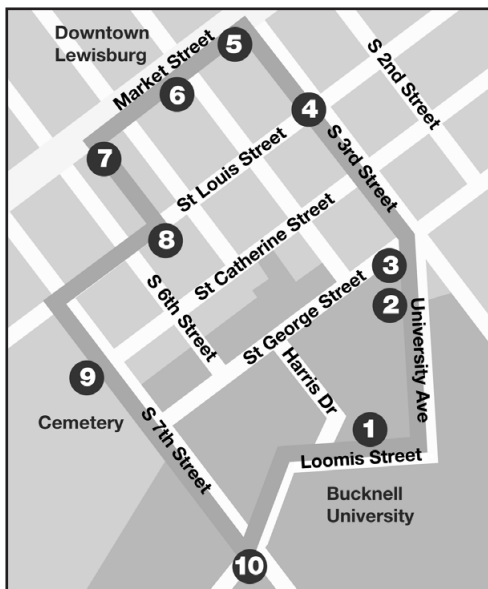
I never get to stay with them for long,  
but even so, I view them with affection:  
they are so beautiful, and so very young.

Poised or clumsy, placid or high-strung,  
they're expert in the art of introspection,  
these creatures that I briefly move among—

And if their words don't quite trip off the tongue  
consistently, with just the right inflection,  
they remain beautiful. And very young.

Still, I have to tell myself it's wrong  
to think of them as anything but fiction,  
these creatures that I briefly move among—

Because, like me, they're traveling headlong  
in that familiar, vertical direction  
that coarsens *beautiful*, blackmails *young*,  
and turns to phantoms those I move among.



The Poetry Path includes sites in downtown Lewisburg and on Bucknell University's campus.

**SITE 1: BUCKNELL HALL: STADLER CENTER FOR POETRY** Home to the Stadler Center for Poetry since 1988, Bucknell Hall was built in the Queen Anne style of architecture and was one of the first buildings on Bucknell's campus.

**SITE 2: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD** The red barn adjacent to the creek was a stop on the Underground Railroad, a series of secret safe-houses that helped an estimated 100,000 African Americans escape slavery in the years before the Civil War.

**SITE 3: VETERANS MONUMENT** The statue at the intersection of University Avenue and South Third Street originally commemorated Union soldiers and now honors all veterans of military service.

**SITE 4: CHURCHES** Clustered at the intersection of South Third Street and St. Louis are three of Lewisburg's churches, examples of the Gothic Revival (Baptist), Ruskinian Gothic (Methodist), and Richardsonian Romanesque (Lutheran) architectural styles.

**SITE 5: POST OFFICE BUILDING** Designed in the Neoclassical style, this building houses the Lewisburg Post Office, along with Bucknell administrative offices. The Lewisburg Opera House, destroyed by fire in 1908, once stood on the southeast corner of this site.

**SITE 6: DOWNTOWN** An icon of downtown Lewisburg, the Campus Theatre is one of the few single screen Art Deco theaters remaining in the United States.

**SITE 7: HUFNAGLE PARK** Now the site of community arts and recreational events, the park was named for police chief Gordon Hufnagle, who died saving lives in the flood of 1972.

**SITE 8: KIDSBURG PLAYGROUND** Many Lewisburg individuals and organizations came together to establish Kidsburg, a creative play space for children. The playground equipment features innovative designs by Playworld Systems, Inc., based in Lewisburg.

**SITE 9: LEWISBURG CEMETERY** Historic Lewisburg Cemetery features a Gothic-style chapel, Victorian family memorials of varying styles, and a memorial plot for soldiers of the Civil War and other conflicts.

**SITE 10: 7TH STREET AND MOORE AVENUE** This main intersection at Bucknell University is a site of constant motion during the academic year. The Langone Center, on the southwest corner, is home to offices, eateries, and the Samek Art Gallery.