

FURSCA Research Program Cover Page

Name of applicant: _____ Date: 3/21/2011_____

Graduation Year: 2012 Major: English - Creative Writing Concentration_____

Advisor: Helena Mesa____ Advisor's Department: English_____

Title of the Project: Exploring Prose Poetry: Examining the Boundaries and Intersection of Poetry and Environment_____

Grant Period: Fall____ Spring____ Summer_2011____

Summer start and end dates: 5/23/2011 – 7/22/2011

Has FURSCA supported this project or projects similar to it for the applicant or advisor in the past? YES NO

If yes, how is this project related to previously funded projects?

Does this project require IRB or IACUC approval? YES NO If yes, has approval been sought? YES NO

Does this project require chemicals or biological agents? YES NO

If yes, Have you received approval to order these chemicals? YES NO

BUDGET SUMMARY

Amount(s) Requested For each line requested, briefly explain the purpose

\$490 Mileage Reimbursement for 962 miles.

\$10 Overnight stay at Tawas Park campsite.

Total: \$500

Exploring Prose Poetry:
Examining the Boundaries and Intersection of Poetry and Environment

I want to explore what makes prose and poetry separate entities and what binds them together. The poetic form “prose poetry” is a seeming blend of these two separate genres, but it is by no means a concrete form. Prose poetry lends itself to genre-bending, as it is a blend between verse and prose, often looking on the surface like a paragraph of prose. However, on closer inspection the form is defined by the lyricism of poetry. Based on the attention prose poetry draws to boundaries, I am interested in applying the form to the physical boundaries of my environment. Therefore, after conducting my research on the essence and conventions of prose poetry, I will compose a body of prose poetry that explores the concept of physical and imagined boundaries within the state of Michigan.

Prose poetry is a genre of poetry that blends the expectations of prose with the imagery and music of poetry. While traditional poetry involves line breaks, meter, rhyme and an emphasis on negative space on the page, prose poetry utilizes the “paragraph” form of prose. On the page the poem is akin to flash fiction, or extremely short fiction, but it is distinguished by use of extended metaphor, lyricism, and other characteristics of traditional poetry. Far from a recent development, prose poetry has its own literary tradition. The idea was first introduced as the “poem en prose,” or the presence of poetry in works of prose, arising in eighteenth century Europe and exemplified by Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal* (Monte, 17-21). Though the greatly influential T.S. Eliot wrote passionately against the genre, a few modernists explored prose poetry, such as Gertrude Stein and Richard Aldington (Deville 6). Later, the American Beat poets picked up the evolving form, among them Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. More contemporary practitioners of the genre include Pulitzer Prize winner Charles Simic and Naomi Shihab Nye (Poets.org).

As an English major with a creative writing concentration here at Albion College, I intend on applying to graduate school for creative writing in poetry or fiction. I received the Gildart Prize for Poetry my sophomore year for a collection of free-form poetry on family, completed English 205: Introductory Creative Writing, and am currently taking English 321: Advanced Creative Writing—Poetry. Now, I

would like to turn my gaze towards not only the elusive form of prose poetry, but also the idea of boundaries, both physical and imagined. I will go about this exploration by examining the physical boundaries of our state, such as city versus country, coast versus inland, etc. I will also explore the social boundaries of our state, traveling to urban cities as well as farm country. I want to reflect in my poems the boundaries that I find within our state, whether they are physical city-limits or the space between people. This examination of environment will be reflected in my writing at the end of the summer.

The first section of my research will be devoted to reading prose poetry to establish an understanding of how prose poems are composed. I will also explore analytical texts on prose poetry in order to comprehend the genre as fully as possible. I will use both an urban and rural setting as inspiration for my poetry in an effort to explore the idea of “boundaries” within the poems themselves. To gather this inspirational material, I will travel to Tawas State Park and Beaver Island Wildlife Refuge in order to visit both coasts of the state. To examine the divide between rural and urban Michigan, I will visit downtown Detroit and Dearborn and the rural areas of Washtenaw County. During these excursions I will keep a photo journal along side a written journal, documenting what I encounter and preliminary thoughts about the subject matter. When I return from these trips I will use my journals to write the majority of my prose poems, basing my imagery and dramatic situations in the research material I collect on the road. (Please see the attached timeline for a more detailed schedule of my research project.)

Ultimately, I hope to better understand what prose poetry is in the context of modern literature as well as contribute to that tradition. This project is an opportunity to carry out in depth study of one genre of poetry that will allow me to grow as a reader and writer of poetry. I also believe that such a body of work would also serve as the seed for a departmental thesis as well as a graduate school writing sample.

Additionally, I plan on presenting my work at the Elkin R. Isaac Symposium, giving a reading of my work as well as a talk about my writing process. Furthermore, I intend to complete ten to fifteen polished, publishable poems by the end of this project. Once completed, I will submit those ten to fifteen poems for publication to literary journals, such as *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Midwestern Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Zone Three*, and *Passages North*. All of these respected, peer-reviewed journals

consider and publish new writers; therefore, I believe this project will yield a collection of prose poetry that is a legitimate candidate for publishing in this medium.

Budget:

I propose a budget of \$500. The mileage for the trip to Charlevoix, Michigan, comes to 524 miles roundtrip, and the trip to Tawas, Michigan equals 438 miles roundtrip. Therefore I am asking for \$490 based on FURSCA mileage reimbursement for 962 miles in total. The remaining \$10 will go towards a one-night stay in Tawas State park (\$15 per night for a rustic campsite). I have already acquired a Michigan Recreation Passport, which allows me entrance by car into any state park during the day. I plan on acquiring all of my reference material through the MELCAT system and will order the texts ahead of time so they will be ready on the first day of my research.

Timeline

<i>Timeline</i>	
Week 1	<p>Begin researching prose poetry, travel to Detroit, collect images, and start journal. During the first week, I will research the history and theory of prose poetry by reading texts such as Delville. I will also read anthologies of prose poems to understand how the theory applies—or leads to—the poems themselves. My goal this week is to learn the tradition, more clearly define what the form is, and better understand how to write my own prose poems.</p> <p>In traveling, I will be examining urban Michigan, starting with downtown Detroit and moving into the suburbs. Later in the week I will explore Dearborn and Ann Arbor in order to construct a more balanced view of urban Michigan. These will all be day trips so that overnight lodging will not be required.</p>
Week 2	<p>Continue to read and research the prose poem and conduct field research by traveling to Tawas state Park where I will stay two nights.</p> <p>This week, my goal is to further my reading as well as begin accumulating inspiration from coastal Michigan. Again, I will be taking pictures and journaling, gathering material for my prose poems from the park and the coast.</p>
Week 3	<p>I will continue to read intensively, paying close attention to theory and craft so that I may begin to write by week four with a sufficient understanding of the form. I will also be traveling to Beaver Island Wildlife Refuge for three days, my last major trip of the project.</p>

	<p>My goal for this week is to finalize my preparations for writing by conducting my last major trip to the west coast of Michigan. I will continue to take pictures and journal, gathering the bulk of my inspirational material. While I intend to start drafting poems towards the end of this week, though the bulk of my writing will begin in earnest in week four</p>
Week 4	<p>Continue reading published prose poetry for inspiration.</p> <p>Begin writing with a goal of finishing rough drafts for four prose poems. I will refer to my photo/writing journal for these prose poems. Rough drafts will consist of an established tone, imagery, dramatic situation and speaker. However, I will leave the serious revising and editing of these drafts until the last stage of the project. These poems will be focused on urban Michigan, drawing on the material collected during trips to Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Dearborn.</p>
Week 5	<p>Continue reading published prose poems.</p> <p>Continue writing drafts of poems. Again, I expect to complete working drafts for four prose poems, paying particular attention to tone, imagery, dramatic situation and speaker. These poems will be focused on east coast Michigan, drawing on inspirational material collected during my overnight trip to Tawas State Park.</p>
Week 6	<p>Continue reading prose poems, paying particular attention to collections published in literary journals.</p> <p>I will construct four more working drafts of prose poems in week six. These poems will be inspired by my last major trip to Beaver Island and will focus on the concept of the island and Lake Michigan, how Beaver Island is part of mainland Michigan and yet separate.</p>
Week 7	<p>I will focus my reading on literary journals and prose poems published in recent editions.</p> <p>I will finish the working drafts of my poems, organizing them and examining them as a group. When reading through my prose poems, I will look for patterns in tone, imagery and voice, constructing a cohesive idea of how I have represented Michigan's boundaries in my prose poems. I will also look for gaps in my writing, making room for additional drafts and rewrites if said juxtaposition gives rise to new ideas for poems.</p>
Week 8	<p>I will finish revising and editing my poems in week eight. As I am examining the prose poem form in this project, revision will be devoted to:</p> <p>A) Language - paying special attention to the music of the line, word choice, and rhythm. B) Tone/Speaker - establishing a consistent and appropriate tone for each prose poem that fits with the speaker. I will also hone the speakers of the poems, taking care to write speakers who are both compelling and have authority. C) Dramatic situation – looking for authenticity or believability in the stories, as well as the power to surprise and move in prose poem.</p> <p>In the fall, after revision I will begin submitting poems for publication, picking literary journals and selecting which prose poems to send out. Most journals do not begin accepting submissions until the fall. Therefore, I will wait to submit poems until September.</p>

References:

- Delville, Michel. *American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998. Print.
- Monte, Steven. *Invisible Fences: Prose Poetry as a Genre in French and American Literature*. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. Print.
- Poets.org, "Poetic Form: Prose Poem." <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5787>> Feb. 1, 2011.

Potential Texts for Research:

- Alexander, Robert; Vinz, Mark; Truesdale, C.W. *The Party Train: A Collection of North American Prose Poetry*. Minneapolis: New Rivers Press, 1996. Print.
- Benis White, Alison. *Self Portrait With Crayon*. Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2009. Print.
- Delville, Michel. *American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998. Print.
- Friebert, Stuart; Young, David. *Models of the Universe: An Anthology of the Prose Poem*. Oberlin College Press, 1995. Print.
- Gonzales, Ray. *No Boundaries: Prose Poems by 24 American Poets*. Dorset: Tupelo Press, 2003. Print.
- Hass, Robert. *Human Wishes*. New York: Ecco, 1989. Print.
- Lehman, David. *Great American Prose Poems: from Poe to Present*. New York: Scribner, 2003. Print.
- Monte, Steven. *Invisible Fences: Prose Poetry as a Genre in French and American Literature*. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. Print.
- Shihab Nye, Naomi. *You and Yours*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions Ltd, 2005. Print.
- Shumate, David. *High Water Mark: Prose Poems*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.
- Simic, Charles. *The World Doesn't End*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1989. Print.
- Stein, Gertrude. *Three Lives and Tender Buttons*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.
- Wright, James. *Above the River: the Complete Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990. Print.