

## Personal Narrative

In August 2006, I moved from a small town in central Pennsylvania, where I'd lived for fifteen years, to Dorchester, an inner-city neighborhood of Boston. There were good reasons for the move: my husband and I, aging, had been invited by our son and daughter-in-law to share the two-family house they were buying, where we would soon become a three-generation household. Still, it was difficult to leave a place where we'd been happy; to feel, as I did at moments, that we were moving to Boston to grow old(er) and die, and for me as a poet to leave a landscape that had become a muse for my poems. Although I'd grown up in a big city (New York) and lived in Philadelphia or its suburbs for many years of my adult life, when we moved to Selinsgrove, the small town fifty miles north of Harrisburg on the Susquehanna River, I found that rural landscape enormously nourishing to me as poet. The prospect of leaving it, of finding a language in an utterly different landscape, was surprisingly frightening. I ought to have known that the muse wears different guises at various stages of one's life, but I felt bereft. I mourned the garden I'd created in that town, the walks I took every morning along the Susquehanna River, the herons I saw there (who also had become muses of sorts), the view of the river itself, different each day.

Of course the mourning itself turned poetry, including prospective elegies written before we made the move. My poem "Skies" is a recent poem that came out of that mourning, and the struggle to learn the language of a new landscape, as is "Dog-Minded," a poem published in *New Madrid* in their Summer, 2013 issue. A very different poem about that landscape is "Waste" which was published by a local writers' organization, Write On the Dot, founded by graduate students in Creative Writing at U. Mass Boston, in their first anthology of poems by writers from Dorchester. I suspect that coming to grips with the ways in which the place I now live in is scarred and threatening has been an important part of its having become, nonetheless, a kind of muse. Tonawanda Street as muse: I'd never have guessed it. Nor would I have guessed that my muse would take the enchanting and sometimes maddening guises of the two grandchildren who have become part of this household in the last six years. But that's another story, other poems.