

## Poems by *William Wenthe*

### *Looking for the Marsh Wren*

A cold front: the pond's surface shaved  
 of its chanting flocks  
 of geese; absent  
 the green-wing teal's  
 iridescent brow—  
 their fitful whistlings  
 like Spring frogs.

Today, sky we must live under  
 on treeless tableland  
 casts down several gray eyes  
 where stretches thin  
 the stocking-mask of cloud.  
 My dog and I sit down  
 on a dry chert bank

where creek clogs into pond.  
 Brown reeds incise  
 slate water, angles over matted,  
 indecipherable as old  
 papyrus. In reed thicket  
 a chirr, a flutter—  
 binoculars turn up

a shard of ice, a flash  
 of styrofoam,  
 a childhood wanting  
 to inherit more  
 than a land  
 fraught with signs  
 of refuge only.

Tremble at reed-margin,  
 a ripple faints  
 like the question—  
 what meager sustenance  
 supplies the precise  
 beak, the feathered heart  
     taut and small as a pearl?

### *Recording My Poems for My Father*

When I sent my skinny paperback,  
I knew it wouldn't weigh much  
in his lumber-handler's hands;  
that it would hover, a bluish smudge,  
before eyes that once trued joints.

I suppose, then, it's only fitting  
to sit in this room I've set up  
in the back of a garage—my studio,  
I like to call it, reaching  
for the aura of his shop.

Every layer of insulation,  
of drywall, wood, glass, caulk  
and paint is a mistake  
corrected. He, who made blocks  
I played with as a child,

and the room where I slept,  
could surely, though almost blind,  
sense these uneven fissures  
in the spackled seams of sheetrock—  
having sold it for thirty-odd years.

Now I speak into a recorder,  
that he may hear the lines  
I've measured and joined  
in my fashion: more than toys,  
they're rooms I work and live in.

And to him? I rewind the tape, and listen—  
the shock of my own voice  
coming back from the little box,  
outside of me now, a stranger,  
yet still recognizably mine.

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**William Wenthe** has two books of poems, *Birds of Hoboken* (Orchises, 1995, reprinted 2003), and *Not Till We Are Lost* (LSU Press, 2003). He teaches at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.