

Classic Poetry Series

Joe Wenderoth
- poems -

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Joe Wenderoth(29 June 1966)

Joe Wenderoth is an American poet, writer and professor. His work is widely anthologized, appearing in collections such as: *The Anchor Book Of New American Short Stories*, *Isn't It Romantic*, *State of the Union*, *Poetry 180*, *The Next American Essay*, *The Best American Prose Poems: From Poe To Present*, *The Body Electric*, *The New American Poets: A Bread Loaf Anthology*, *American Poetry: Next Generation*, *Best American Poetry*, *The Best American Essays 2008*. In 2003, the One Yellow Rabbit theater company performed an adaptation of Wenderoth's *Letters To Wendy's*. The adaptation was done by Bruce McCulloch (*The Kids in the Hall*) and Blake Brooker, both of whom also starred in the production. In 2007, Wenderoth performed in collaboration with Gibby Haynes (*Butthole Surfers*) in Brooklyn at the Issue Project Room. Wenderoth teaches in the graduate Creative Writing Program at the University of California at Davis.

He is from Baltimore, Maryland, and received his M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College

My Life

after Henri Michaux

Somehow it got into my room.
I found it, and it was, naturally, trapped.
It was nothing more than a frightened animal.
Since then I raised it up.
I kept it for myself, kept it in my room,
kept it for its own good.
I named the animal, My Life.
I found food for it and fed it with my bare hands.
I let it into my bed, let it breathe in my sleep.
And the animal, in my love, my constant care,
grew up to be strong, and capable of many clever tricks.
One day, quite recently,
I was running my hand over the animal's side
and I came to understand
that it could very easily kill me.
I realized, further, that it would kill me.
This is why it exists, why I raised it.
Since then I have not known what to do.
I stopped feeding it,
only to find that its growth
has nothing to do with food.
I stopped cleaning it
and found that it cleans itself.
I stopped singing it to sleep
and found that it falls asleep faster without my song.
I don't know what to do.
I no longer make My Life do tricks.
I leave the animal alone
and, for now, it leaves me alone, too.
I have nothing to say, nothing to do.
Between My Life and me,
a silence is coming.
Together, we will not get through this.

Joe Wenderoth