For immediate release August 28, 2011

Pennsylvania poet’s third volume is ‘both intimate and discreet’

PITTSBURGH—Poet Julia Spicher Kasdorf once said in an interview that “nothing is a bad topic for a strong writer” . . . apparently not even garlic, a 1978 Chevy or cardio-kickboxing, all topics featured in her new collection Poetry in America.

Kasdorf, associate professor of English and Women’s Studies at Pennsylvania State University, was born in Central Pennsylvania and raised in a suburb of Pittsburgh. Poetry in America includes several nods to life in Pittsburgh and other locales in Pennsylvania. Some of the other poems are inspired by Kasdorf’s experiences as a writer, mother, and traveler.

Poet Eamon Grennan said, “I admire Julia Kasdorf’s poems for their alert eye, attentive mind, vigilant heart, all fused into a single, sometimes painfully aware, vision of the world. Bristling with narrative surfaces, angular emotional interiors, humorous sympathies, her poems move in careful zigzags. Plain-spoken, both intimate and discreet, these poems take hold.”

Kasdorf is the author of two previous poetry collections: Eve’s Striptease and Sleeping Preacher, which won the 1991 Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize and the Great Lakes Colleges Award for New Writing in 1993. Kasdorf’s poems have appeared in The New Yorker, Paris Review, and Poetry, as well as numerous anthologies, including the 2003 Pushcart collection.

She is also the author of The Body and the Book: Writing from a Mennonite Life 1991-1999, which won the Book of the Year Award from the Modern Language Association’s Conference on Christianity and Literature, and Fixing Tradition: Joseph W. Yoder, Amish American.

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Poetry in America is published by the University of Pittsburgh Press
88 pp. • 6 x 9 • ISBN 9780822961567 • Paper $15.95