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| Dear Frances,

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| You may have read in the June issue of *Harper’s* the dire essay titled “Poetry Slam, or the Decline of American Verse” by  |

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Mark Edmundson. It is certainly receiving a lot of attention for its critical depiction of contemporary poetry and its scathing dismissal of living poets from Seamus Heaney to Anne Carson. Bemoaning his perceived notion that poets no longer speak for “us” but instead only for themselves, Edmundson writes, “I often think that our poets now write as though history were over and they were living in a world outside collective time.”  I am sending Edmundson a copy of Graywolf Press’s latest poetry title, published this month, titled *Belmont* by noted poet, critic, and Harvard professor [Stephen Burt](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001uLbKumAj_S7DQfQ-RMWlelrGlxoZSagpLC6ATGctKZ2QSL2217H3kN4Ej8Kwpj3bOr4-3mUrkBxx_EzM7fthqHhAKbbFgpkXOAY7J44FktEUzDy4JpajCgYeB7-6wF4pp0Ph7w9GALOHQ_YTVkx2ZDZkrE-VrdmYPeWMl5ld3-PKQXDW_N7aOOFeQmS9Ksz8KMquYbNRUvqj5zYDOpwQtmtDAIQQjulWwPJA2M0PQK14ZNPQNGXvWw==" \t "_blank). The book is a powerful statement about contemporary life, history, politics, urban landscapes, gender identity, and parenthood. It’s a book that should make Edmundson reconsider his argument. In fact, Burt just this week published a smart retort to Edmundson’s essay in the *[Boston Review](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001uLbKumAj_S6z0jp2krEdKlY4Xdo2dgJ3Tr0ydsPAQqJbAaiR5Fx6-F8N6djy4Ic6vvKwzrwmZqJYRU6NIGLk_U8aQ48tb3jGooPOfcFkELAeUey4tdCGDLRKRFLkO3IVr-VhChEahcigtxM6DUY2OBLwDY3bvvGgBpAXUlVOk6Y4WTuLmls7mmoF7Z4HA0o8" \t "_blank)*. In his poetry as in his criticism, Burt is everywhere interested in writing as a way to gather us in, together, in a collective enterprise of praise, gratitude, and respect for the place of beauty in the world. “Sing for us whose troubles // are troubles we’re lucky to have,” Burt's first poem begins. And as if speaking about poetry itself, he ends the poem with these lines: “We should never look down // on what gives strangers comfort, // on what we learn too late that we might need.” At [Graywolf](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001uLbKumAj_S4cQKKjdAPFInYWnVwYjShDu6relgc8FwgSS_Fn9xkoofo12WFem7lHrNIO_SrCK_WRLWIAHZ_jn6-Q2uPKY6rAmzGTaHD4s3DO8j7L-nyRlX84czBdUBu4_AYKgIQpTbW7Hbm3n-K31Q==" \t "_blank), we believe poetry is for everyone, that it speaks for us individually and collectively in profound, challenging, and artful ways, and that it has the power to resonate across our culture. Of the soul, Burt writes, “Respectable people have found it in a guitar. // Consider where it lives, or hides, in you.” Best summer wishes, Jeff Jeffrey ShottsExecutive Editor  |

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