such a mix of high and low culture. I think poetry aspires to the best of both.

Q. Why do you write such long books? One reviewer called For the Confederate Dead “hefty.”

A. It’s not as long as my last book [Black Maria]! But those were short poems. I don’t like that image: the ‘slim volume of poetry.’ I think poetry has an intensity that’s not always served by length, but you have to say what you have to say. I’m just happy that Knopf has put out my work and has kept it coming out. I always admire long poems and the way they can take in a whole world, not just a slice of the world. Poetry isn’t meant to just be devoured in one sitting. It’s something you are meant to return to, something you can get lost in.

What I like about poetry is that it’s not like poetry is here and life is over here. To me, poetry feels at its best when it’s like life, which is fragmented, sometimes full of language and sometimes full of silence, but ultimately redemptive. I think that lyrical quality is important to our lives.

Shaun Sutner, a reporter at the Worcester Telegram & Gazette since 1992, has written for the Harvard Education Letter and Commonwealth Magazine.

Kenneth Kronenberg seeks the definitive source for “When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross,” attributed variously to Upton Sinclair, H. L. Mencken, and Huey Long, and to Sinclair Lewis’s It Can’t Happen Here. (On-line searches of two texts of the novel yielded nothing, he says).

Clifford Straehley requests the name of the putative author of the exhortation “Do good because good is good to do. Fear not the threat of Hell, nor be beguiled by the promise of Heaven.”