William Logan is the author of ten volumes of poetry, most recently *Madame X* (2012). He has published six books of essays and reviews, including *The Undiscovered Country*, which received the National Book Critics Circle award in criticism. A new book of criticism, *Guilty Knowledge, Guilty Pleasure*, was published in 2014.

Logan’s workshop for the 2016 Poetry Conference is *The Iambic Line*. The description is as follows: Oh, heck. I assume that, knowing the basics, you've written a few poems in iambic pentameter. Each session, we'll discuss a poem or two by a past master of the art as well as poems by members of class. To that end, participants should send him half-a-dozen of their pieces in pentameter (fewer if you have no more than a few). Where meter goes astray, we'll discuss the rules or understandings it violates, and the pluses and minuses of such violation.


Amsterdam, London, Paris, Basel, Rome,  
I rode the trains with hippies, far from home

on their private Grand Tours, which as a rule  
ended in Kabul, Kathmandu, or graduate school.

I passed the dusty porticos long closed,  
a cobbled alley hung with women’s clothes,  

Venus de Milo, Nike of Samothrace,  
those haunted galleries, each with its haunted face.

On a *rapido* through the campagna, stalled for hours  
beside a field of homely saffron flowers,

I came to no great decision about my life,  
had no epileptic idea, did not meet my future wife,

and later suffered no epiphanies beside the Parthenon,  
no geologic insight reading Chesterton.
One evening in Florence, though, I walked behind three blonde Americans, who talked

of the inconsequent nothings of their summer,
where everything was Cool! or Far out! or Such a bummer!

The tall pony-legged one, tanned and lithe,
marched with the instinct of a harvest scythe,

her long back naked beneath the evening’s haze,
arched shoulderblades chiseled by Praxiteles.

What sculpture is more beautiful than a living breast,
an inturned belly, or hazel eyes that suggest

hopes new rendered, then forever lost?
We were young, of course, and that was the cost.

Had I approached, what would she have had to say,
that girl whose mere loveliness would soon decay?

I kept silent rather than take the risk.
O my Manet! My walking odalisque!