

# Patricia Dobler Poetry Award, 2007 Winner

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## Incoming Wounded

By: Maureen O'Brien

Sweet cool wind, an "Ave Maria" radio station  
in a motel room where the phone doesn't work,  
you pissed near the Pentagon, in a river of snow melting.

Through the thin sheetrock we hear the army chaplain  
shaming the earless soldier into praying,  
while after touching you I trace the trenches of my stretch marks  
and we vanish in the dark

biker bar. Amputees file past. My fishnets slide  
down my legs: you, too, have come home wounded,  
your electric wheelchair wheezes while carrying us.

In the cold rain I make you stop and turn to me. I say,  
"I am so in love with you,  
I've been in love with you all along,  
I don't care what you feel in return." And while you watch from under

a tarp I bob in the grimy motel pool.  
I dry off near the busted gate. A doe comes right up to me,  
rubbing her face near mine, and making whistling sounds.  
When I found out you had been blown apart,

I did not sleep for days.  
Finally I slipped under and I dreamt  
that I peered inside my own birth canal and saw our baby's face,

it was the face that has been here forever  
all the way back through thousands of wars,  
living, dying, becoming whole again,  
longing to shred me open and be born.

## About the author

Maureen O'Brien teaches creative writing at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. Her novel *b-mother* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) sold to the Lifetime Movie Channel and was translated into German and Italian. Her poetry chapbook, *The Other Cradling* (Finishing Line Press), received an Honorable Mention in the Jean Pedrick Chapbook Award from the New England Poetry Club. O'Brien received First

Prize in the New Millennium Poetry Contest. Her story "Sequins and Holes" was runner-up in Many Mountains Moving flash fiction contest. She has received fiction grants from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund. Her work has appeared in magazines and anthologies including Red Rock Review, The Louisville Review, The Southern Women's Review, and most recently in About Place and The Cancer Poetry Project 2.

**Judge:** Judith Vollmer