David Ferry was born in Orange, New Jersey. He served in the Air Force for three years and became sergeant before matriculating at Amherst College, where he earned a BA, and then continuing at Harvard where he earned a PhD. After graduating, Ferry began teaching at Wellesley College, where he was a member of the faculty for over fifty years. Well-known as a translator of some of the world's major works of poetry, he is also a prize-winning poet in his own right, including the 2011 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize from the Poetry Foundation.