

UNL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER & CALENDAR

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"All the news we can beg, steal or borrow."

Laureate Rounds – Full Circle

We asked **Ted Kooser** for a peek into his recent past and impending future as, what?, U.S. Poet Laureate Emeritus?, and some observations about the whole experience. Here is his wonderful response:

"On the last evening of my laureateship, May 31st, I was in Omaha for a concert by the baritone, Thomas Hampson, at the Holland Center, at which Hampson sung two pieces based upon poems of mine. The national tour, of which this event was a part, was Hampson's tribute to the American art song, and it was sponsored by the Library of Congress. The Librarian, James Billington, was there that night, and a small group of us had dinner. After dinner, as we walked to the concert hall, the Librarian said to me, 'Ted, I want you to know that all those people in New York who thought that I was crazy to appoint you now act as if it had been their idea.' So it seems my labors to prove that someone from Nebraska could do the job were worth the effort.

"During my twenty months in office I appeared in front of approximately 200 groups, ranging in size from small book clubs to audiences of over a thousand, and I was in every state but three. I was interviewed by the media -- TV, radio, and print -- on around 100 occasions. I received and answered hundreds of letters and emails, and have three fifty-five gallon Rubbermaid tubs full of letters and cards I received from well-wishers. My newspaper column, which I plan to continue indefinitely, is in 150 to 200 newspapers with a potential circulation of nearly 12 million readers. **Pat Emile**, my assistant editor, and four of our graduate students, **Christine Stewart-Nunez**, **Tyrone Jaeger**, **James Engelhardt**, and **Fran Davis**, have been of immeasurable help to me.

"The laureateship, in combination with the Pulitzer Prize, have brought me lots of invitations, and it looks as if I will be traveling a lot in the next few years. But I hope to do no more than a couple of trips a month, and

those for only a few days in length. I have missed being home.

"There have been times when I have been so sick of poetry, of reading it and talking about it, that if Homer had been giving a reading of *The Iliad* in the Bailey Library I wouldn't have shown up. But this malaise will pass, and it's fun to be spending time with my poetry students, picking over their work. Since the end of May I have been spending much of my free time at my building in Dwight, reading and writing a little and drawing and painting a lot. The building is an old storefront and I have filled the big windows with artificial flowers from Lincoln thrift shops. When people ask what I'm doing there, I tell them that I am The Artificial Florist.

"I want to thank everyone in the department for their support and good wishes this past two years. It has meant a lot to me, during a very dreamlike time, that here in Nebraska I have a job where my feet are flat on the ground."

– Ted

Recent Publications & Other Achievements

As you survey the eager faces of your students this semester, ponder this: On June 7, English-department alum and University of Nebraska President **J. B. Milliken** (B. A. 1979) named our former chair **Linda Pratt** interim executive vice president and provost. As such, Linda is NU's ranking academic and administrative officer after the president and serves as dean of the university-wide Graduate College and as the presiding officer of the graduate faculty and the Executive Graduate Council. She is the first woman to serve in this position at the University of Nebraska.

Grace Bauer had a busy summer. Her book of poems, *Beholding Eye*, was published in June by CustomWords. In August, another book manuscript, *Retreats & Recognitions*, was chosen by Robert Pack as winner of the Idaho Poetry Prize and will be published by Lost Horse Press in 2007. Meanwhile,

the anthology *Umpteen Ways of Looking at a Possum: Critical and Creative Responses to Everette Maddox*, which Grace is co-editing with Julie Kane, has gone to press, and is due out later this month from Xavier Review Press. Grace will join a group of poets from across the country on Sept. 11, reading as part of the Wave Bus Tour and will also read on Sept. 22 in the Clean Part Reading Series (see Upcoming Events).

Nick Spencer's book *After Utopia: The Rise of Critical Space in Twentieth-Century American Fiction*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press in July. Nick also presented a paper entitled "The Power of Anarchist Utopia: B. Traven and Pierre Clastres" at the Utopian Studies Society Conference in Tarragona, Spain, July 6-8.

Several department members attended the American Literature Association meeting last May in San Francisco:

At the session on "New Directions in Cather Scholarship" **Guy Reynolds** talked about "The Novelist as Editor: Cather at McClure's."

Susan Belasco moderated "A Mini-Anthology of Neglected, Forgotten, or Underestimated Periodicals of the Long 19th Century," and **Kalenda Eaton** presented her paper "At Home on the Range: African American Travel, Migration, and the Allure of the Great Plains" at the panel on "Mobility, Migration, and Ethnic and Cultural Minorities in Writing on American Travel and Tourism III."

Ken Price coordinated a panel on digital American literary studies (the panel ultimately led to the founding of a new digital Americanists group). **Andrew Jewell** (Ph.D. '04) presented on the Willa Cather archive at this session, and **Mark Kamrath** (Ph.D. '96) introduced new work on the Charles Brockden Brown Electronic Archive.

Ken was then off to Paris in July to deliver a paper about the founding and development of the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at the Association for Digital Humanities Organizations meeting.

And on Aug. 4, **Ken** and co-director Kay Walter's Walt Whitman Archive Integrated Guide Team received the C.F.W. Coker Award from the Society of American Archivists in Washington, D.C. The Coker Award recognizes the archive's breakthrough integrated finding guide to Whitman's poetry manuscripts, which pulls together manuscript information from more than 30 institutions into one finding aid. To be considered for the award, "nominees must, in some significant way, set national standards, represent a model for archival description, or otherwise have a substantial impact on descriptive practices." Among the project collaborators are **Stacey Berry** (formerly Provan),

Brett Barney (Ph.D. '03), and **Andrew Jewell**. Key contributions were also made by Mary Ellen Ducey, university archivist and special collections librarian at UNL, and Daniel Pitti of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia.

Andrew Jewell has also received two internal grants to work on Cather Archive projects: the expanded, digital edition of *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* (for which **Sabrina Ehmke** serves as Editorial Assistant) and, with Digital Initiatives Librarian Brian Pytlik Zillig, a unique tool for doing sophisticated textual analysis of Cather's complete corpus of fiction. Both projects will debut in the spring of 2007.

Andy also reports that the Willa Cather Archive (<http://cather.unl.edu>) has published several new resources, including digital versions of short stories and nonfiction pieces from periodicals, a 10-second film clip (part of the only known moving image of Cather), and a new and greatly-expanded image gallery. This gallery, which has over 600 images from the Library's Archives and Special Collections, is fully searchable and zoom-able and contains features that allow users to compare images side-by-side as well as organize "favorite" photographs into a distinctive folder.

Steve Buhler's reverse-gender adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* was staged by the Flatwater Shakespeare Youth Ensemble June 19-21 at the Swan Theatre in Lincoln. Steve also served as dramaturg for the mainstage production of the play, which ran at the Swan June 8-25, and in which he appeared as Egeon. He is currently the dramaturg for Flatwater Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, opening on Sept. 21, and his adaptation of that play for the Youth Ensemble will run Oct. 2-4. For information, contact Steve or call Flatwater Shakespeare at 484-7640.

Marco Abel published "The State of Things: More Images for a Post-Wall Reality – The 56th Berlin Film Festival" in *Senses of Cinema* 39 (April-June 2006). You can read the essay at www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/festivals/06/39/berlin2006.html. Marco also published "Das Seltene und Kostbare," an interview he conducted with contemporary German filmmaker Christoph Hochhäusler, in *Filmtext.com* (May 2006). If your German is good, you can read the interview at www.filmtext.com/start.jsp?mode=3&thema=I&key=33.

Maureen Honey visited the Schomburg Center for Black Culture in Harlem last June for a week's worth of research on women poets of the Harlem Renaissance for a project funded by the Research Council via a Fling Faculty Fellowship. She read the files for

Gwendolyn Bennett, one of the rising young stars of the 1920's in Harlem, who won a fellowship to study art in Paris for a year and who was hired as a professor by Howard University in Washington D.C. at the age of 24. Bennett also served as literary editor of *Opportunity Magazine*, journal of the National Urban League, and published a great deal of poetry in the era's major journals and anthologies.

While in New York, Maureen also met with a documentary filmmaker on an NEH grant for whom she is a consultant about her project on women reporters on the front lines of World War II. The project is at the script stage.

Wheeler Winston Dixon has just published a new article, a detailed study of the life and films of director D. Ross Lederman, "A Cinema of Violence: The Films of D. Ross Lederman," in *Film Criticism* 30.3 (Spring, 2006). "It's a major piece of research," he explains, "using Lederman's personal papers and archives in the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles."

Over the summer, Wheeler published the following reviews: "*Re-Takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* by John Mowitz" and "*Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in the Age of New Media* by Stephen Vaughn" in *Choice* May 2006; "*The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact* by Colin McGinn" in *Choice*, April 2006; "*Feedback: The Video Data Bank Catalogue of Video Art and Artist Interviews* by Kate Horsfield and Lucas Hilderbrand" in *Choice* July 2006; and "*Derek Jarman and Lyric Film: The Mirror and The Sea* by Steven Dillon" in *Film Quarterly* 59.3 (Spring, 2006).

Tim Schaffert has an article about the Wave Books Poetry Bus tour in the current issue of *Poets and Writers* magazine (Sept./Oct. 2006).

This summer **Anthony Hawley** served as poet-in-residence at Greenwood Music Camp in Cummington, Mass., where he gave several readings, including a performance of "Icefield Sonnets" for String Quartet, a three-movement work composed by Pierre Jalbert (associate professor of composition and theory at Rice University) based on three of Anthony's poems. In the past year, the work has been performed by the Chiara, Enzo, Maia, and Ying quartets across the country. During the summer months, Anthony also gave readings in Minneapolis, Houston, and Cincinnati. Recent poems of his appear in the summer issue of *Denver Quarterly*.

Kelly Grey Carlisle has won a CSG fellowship to attend the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts for a two-week residency in October. Five of these fellowships are awarded annually.

Kelly and **Denise Banker** (Ph.D. '05) competed in the 2.4 and 1.2 mile open water swims at the Cornhusker State Games. Each swam a combined distance of 3.6 miles, which, they'd like to note, is farther than Lord Byron swam when crossing the Hellespont.

In August (2006) the *Midwest Miscellany XXXIII*, carrying the date Spring 2005 (!), came out with **Mary K. Stillwell's** essay "The Art of Alchemy: Transformation in the Poetry of **Hilda Raz.**"

Julie Iromuanya and **DeMisty Bellinger** are described as "creative and web-savvy" in the press release announcing the June 2006 launch of the University of Nebraska Press blog. The two English-department Ph.D. students are also interns at the press and were "heavily involved" in creating the blog site (<http://nebraskapress.typepad.com>).

Benjamin Vogt's creative nonfiction essay "The Deep Middle" appeared in *Crab Orchard Review* (11.1 Winter/Spring 2006). Ben was also a finalist for the Don Russ Poetry Prize from *Kennesaw Review*.

Zachary Schomburg's poem "The Truth About Canada," is now available as a small chapbook from Big Game Books (www.reenhead.com/biggame/biggame.html). He has other poems in the current issues of *Washington Square Review*, *Pilot*, *Same Storm*, *Typo*, *the Hat*, *Copper Nickle*, and *Action Yes*, and he has a translation of a **Mathias Svalina** poem (and vice versa) online at *Konundrum Engine Literary Review*.

And, over the summer poems by **Mathias Svalina** appeared in *No Tell Motel*, in *Realpoetik*, and in *Typo*.

Laura Madeline Wiseman has poems in the newest issues of *The Minnesota Review*, *Fence*, *Steam Ticket: A Third Coast Review*, and elsewhere.

Carrie Shippers has two poems in the just-released Summer 2006 *Harpur Palate* (6.1).

Steve Lovett had an eventful summer. He accepted a full-time faculty position at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, teaching creative writing, literature, and composition courses and working as a consultant in the UNO Writing Center. He was also married to Shannon Cooley on July 28.

Congratulations to **Derek Driedger** and his wife, Rebecca, on the June 8 birth of their daughter, Racquel Faith.

Kati Cramer and husband, Jon, welcomed Anna Therese Cramer into the world on Sept. 1, at 3:39 a.m. She weighed in at 8 pounds, 1 ounce, and is 20 inches long. "We think she's a spitting image of her daddy!," Kati wrote. "She has a very demanding cry, so we think she may have inherited my personality! We're glad to be back home [in Kentucky], and Anna is settling in wonderfully."

They Came to Stay

This year's honors for years of service to UNL go to **Alan Yates** (35 years); **Jim Ford** (25 years); ESL secretary **Marlene Kohmetscher**, **Debbie Minter**, and **Barry Schwab** (10 years); and **Kwakiutl Dreher** and **Lew Kaye-Skinner** (five years).

Welcome to our newest faculty members, **June Griffin**, **Stephen Ramsay**, and **Julia Schleck**.

Alumni News

Robert Vivian (Ph.D. '01) tells a tale that Kirkus Reviews describes as "disturbing, horrifying and beautiful all at once" in his new book, *Mover of Bones*, out this month in the University of Nebraska Press Flyover Fiction series.

Jim Reese (Ph.D. '06), wife, Linda, and daughter, Willow, have settled into a "little slice of heaven" in Hartington, where the mailbox is missing (at least it was in July) and "the neighbors are great." Jim is now an assistant professor of English and director of the Great Plains Writers' Tour at Mount Marty College, Yankton, S.D.

Now available for order: **Jim Cox's** *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* (University of Oklahoma Press, Nov. 2006). Jim (Ph.D. '99) and wife, **Domino Perez** (Ph.D. '98), spent three years at the University of North Texas after leaving NU and have been at the University of Texas - Austin for the last four years. Jim is a lecturer there, and Domino has a joint appointment in the Department of English and the Center for Mexican American Studies. Domino recently received a Raymond Dickson Centennial Endowed Teaching Fellowship and has a book, *There Was a Woman: Greater Mexican Cultural Readings of La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture*, due out next year from the University of Texas Press.

Pennies for ACORNs

The coin jar at Elaine Dvorak's desk is filling up about as slowly as the flood waters receded from New Orleans last year, so please remember to bring in that change you've been collecting since last year and additional funds too. The money will go to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, the nation's largest organization of low to moderate income families. ACORN is leading the grassroots effort to rebuild the communities that were hit the hardest last year by Hurricane Katrina.

Upcoming Events

Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m. – Closing cultural gala, "After the Storm: Celebrating Old New Orleans," featuring the Darryl White Jazz Quintet; ACORN director, Tanya Harris; Omaha Slam Poet team; and poet Kalamu ya Salaam. **Seanna Oakley** emcees. Free to the public, at the Nebraska Champion's Club, 707 Stadium Drive.

Sept. 11, 7 p.m. – **Grace Bauer** reads at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

This reading is part of the **Wave Books Poetry Bus** tour. Featuring more than 100 poets, and stopping at 50 cities in 50 days, the tour is sponsored nationally by Seattle-based independent press Wave Books and is arguably the most ambitious poetry tour ever attempted.

Local sponsor for the Lincoln leg of the tour is The Clean Part Reading Series, curated by **Zach Schomburg** and **Mathias Svalina**.

Sept. 12, 3:30 p.m. – **Faculty meeting**, Bailey Library

Sept. 13, 11:30 a.m. – **EGSA meeting**, Bailey Library

A light lunch will be provided and students will have the opportunity to sign up for EGSA sponsored committees. All graduate students are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Sept. 14, 3:30 p.m. – **Research & Region Colloquium "Deep Map Country: Narrative Cartography of the Great Plains"**

Sponsored by the Plains Humanities Alliance, this colloquium features Susan Maher, chair and professor of English at UNO. Bailey Library

Sept. 14, 7 p.m. – **Terese Svoboda** reads from her new novel, *Tin God*. Bailey Library

Svoboda, a native of Ogallala, is the author of eight books of prose and poetry, including *Trailer Girl and Other Stories*, *Cannibal*, and *Treason*. Her poetry and

fiction have appeared in many publications, including *Harper's*, *Paris Review*, and *The New Yorker*.

Sept. 15, 4 p.m. – No-Name Reading featuring **Carrie Shippers** and **Lucas Stock**. At Sur Tango Bar, 1228 P St. See <http://www.unl.edu/noname> for more information.

Sept. 15-16 – Omaha Lit Fest

Various events at various venues, featuring (among others) various department colleagues and alumni, including **Marge Saiser**, **Mel Krutz**, **Anthony Hawley**, **Mary K. Stillwell**, **Denise Banker**, **Greg Kosmicki**, **Daryl Farmer**, **Ladette Randolph**, **Robert Vivian**, **Tim Schaffert**, **Jonis Agee**, and **Gerry Shapiro**. Free to the public. For more information go to <http://www.omahalitfest.com>.

Sept. 19, 3:30 p.m. – Afternoon social formerly known as Faith O'Grady. Bailey Library

EGSA is sponsoring the first fall social of the year. "In the spirit of a little healthy competition, those who come will be able to suggest new names for the social. The nominees will be voted upon by the department at a later date. Please bring a dish to share, and mark your calendars because we hope to see everyone there!"

Sept. 21 – *Romeo & Juliet* opens at the Swan Theatre.

Steve Buhler is dramaturg, and **Bob Hall** the director. For information, contact Steve or call Flatwater Shakespeare at 484-7640

Sept. 22, 7 p.m. – Clean Part Poetry Reading featuring **Grace Bauer**, along with **Gabriel Gudding** and **Nathan Bartel**. Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery

This is the second of six Clean Part Poetry readings scheduled for the Sheldon this academic year.

American Life in Poetry: Column 073
By Ted Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006

Those of us who have planted trees and shrubs know well that moment when the last spade full of earth is packed around the root ball and patted or stamped into place and we stand back and wish the young plant good fortune. Here the poet Roy Scheele offers us a few well-chosen words we can use the next time.

Planting a Dogwood

Tree, we take leave of you; you're on your own.
Put down your taproot with its probing hairs
that sluice the darkness and create unseen
the tree that mirrors you below the ground.
For when we plant a tree, two trees take root:
the one that lifts its leaves into the air,
and the inverted one that cleaves the soil
to find the runnel's sweet, dull silver trace
and spreads not up but down, each drop a leaf
in the eternal blackness of that sky.
The leaves you show uncurl like tiny fists
and bear small button blossoms, greenish white,
that quicken you. Now put your roots down deep;
draw light from shadow, break in on earth's sleep.

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