

UNL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

Friday, March 2, 2007

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Publisher: Joy Ritchie

"Speaking Truth to people in varying states of powerlessness"

Recent Publications and Other Achievements

Jim Ford is codirecting with Ariel Bybee UNL's production of Frank Loesser's *The Most Happy Fella*, the most operatic of all American musicals. Frank Loesser's The musical, containing such familiar numbers as "My Heart Is So Full of You," "Joey, Joey, Joey," and "Standin' on the Corner," is based on Sidney Howard's 1924 Pulitzer Prize winning drama *Thy Knew What They Wanted*. The part of Tony Esposito will be sung by T Doyle Leverett, who last performed this leading role at New York City Opera. After UNL performances on February 22, 23, and 25, the production will move to the Lincoln Community Playhouse in June, and the Waterford (Ireland) International Festival of Light Opera in September.

Tamy Burnett presented a paper titled "Get Tough, Get Even: Veronica Mars and Attitudes Towards Justice in a Post-9/11 America" at the annual Southwest/Texas Popular Culture/American Culture Associations Regional Conference in February.

Wheeler Winston Dixon chaired a panel on 1950s Film and Television at the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association /American Culture Association 28th Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM, on February 15, 2007, and also read a paper entitled "Dreams of Childhood: 1950s Science Fiction Television." **Gwendolyn Audrey Foster** also attended the conference, and read her paper "Anti- Communist Hysteria: 'My Son John' and the Move Against the Educated Left in the 1950s." Gwendolyn and Wheeler also participated in the film journal editors' panel at the conference, entitled "Breaking In, Breaking Out" on February 16, 2007, representing *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, as the co-editors of the journal. Wheeler also presented a paper, "Teaching Film as it Disappears," at the The International Symposium on New Directions in the Humanities, Columbia University, New York, NY on February 24, 2007.

Amber Harris Leichner's poem "Papa of the Borderlands" was published in the Winter issue (3.2) of the *Dos Passos Review*.

Marco Abel attended for the 3rd year in a row the Berlin Film Festival. During the 10 days he spent in Berlin, he saw more than 20 new German films and conducted an interview with Austrian director Jessica Hausner, whose most recent film *Hotel* (2004) is going to be featured as part of the Ross's upcoming "Retrospective of Contemporary German Cinema" (March 23 - April 5), curated by Marco.

Laura Madeline Wiseman has an entry on Rita Dove in *Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Women Writers* (2007) and a poem in the recent issue of *Diner*.

Upcoming Events

March 5: Teaching & Research Committee Panel Session on "New Trends in 20th/21st Century Studies." Participants will be **Marco Abel, Aaron Hillyer, Steve Ramsey, and Amelia Montes**.

March 8: EGSA-sponsored department social, 3:30-5pm in the Bailey. Bring your favorite dish to share and we will have the tea ready!

March 8: "Muslim Influences on Medieval Christian Theology," a dialogue/lecture by Professor Stephen Lahey, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Professor Idit Dobbs-Weinstein of Vanderbilt University. 7:30 p.m., Bailey Library. This will be the sixth in the lecture series, *Muslim/Jewish/hristian Relations, 1100-1700*. Free and open to the public.

March 9: No Name Reading: Madeline Wiseman and Razia Sultana Khan, 4:00 Sur Tango Bar, 1228 P Street.

Alumni Updates

Amy Knox Brown (1988 M.A., 1997 Ph.D.) received an M.F.A. from North Carolina State University in 2006. She's presently a Visiting Assistant Professor of creative writing at Salem College, the oldest women's college in the country. Amy's fiction has recently appeared on-line in *Narrative Magazine* and is forthcoming in *Beloit Fiction Journal*, and poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Ellipsis*, and *Cutthroat*. Amy's story collection, *Three Versions of the Truth*, is scheduled for Sept. 2007 publication by Press 53 (press53.com).

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

Here the Maine poet, Wesley McNair, offers us a vivid description of a man who has lived beyond himself. I'd guess you won't easily forget this sad old man in his apron with his tray of cheese.

The One I Think of Now

At the end of my stepfather's life
when his anger was gone,
and the saplings of his failed
nursery had grown into trees,
my newly feminist mother had him
in the kitchen to pay for all
those years he only did the carving.
"You know where that is,"
she would say as he looked
for a knife to cut the cheese
and a tray to serve it with,
his apron wide as a dress
above his workboots, confused
as a girl. He is the one I think of now,
lifting the tray for my family,
the guests, until at last he comes
to me. And I, no less confused,
look down from his hurt eyes as if
there were nothing between us
except an arrangement of cheese,
and not this bafflement, these
almost tender hands that once
swung hammers and drove machines
and insisted that I learn to be a man.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org),

publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright (c) 2002 by Wesley McNair, whose most recent book is *The Ghosts of You and Me*, David R. Godine, 2006. Reprinted from *Fire: Poems*, published by David R. Godine, 2002, by permission of the author. Introduction copyright (c) 2006 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

An Important Alert from the Bowels of the University's Operations Center!!

Due to the need to expand the Electrical Power grid in our Operations Center here at CSN and allow for the addition of new Electrical circuits, we have found it necessary to schedule a **complete Power Outage** in the Operations Center on **March 4, 2007** from **04:00 a.m. until between 10:00 a.m. and noon**. During this installation, the Operations Center will be completely without power, and ALL Systems and most Networking will be unavailable. We hope that this does not create any undo hardship or problems for anyone, and will attempt to have all Systems operational again as soon as possible on that day. **Note: this applies to computer servers, not to building power.** Any questions or comments, feel free to contact the UNCSN Helpdesk at 472-7373. Thank you.

Pet Dream Analyst

Dear Pet Dream Analyst,
I don't know if this is a pet dream or not, since in real life I don't own an elephant, but last night I dreamed there was an elephant on our roof wearing shiny red high heeled shoes. What does this mean?

Dear Elephant Fantast,
I suspect you secretly want an elephant as a pet, but are deterred by the expense. The shiny red high heeled shoes might have erotic implications, but I'd rather not go down that road. More likely they are a touch of child-like whimsy, in the manner of the Babar the Elephant books, which you probably read as a child. An elephant dancing on the roof—how charming! But the noise when you were trying to sleep—quel dommage! (as Babar would say). I recommend resolving your ambivalence ("I don't

know if this is a pet dream or not”) by deciding either to cough up the money to buy an elephant or perhaps to settle for a more practical Dachshund.

Dear Pet Dream Analyst,

In a recent dream, I took our dog to the vet, and when I returned to pick him up, the vet brought him out and reported that he had bitten him (that is, the dog had bitten the vet, not the other way around). Our dog has never bitten anyone. In the dream, the vet was not upset about this; in fact he seemed amused. What does this mean?

Dear Dog Owner,

A clear case of projection: you would like to bite people yourself but are too goody two shoes to do it, so you dream of your dog biting his adversary the vet. You further ward off the guilt you feel about aggression by imagining the vet would be amused rather than upset. Dogs take after their owners, hence your Milquetoast pet. You need to find a dog trainer who is expert at anger management to teach you and your dog how to growl, show your teeth and bite if need be. You will get more respect, believe me, and sleep better at night. Both of you.

Dear Pet Dream Analyst,

I don't want to criticize, but it seems that in past pet dream analyst columns, the dreams have focused on human dreams ABOUT pets, not the pets' own dreams, which is a bit unfair. (I believe the chancellor himself may have commented on this, though not publicly.) My dog clearly has dreams -- he does the whimpering-in-his-sleep, kicking-his-legs thing that dogs do. I like to think that his dreams are more imaginative than the cliched squirrel-hunting dreams people assume. What do you, the pet dream analyst, think?

Dear Pet Dream Quibbler,

When I start analyzing the dreams of pets, it is time for me to check in for analysis myself. That said, we have some ideas of what pets dream, if only by inference. Cats tend to work out metaphysical problems in their sleep: is there an abstract mouseness that exists prior to individual specimens of mouse? These are hard problems so cats sleep a great deal. Dogs tend to have surreal dreams in which they may indeed be chasing a squirrel, but the squirrel is on a unicycle wearing a beret. And the dog himself is on roller skates, hence the flailing of the legs. Put it this way: a dog would understand the Elephant Fantast's dream about an elephant on the roof wearing red shoes, but to a cat it would be just another instance of human foolishness.

Private to Kitty Lover in the Near South: At a recent lunch, Miss Manners, Dr. Gott and I commiserated over a ruse often foisted on us: fictional letters designed to make us seem gullible charlatans. I returned to my office to find your letter, which seemed a case in point. But Pete (Dr. Gott) had stressed how difficult it is in the postmodern world to distinguish between an outlandish fabrication and a cry for help. So, Mr. or Ms. Smarty Pants, if, and I stress if, a person had dreams such as you describe it would be a sign of incipient homicidal mania. Charles Manson and Ted Bundy both began their descent into psychosis with an innocuous love of kittens that counter transferred into a hatred of humans. Given your apparent personality type, I recommend finding new homes for all the kittens--every last one--and acquiring an ant farm, the inhabitants of which will inspire no such fantasies. Get a grip on yourself while there is still time.

Calendar Department-Wide

Elaine Dvorak will begin keeping an English Department Event Calendar. We can avoid some, but probably not all, conflicts in scheduling visiting lecturers, creative writers, readings, panels and other events if everyone will consult the Department Event Calendar before scheduling events. In addition, since many of us participate in one or more interdisciplinary programs, if you know that an important event sponsored by another program is scheduled for a specific date, it might be helpful to inform Elaine so that she can note that on the calendar as well.