

UNL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

Friday, October 5, 2007

Editor: Gerry Shapiro

Publisher: Joy Ritchie

"Speaking Truth to people in varying states of powerlessness"

Recent Publications and Other Achievements

Linda Pratt was in New York City recently to chair a meeting of the MLA's Committee on Academic Freedom, Professional Rights, and Responsibilities.

Steve Behrendt has a longish review essay on two new books (on politics and anger in later 18th-century Britain) in the most recent issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life*. Steve is also still looking for adoptive parents for several illness-free and disease-free kittens (two male, two female; great personalities all) that were the products of an obviously scandalous midnight tryst by resident neighborhood wanderers whom the Behrendts befriended (with probably predictable results!).

Upcoming Events

October 5: No Name Reading, featuring **Dan Nowak** and **Benjamin Vogt** 4 p.m. **Sur Tango Bar, 12th and P.**

October 6: "Working As An Artist in Nebraska," a panel discussion, **2 p.m. - 4 p.m., Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery 12th and R Street.** Featuring six recent winners of Nebraska Arts Council Individual Artist Grants, including our own **Mary K. Stillwell** and **Gerry Shapiro**.

October 9: "Tea and Temptation, an Intimate Musical," **6:30 p.m., Ethel S. Abbott Auditorium, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery,** featuring **Kwakiutl L. Dreher**, accompanied by Mollie Baldwin Manner. "Tea and Temptation" is an installment of *Sheldon Connections 2007*.

October 10: Kathleen Flenniken, author of *Famous*, winner of the 1006 *Prairie Schooner* Poetry Prize, reading from her work, **Bailey Library, 7:30 p.m.**

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

Editor's Note: in honor of the end of Baseball Season (that most poetic of all sports seasons – sorry, Huskers fans), we're doing a double-header on American Life in Poetry this issue.

Column #130

A number of American poets are adept at describing places and the people who inhabit them. Galway Kinnell's great poem, "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World" is one of those masterpieces, and there are many others. Here Anne Pierson Wiese, winner of the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets, adds to that tradition.

Columbus Park

Down at the end of Baxter Street, where Five Points slum used to be, just north of Tombs, is a pocket park. On these summer days the green plane trees' leaves linger heavy as a noon mist above the men playing mah jongg--more Chinese in the air than English. The city's composed of village greens; we rely on the Thai place on the corner: Tom Kha for a cold, jasmine tea for fever, squid for love, Duck Yum for loneliness. Outside, the grove of heat, narrow streets where people wrestle rash and unseen angels; inside, the coolness of a glen and the wait staff in their pale blue collars offering ice water. Whatever you've done or undone, there's a dish for you to take out or eat in: spice for courage, sweet for chagrin.

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Sometimes beginning writers tell me they get discouraged because it seems that everything has already been written about. But every experience, however commonplace, is unique to he or she who seizes it. There have undoubtedly been many poems about how dandelions pass from yellow to wind-borne gossamer, but this one by the Maryland poet, Jean Nordhaus, offers an experience that was unique to her and is a gift to us.

A Dandelion for My Mother

How I loved those spiky suns,
rooted stubborn as childhood
in the grass, tough as the farmer's
big-headed children--the mats
of yellow hair, the bowl-cut fringe.
How sturdy they were and how
slowly they turned themselves
into galaxies, domes of ghost stars
barely visible by day, pale
cerebrums clinging to life
on tough green stems. Like you.
Like you, in the end. If you were here,
I'd pluck this trembling globe to show
how beautiful a thing can be
a breath will tear away.

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