

UNL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

Friday, February 22 2008

Editor: Gerry Shapiro

Publisher: Joy Ritchie

"Speaking Truth to people in varying states of powerlessness"

Recent Publications and Other Achievements

Maura Giles-Watson's interdisciplinary article, "Odysseus and the Ram in Art and (Con)text," has just come out in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (vol. 103).

Wheeler Winston Dixon narrates and appears in the thirty-minute documentary film "Jean-Luc Godard: A Riddle Wrapped in an Enigma" as part of a box set of three DVDs of four films by Godard (*Déetective*, *Hélas pour moi*, *Passion*, and *Prénom Carmen*) from Lionsgate Films. Wheeler is one of three critics who analyzes Godard's late films in the documentary; also appearing are David Sterritt, Chairman of the National Society of Film Critics, and Kent Jones, editor of *Film Comment*. Wheeler contributed his "best films of 2007 list" to the Senses of Cinema World Poll (October-December 2007), at: <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/08/46/2007-world-poll-1.html#Dixon> Wheeler also published a review of *The British Musical Film* by John Mundy in *Choice* (March 2008).

Melissa Homestead was disappointed that so few people in the department appear to be close readers of the *Lincoln Journal Star* and thus failed to notice that one of her cats made the February 5th issue of that august news organ. In response to an earlier article about an 18-year old Shihtzu which its owner believed to be the oldest dog in Lincoln and the reporter's call for readers to submit more reports of ancient canines, Melissa contacted the reporter about her oldest cat. The paper reported, "Melissa Homestead of Lincoln threw down another challenge to our readers. Is her cat Isobel, 20, the oldest cat in Lincoln? Homestead adopted Isobel in 1988 in Philadelphia. Since then, Isobel's lived at nine addresses in five states." Perhaps because this item appeared at the end of a list of dog reports, no readers have challenged Melissa's claim on Isobel's behalf (a bit overstated by the reporter -- Isobel's in her 20th year, but won't hit her 20th birthday until later this year).

Susan Belasco, co-editor (with Linck Johnson), of *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature*, is happy to announce that Volume 2 is now published, completing a project that began in the spring of 2001. As with Volume 1, a number of current and former UNL faculty members and students have been involved in this project. **Tom Gannon**

serves on the editorial advisory board for Volume 1 and **Nick Spencer** serves on the editorial advisory board for Volume 2. **Venetria Patton** is the editor of *Background Readings for Teachers of American Literature*, a collection of essays designed as a resource for instructors, and **Sharon Harris** is the editor of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, one of five newly-edited novels, also designed to accompany the anthology. Several English-department graduate students (now alumni) contributed audiovisual units for *Archive America*, the Instructor's DVD, including **Amanda Gailey** (Ph.D. '06), **Andy Jewell** (Ph.D. '04), **Darcie Rives** (Ph.D. '06), and **Jeanine Jewell** (Ph.D. '05). Current graduate students who have worked as research assistants at various times include **Jackie Cruikshank**, **Ramon Guerra**, and especially **Liz Lorang**, who served as a special assistant to the editors for Volume 2. **Janel Simons**, a UNL English undergraduate (B.A. '04) and current Ph.D. student, also worked as a research assistant. According to Susan, "Linck and I could not have undertaken—or completed-- this project without the invaluable help and support of my generous colleagues at UNL, and we would especially like to thank **Grace Bauer**, **Bob Bergstrom**, **Steve Behrendt**, **Franz Blaha**, **Steve Buhler**, **Janet Carlson**, **Barbara DiBernard**, **Kwakiuti Dreher**, **Tom Gannon**, **Amy Goodburn**, **Melissa Homestead**, **Maureen Honey**, **Tom Lynch**, **Amelia Montes**, **Linda Pratt**, **Ken Price**, **Guy Reynolds**, **Joy Ritchie**, **Greg Rutledge**, **Gerry Shapiro**, **Judy Slater**, and **Nick Spencer**."

One of **Kelly Grey Carlisle's** essays was reprinted in the *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: 1970 To The Present*, edited by Michael Martone and Lex Williford and available from Simon and Schuster. An essay by **Ted Kooser** also appears in this anthology.

South Atlantic Review has published **Marco Abel's** critical review essay, "Spatializing Violence, Violating Space: Towards a New Theory of Violence in Contemporary American Fiction," in its latest, much delayed Summer 2006 (!) issue.

Carrie Shipers has two poems in the newest issue of *Harpur Palate*.

Timothy Schaffert's short story "The Lovers of Vertigo," was published as a "mini-book" in the featherproof light reading series. The story is downloadable for free (with easy book-making instructions) from featherproof.com.

Tamy Burnett recently attended the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture/American Culture Associations conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she presented a paper titled "Heroic Women and Violent Spectacle: Questions of Visual Pleasure, Gender, and the Foundations of Today's Violent Woman in Film."

Janet Harkness has recently been appointed to two advisory boards: one in the US (the National Science Foundation Social, Behavioral, & Economic Sciences Advisory Board); and another in Germany (the "Taskforce" Advisory Board of the Deutsches Jugendinstitut in Munich).

In a surprise classroom ceremony, **Steve Buhler** was named UNL's Professor of the Month for January 2008 by the Black Masque chapter of the Mortar Board Honor Society. Also last month, Steve presented his talk, "Audiences with the King: Adapting Shakespearean Tragedy," at the University of Mobile, Alabama.

News From the Writing Center

This year the Writing Center at UNL established a consortium of undergraduate peer consultants to complement a staff of five graduate teaching assistants. In order to maintain a robust undergraduate staff and establish a sense of continuity in our writing center, we are asking for the faculty's help.

Specifically, we are looking out for potential consultants for the fall of 2008, so if you know of any students you think would make good writing center consultants, we'd like to know about them. For us a potentially good consultant is a student who demonstrates ambitiousness in genre and subject, is willing to take risks with her writing and writes to the outside limits of her ability. In addition, we are interested in writers who display sophistication both in the way they talk about writing and in the relational work that corresponds to having a productive conversation about writing.

The Writing Center at UNL is deeply invested in creating a diverse undergraduate staff as well as hiring promising undergraduates at the beginning of their second or third year of study. If you have any recommendations, please contact **Frankie Condon** (fcondon2@unl.edu) or **Mike Kelly**.

Upcoming Events

TODAY! February 22, Tyrone Jaeger and Amy Jirsa, reading from their work, as part of the No Name Reading Series, 4 p.m., Sur Tango Bar *et* Café, 12th & P.

Tuesday, March 4: Women's Lit Film Night Series: *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), 6:30 p.m., Bailey Library; hosted by **Rebecca Bednarz**. This film explores the conflict between traditional and modern ideas of love and marriage in Indian culture. Directed by Mira Nair, the film follows Aditi, a young woman who has agreed to enter an arranged marriage. Aditi's upcoming marriage raises questions of love and tradition for her and others in her family. Rated R. All films in the Women's Lit Film Night Series are free and open to the public, so bring a friend, a date, or someone you just met walking down the street! Snacks will be provided, but bring your own soda, juice, or water.

Wednesday, March 12: Maria Melendez, reading from her poetry, 7:30 p.m., Bailey Library. **NOTE: THIS IS A SCHEDULE CHANGE.**

Thursday, March 13: Women's and Gender Studies Annual Banquet, celebrating Women's History Month and 30 years of Women's studies at UNL, 6:00 - 8 p.m., Wick Alumni Center.

Nebraska Poets on Sheldon Paintings Contest

The final weeks for entering the Nebraska Poets on Sheldon Paintings Contest are here--postmark deadline March 1st. We hope you'll encourage your classes to submit! This past weekend (2/16-2/17) we had the pleasure of hearing NET Radio's piece on the project. Jerry Johnston spoke with Nebraska poet laureate William Kloefkorn, our own Grace Bauer, and Nebraska Writing Project teacher Mary Birky. If you'd like to listen, visit: http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/netradio/news.newsmain?action=article&ARTICLE_ID=1229371. Details are available at http://www.sheldonartgallery.org/events_programs/index.html. Please direct questions to: sheldonpoetrycontest@unl.edu. Here's hoping for a successful submission period!

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

There's a world of great interest and significance right under our feet, but most of us don't think to look down. We spend most of our time peering off into the future, speculating on how we will deal with whatever is coming our way. Or dwelling on the past. Here Ed Ochester stops in the middle of life to look down.

What the Frost Casts Up

A crown of handmade nails, as though
there were a house here once, burned,
where we've gardened for fifteen years;
the ceramic top of an ancient fuse;
this spring the tiny head of a plastic doll--
not much compared to what they find
in England, where every now and then
a coin of the Roman emperors, Severus
or Constantius, works its way up, but
something, as though nothing we've
ever touched wants to stay in the earth,
the patient artifacts waiting, having been lost
or cast away, as though they couldn't bear
the parting, or because they are the only
messengers from lives that were important once,
waiting for the power of the frost
to move them to the mercy of our hands.

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irty, forty years ago, there were lots of hitchhikers, college students, bent old men and old women, and none of them seemed fearful of being out there on the highways at the mercy of strangers. All that's changed, and nobody wants to get in a car with a stranger. Here Steven Huff of New York tells us about a memorable ride.

Safe

You used to be able to flag a ride in this country.
Impossible now--everyone is afraid
of strangers. Well, there was fear then too,
and it was mutual: drivers versus hitchhikers.
And we rode without seat belts,
insurance or beliefs. People
would see me far ahead on a hill like a seedling,
watch me grow in the windshield
and not know they were going to stop until
they got right up to me. Maybe they wanted
company or thought I'd give them
some excitement. It was the age
of impulse, of lonesome knee jerks. An old woman
stopped, blew smoke in my face
and after I was already in her car she asked me
if I wanted a ride. I'm telling you.
Late one night a construction boss pulled over.
One of his crew had been hit
by the mob, he said as he drove, distraught
and needing to talk to someone.
We rode around for a long time.
He said, I never wore a gun to a funeral before,
but they've gotta be after me too.
Then he looked at me and patted the bulge
in his coat. Don't worry, he said, you're safe.

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