

# UNL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

Friday, February 2, 2007

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"Speaking Truth to people in varying states of powerlessness"

## Upcoming Events

**Today, February 2: No-Name Reading**, featuring **Francis Davis** and **Christine Stewart-Nuñez**, 4 p.m., Sur Tango Bar, 1228 P Street.

**February 6: Teaching & Research Committee Panel Session on "Recovery Work in English Studies."** Participants will be **Steve Behrendt**, **Amber Leichner**, **Whitney Douglas** and **Eric Turley**.

**February 7: Faculty Meeting**, 3:30 p.m. Bailey Library.

**February 10: The Clean Part Reading Series, 7pm at the Sheldon.** Three poets, **Julie Doxsee**, **Sandy Florian**, and **Sommer Browning**, will be traveling from Denver and New York City to read from their work. For bios and poetry samples, visit [www.thecleanpart.blogspot.com](http://www.thecleanpart.blogspot.com).

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

## Teaching Recognitions Awards

A number of our colleagues were recognized this year by the UNL Parents Association Awards. These awards originate with students, who nominate faculty or staff members who've "made a significant contribution to their lives while at UNL." The number in parentheses next to each faculty member's name indicates the number of times they've been recognized with this award. There will be a reception in honor of recognized faculty hosted by the Teaching Council today, Friday February 2, in the Ballroom of the City Campus Union, at 2:30 p.m.

**Marco Abel (1), Wheeler Winston Dixon (11), Kalenda Eaton (1), Steve Edwards (2), Chris Gallagher (2), Joseph Goecke (2), Maureen Honey (4), Brenda Ingraham (1) Janet Jarvis (2), Lew Kaye-Skinner (4), Amber Leichner (1) Joseph Rein (1), Jessica Rivera (1) Gerald Shapiro (5)**

## American Life in Poetry

By **Ted Kooser**, U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006

Literature, and in this instance, poetry, holds a mirror to life; thus the great themes of life become the great themes of poems. Here the distinguished American poet, John Haines, addresses--and celebrates through the affirmation of poetry--our preoccupation with aging and mortality.

### Young Man

I seemed always standing  
before a door  
to which I had no key,  
although I knew it hid behind it  
a gift for me.

Until one day I closed  
my eyes a moment, stretched  
then looked once more.  
And not surprised, I did not mind it  
when the hinges creaked  
and, smiling, Death  
held out his hands to me.

Reprinted from *ABZ: A Poetry Magazine*, No. 1, 2006, by permission of the author. Copyright (c) 2006, by John Haines, whose most recent book of poetry is *Of Your Passage, O Summer*, Limberlost Press, 2004. This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress, and the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.

## Recent Publications and Other Achievements

Issue #8 of *Octopus Magazine* ([www.octopusmagazine.com](http://www.octopusmagazine.com)) is now online and 8 chapbooks are available for purchase from *Octopus Books*. They can be purchased individually or as a set. Please consider supporting this project by buying these books directly from **Mathias Svalina** or **Zachary Schomburg** or by visiting [www.octopusbooks.net](http://www.octopusbooks.net) (there is a Paypal option).

**Tyrone Jaeger's** short story collection, *Graffiti Mouth*, was a semifinalist for this year's Iowa Short Fiction Award. There were 400 some entries and Tyrone was one of twenty semifinalists. His short shorts, "My Wife in the Bath," "The Petrified Forest," and "Trespassing" are in the Winter 2007 issue of *PRISM International*, which is due out some time this month.

**Laura Madeline Wiseman's** short story "How to be a Wife" was reprinted in the winter issue of *Geist*. Other poems and short stories appear in the recent online additions of *Poetry Midwest*, *Dissections*, *Celebrations*, and *Apple Valley Review*.

Congratulations to **Wheeler Winston Dixon** and **Gwendolyn Audrey Foster**, both of whom have received Maude Hammond Fling Fellowships to complete their book *A Short History of Film*, to be published in 2008 by Rutgers University Press.

**Michael Busk's** poem, "I Brought My Dead Grandma to the Prom," will appear in the Spring issue of *The Pinch*. His short story, "John Hancock's Bane," will appear in the Spring issue of *The Madison Review*.

Two of **Mary K. Stillwell's** poems, "Lavender Sweet Peas" and "Taking My Place III," have just come out in the Winter 2006 issue of *The South Dakota Review*.

*Prairie Schooner's* 2006 Poetry Book Prize-winner, **Kathleen Flenniken's** *Famous*, just won a place on the list of 23 books, only 3 of them poetry, chosen by the American Library Association. Each year the Notable Books Council of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the ALA, compiles a list of outstanding books for the general reader. These titles are selected for their significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge and for the pleasure they can provide to adult readers. Congratulations to *Prairie Schooner* and Kathleen Flenniken on this major award.

**Zachary Schomburg's** chapbook of poems, *Abraham Lincoln's Death Scene*, is now available from Horse Less Press ([www.horselesspress.com/chapbooks.html](http://www.horselesspress.com/chapbooks.html))

Norton Records has re-released "It's Lame," the first single by Figures of Light, the American proto-punk band formed in 1970 by **Wheeler Winston Dixon** and Michael Downey. The single was first released in 1972. "It's Lame" has been described as ". . .one of the ultimate proto-punk basement rock singles of all time."

## It's A Small World, After All

This report from **Wheeler Winston Dixon**: "When I first came to UNL in 1984, I went to see the murals in the Nebraska State Capitol by **Hildreth Meiere**. My late aunt, **Nina Barr Wheeler**, worked on the murals as Hildreth's assistant as part of the WPA during the early 1930s, coming out from New York to do the work, and becoming involved in life at UNL. I recently learned that Nina became good friends with **Lowry C. Wimberly**, then the editor of *Prairie Schooner*, and spent many evenings at his house discussing life, art and literature. The two remained friends when Nina returned to New York, and when Wimberly wrote his whimsical book *The Famous Cats of Fairyland* (published by Dutton in 1938), he asked Nina to do the illustrations. Nina went on to do stained glass windows for the National Cathedral in Washington DC, as well as doing the murals on the walls of the Four Seasons restaurant in the early 1960s, along with much other work. But she remembered her time here with great affection, and as I've just been able to get a copy of the book, I thought it was an interesting intersection of people, places, and events."

## Pet Dream Analyst

Dear Pet Dream Analyst:

I have a recurring nightmare about my two pet rats, Meegit and Scout. When I go to their cage to play with them, all of a sudden I realize that I actually have six pet rats, all in the same cage, which would be horribly crowded. And then I realize that I haven't been looking after them--they're sick or starving or dirty. In my dream I am very distressed, because I would never let an animal suffer like that, and I didn't

– A Puzzled Dog Owner

even know I had all these rats. And then, in this really weird horror movie way, I turn around from the cage and there towering behind me are dozens more cages and aquariums, containing all sorts of animals--fish, rats, rabbits, birds, snakes--in equally horrible conditions as the little rats. The room looks like some mad scientist's laboratory, not my apartment. In the world of my dream, I didn't know that I had all these animals, or I had forgotten about them, so it is always a horrible surprise when I turn around and see them there. My dream usually ends with me running around, changing cages, making vet appointments, comforting poor dying animals. I have a feeling that this dream is related to anxiety, but I'd like to know what you think.

– A Concerned Pet Rat Owner

Dear Concerned,

You are anxious in the dream, but dreams are not caused by anxiety, they are wish fulfillment. Ask yourself why you keep two pet rats in the first place. Does Meegit herd sheep for you or fetch your slippers? Does Scout help keep vermin out of your apartment? On the contrary, rats and other caged and tanked pets require constant care from us. It makes us feel good to feed, water, and clean up after them. So why not six rats or an apartment filled with creatures dependent on you? And who could be more dependent than sick and dying animals? You are suffering from what we call a "Displaced Mother Teresa Complex" (DMTC). Your phrase, "comforting poor dying animals," is the give away. Compassion is a noble emotion, but for good reason your sleeping mind fears that it could be a bottomless pit. Aside from the odd troubled night, your DMTC will have few consequences unless you "reach for your dream" by in fact acquiring large numbers of moribund small animals.

Dear Pet Dream Analyst:

Okay, so last night I dreamed that my dogs and I were in a city. It seemed to be New York. I woke up in the morning, and we were all sleeping on a futon on the floor of somebody's apartment living room. A friend's dog was there, and the dog pooped on the futon. Half awake, I thought, "Oh, yeah, we're in New York! I have to get these dogs on leashes and get them down the stairs to do their business." So I threw a coat over my pajamas, and I went stumbling down the stairs with three dogs pulling me (it was a fifth story walkup), and then...my alarm went off before we got outside. But that's why I actually remember details of the dream. Really, I'm *not* making this up.

Dear Puzzled,

And a good thing it is that you woke up: if you had gotten outside on the streets of New York in your pajamas at 3:00 AM you would have been mugged and killed (that the three dogs would probably survive is some comfort). It is like those dreams in which you are falling but wake up before you hit the ground. Dreamers who don't wake up before hitting the ground never get to tell how their dreams end because they die during the night. So it would have gone for you if you had reached the street. I would avoid this dream by cutting back on the midnight liverwurst and pickle sandwiches. And, if you ever visit New York, be like a native and learn to live with occasional incidents of dogs that poop in the night.

Dear Pet Dream Analyst,

I am in serious trouble. Three nights ago I dreamed my scotch terrier, Sir Walter, laboriously recited the whole of *Waverley*, the first of the Waverley novels, doing the dialogue with a thick burr. I awoke at three in the afternoon with a splitting headache and severe muscle cramps. Since then I have not been able to sleep at all for fear of *Guy Mannerling*.

– A Desperate Dog Owner

Dear Desperate,

You are in trouble. Unless you put a stop to this you will be a raving lunatic by the time you reach *Anne of Geierstein*. You already sound a bit unhinged. It is a mistake to name a pet after a writer. The locus classicus in psychological literature was a poodle named Marcel who subjected his owner to a dream recitation of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which was all the more excruciating because the owner did not know French. It took nearly a week and the owner was briefly hospitalized for ulcerating bed sores. She changed the poodle's name to Fougou and had no further problems. You are paying the price for trying to give Sir Walter an original and witty name, which matters little to a dog. Have done with it and call him Scotty.

