

# WRITING MATTERS

VOL. 8 NO. 1

Fall 2007

## CWA 2007 FALL QUARTER SYMPOSIA

### The Black Arts Movement in the Broader Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

*Tuesday*

*October 16, 2007*

*2:00-5:00 p.m.*

*Reception follows*

*Norris University Center*

*Northwestern Room,*

*1999 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL*

The panelists will be **Angela Jackson**, poet, novelist and playwright; **Sterling Plump**, poet, scholar, editor and activist; **Carolyn Rodgers**, poet, feminist and educator; and **Sala Udin**, Freedom Rider, actor in the establishment of the Pittsburgh Black Horizons Theatre, under the direction of his childhood friends, Rob Penny and August Wilson, elected member of the Pittsburgh City Council, where he served for 11 years.

Co-sponsored by the Center for the Writing Arts, the Departments of African-American Studies, English, and Political Science, and the Office of the Dean of the Weinberg School of Arts and Sciences.

### International Day of Writing

*Friday*

*October 26, 2007*

*2:30-4:30 p.m.*

*Harris Hall, Room 108,*

*1881 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL*

Our visitors from Indonesia, Egypt, Russia, Hong Kong, Bulgaria, and Australia are currently in residence at the International Writing Workshop at the University of Iowa. The writers will present brief readings of their work in translation, and a discussion of literary cultures and literary practices will follow.

**Guest writers are:**

Nirwan Dewanto, **Indonesia**

Hamdy El Gazzar, **Egypt**

Ksenia Golubovich, **Russia**

Lawrence Pun, **Hong Kong**

Aziz Nazmi Shakir-Tash, **Bulgaria**

Lindsay Simpson, **Australia**

### SPECIAL EVENTS ON CAMPUS



**Nancy Horan**, author of *Loving Frank*

**Thursday**

**October 11, 2007**

5:15-5:45 p.m. reception

5:45-6:45 p.m. reading/discussion

A book signing will follow

Harris Hall, Room 108  
1881 Sheridan Rd, Evanston, IL

Nancy Horan's debut novel *Loving Frank* details Frank Lloyd Wright's passionate affair with Mamah Cheney; both of them left their families to be together, creating a Chicago scandal that eventually ended in violence. Currently on the *New York Times* bestseller list.



**Michael Lesy**, author of *Murder City: The Bloody History of Chicago in the Twenties*

**Friday**

**November 2, 2007**

12:30-1:30 p.m. (pizza lunch served)

University Hall, Hagstrum Room 201

Hampshire College Professor of Literary Journalism Michael Lesy is among the inaugural United States Artists Fellows. Lesy, who has taught at Hampshire College since 1990, has published a dozen books, including *Wisconsin Death Trip*, which has been in print since it first appeared in 1973. Lesy will be participating in the 18th Annual Chicago Humanities Festival this November.

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**WRITING MATTERS**

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**Mark Your Calendars:**



**Mary Pattillo**

*Sociology and African-American Studies,  
WCAS*

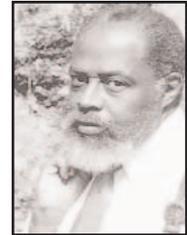
Wednesday, October 17, 2007

A Reading from *Black on the Block: The  
Politics of Race and Class in the City*

12:30-1:30 p.m.

**Ed Roberson**

*Fall Quarter 2007 Visiting Writer in  
Residence*



Tuesday, October 30, 2007

Spoken Word Poetry Reading  
with Musical Accompaniment

5:15-6:15 p.m.

Dittmar Gallery, Norris University Center  
1st floor, 1999 Campus Drive

**PLANNING WRITING EVENTS THIS QUARTER?  
LET US KNOW!**

Just a reminder that the Center's biweekly electronic digest, *NU Writing Event Digest*, highlights NU writing events and reaches students, faculty, and staff via the Center's growing email list. If you know of an upcoming event related to writing, whether it be an author's visit, departmental program, or even an off-campus event involving NU students or faculty, please let us know! We will do our best to publicize all writing-related programming. If you would like to receive the electronic *NU Writing Event Digest*, please send an email to: [words@northwestern.edu](mailto:words@northwestern.edu) or call us at 847-467-4099.

The Center for the Writing Arts presents a variety of distinguished writers from both on and off campus. For complete calendar and recent additions visit:  
[www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/](http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/)

## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

By Reginald Gibbons  
 Director, The Center for the Writing Arts, Professor of English and Classics

The activities of the Center for the Writing Arts this year include the teaching and readings and lectures by the Visiting Writers in Residence (poet Ed Roberson in the fall, nonfiction writer Alex Kotlowitz in the winter, and fiction writer Mary Ann Mohanraj in the spring), the many CWA-sponsored presentations by faculty and guests, the updated web "matrix" of all Northwestern courses that focus on or emphasize writing, and more. The purpose of all CWA activities is to create, support and further undergraduate and graduate opportunities for the study of writing at Northwestern, both within CWA itself and across the university; to facilitate a continuing discussion in the university community about how best to situate writing as a crucial part of a university education; to help coordinate the university's multifarious courses and programs in writing across departments, programs and schools; and also to welcome audiences from the metropolitan area to the rich array of public events on campus that are focused on writing.

Two unusual events sponsored by the Center for the Writing Arts events will take place in October. The first is a roundtable on the legacies both cultural and political of the Black Arts movement, drawing on the presence in Chicago of four important African American poets, and including also a notable figure from Pittsburgh. Visiting Writer in Residence Ed Roberson, a distinguished poet, has invited to campus poet and fiction writer Angela Jackson, poet Carolyn Rodgers, poet Sterling Plumpp, and the social activist Sala Udin, who until recently was a member of the city council of Pittsburgh (a city which has produced a remarkable group of African American artists, including Mr. Roberson himself, novelist John Edgar Wideman, playwright August Wilson, sculptor Thaddeus Mosley, and others). From 2:00 till 5:00 on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 16, the participants in the conference will make brief presentations and discuss with each other and with the audience the Black Arts movement in retrospect. (A reception will follow the conference presentations.) I believe that such a public conversation is unprecedented at Northwestern, and in itself will be an important moment in the history of the Black Arts era. (And for that reason the event will be video-taped and edited for later webcasting.)

Also unprecedented will be our Northwestern International Day of Writing on Oct. 26, with guests from the International Writing Workshop at the University of Iowa, thanks to the kind help of the Director and Assistant Director of that workshop,

Christopher Merrill and Hugh Ferrer. These writers will give a public presentation of their work, and talk and answer questions, from 2:30 to 4:30 that Friday (a reception will follow). They will have dinner with undergraduates thanks to the support of Nancy Anderson of the Residential Colleges. The visitors:

Nirwan DEWANTO (essayist, poet, editor; Indonesia) has published his essays and poems in numerous Indonesian journals, magazines, anthologies, and newspapers; he is also the editor of a newly published anthology of the best short stories of the *Kompas Daily* newspaper. He has curated several literary arts festivals, most recently the 4th Utan Kayu International Literary Biennale in Jakarta and Central Java.

Hamdy EL GAZZAR (playwright, fiction writer, novelist; Egypt) has been widely published in the Arab world. He has written and directed several plays and written documentary films for Egyptian TV. His debut novel, *Black Magic* (2005), won the 2006 prize for the best novel by a writer under 40 from the Sawiris Foundation in

Cont. on page 5



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

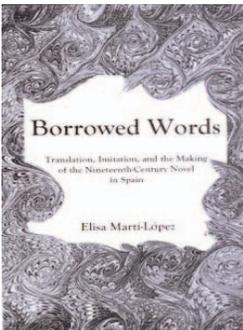
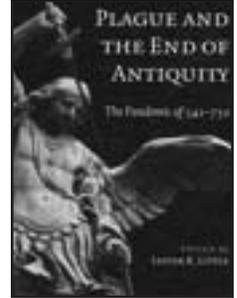
We asked these questions: 1) What scholarly/professional book or article are you currently reading? 2) What book are you reading at the moment largely for pleasure? 3) What is the next book (work or pleasure) you hope to read? 4) What do wish all your students would read? 5) Has any book you've recently read changed your thinking about your own work? and how?



### Daniel Garrison

Professor  
WCAS, Classics

1. Lester K. Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750.*
2. Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policeman's Union.*
3. A.A. Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus.*
4. Robert Harris, *Imperium: A Novel of Ancient Rome;*  
Tom Holland, *Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic.*
5. See #1. Shows how plagues and pandemics shape history, and are as much shaped by society as they are by a particular disease.



### Elisa Martí-López

Associate Professor  
WCAS, Spanish & Portuguese

1. I am currently reading the article "Urban Funerary: Aldo Rossi and the Postwar Monument" by Joel David Robinson (*Chicago Art Journal* 15 (2005): 40-58, and rereading André Chabot's *L' Erotique du Cimetiere.*
2. Two novels: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Go*, and Maria Barbal's *País Íntim.*
3. For both work and pleasure: *Un senyor de Barcelona* by Josep Pla (a biography written in 1945.)
4. I wish my students would read any one or two books all the time.
5. Joan Ramón Resinas's *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Birth and Decline of an Urban Image* (the book is forthcoming, from Stanford University Press.)

### Center for the Writing Arts Mission Statement:

*The purpose of all CWA activities is to create, support and further undergraduate and graduate opportunities for the study of writing at Northwestern, both within CWA itself and across the university; to facilitate a continuing discussion in the university community about how best to situate writing as a crucial part of a university education; to help coordinate the university's multifarious courses and programs in writing across departments, programs and schools; and also to welcome audiences from the metropolitan area to the rich array of public events on campus that are focused on writing.*

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Egypt. An English translation of the novel is forthcoming in 2007. Currently, he directs the Research Department of Egypt's Culture TV Channel. He has a new novel in progress.

Ksenia GOLUBOVICH (novelist, fiction writer, literary critic, editor, translator; Russia) has published the poetry collection *Personae*, the travelogue *The Serbian Parable* and the novel, *Wishes Granted*. She contributes essays on life in contemporary Russia to several newspapers and journals, including *Logos*, a philosophical magazine. She holds a Master's degree from Moscow University, where she recently taught a special course on poets and power.

Lawrence PUN (fiction, non-fiction, literary criticism; Hong Kong) has authored three novels, most recently *The Lost Land* (2005), and a number of non-fiction works. Among his awards are the Hong Kong Youth Literary Award, a Chinese Literature Creative Award, and

the 7th Hong Kong Chinese Literary Biennial Award. His fiction appears regularly in journals and anthologies in Hong Kong and mainland China. He currently teaches creative writing at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His website and blog are at [www.lawpun.com](http://www.lawpun.com) and <http://blog.sina.com.cn/lawpun>.

Aziz Nazmi SHAKIR-TASH (poet, fiction writer; translator; Bulgaria) works in Arabic, Turkish, and English both as a scholar and as a writer. He has authored three books of poetry, most recently *A Sky at 33* (2007), and one collection of short stories *Rain Apocrypha* (2004). An accomplished translator and editor with more than a dozen translations of poetry and prose to his credit, he publishes both in Bulgaria and in Turkey.

Lindsay SIMPSON (novelist, jour-

nalist, non-fiction writer; Australia) spent twelve years as an investigative journalist with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and in 1999 was the founding member of the Journalism and Media Studies program at the University of Tasmania. Author of six books of non-fiction, she currently lectures on journalism and writing at James Cook University. In 2006 she published her first novel, *The Curer of Souls*.

Please help us get word of these two events to students, colleagues and friends, here at Northwestern and beyond the borders of the Evanston campus. And please let me know at any time during the year of your concerns and suggestions regarding any aspect of the study of writing at Northwestern.

Reginald Gibbons  
<[rgibbons@northwestern.edu](mailto:rgibbons@northwestern.edu)>

### Writing 303 Winter Quarter 2008

THE ART OF NONFICTION  
with Visiting Writer in Residence  
ALEX KOTLOWITZ  
Mondays  
2:00-5:00 pm

*This undergraduate course is open  
by application only*

This course will--through both reading and writing--explore the art of what is often called literary journalism, narrative nonfiction, or what John McPhee calls "the literature of fact." The best of nonfiction narrative wields a fierce power, poking and prodding our preconceptions of the world, pushing us to look at our-

selves and others through a different prism. What makes for a compelling story? (What tools might we borrow from fiction?) Why employ the use of narrative? How does it help form our view of people and events? We'll explore the craft of reporting and research which borrows from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, history and sociology--and work with rigor and discipline on the art of good writing. We'll read nonfiction narratives--both book and magazine articles--on a host of subjects, ranging from war and poverty to the environment and sports. We'll work in this class as a professional writer might, from draft to draft. There will be regular writing assignments, and students will be asked to craft a longer narrative on a subject of interest to them.

### APPLICATION DEADLINE IS: MONDAY, October 16th by 5PM

Applications are available at:  
The Center for the Writing Arts  
Kresge 4-315, Evanston Campus  
OR  
Email: [words@northwestern.edu](mailto:words@northwestern.edu)  
You can also find the application  
online at:  
[www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/](http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/)



## Student Writing Contest, Prize is Being Featured In Center Newsletter

In past issues of the Center for the Writing Arts newsletter, the student column, "Student Voices," has been by invitation. Starting with the next issue, we will open this special column to submissions from all undergraduate and graduate students at Northwestern.

One essay will be featured in each of our quarterly issues, which are distributed campus-wide to selected faculty and students. Also, the newsletter is posted online at our website: <http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/>

We're looking to hear from students, in any school or university department about what makes them want to write. Students should submit a brief essay, 700-900 words, about the place writing has in their education at Northwestern and their life, in general, and what they have found to be helpful, productive and exciting in their writing practice--specific events, encounters, and experiences.

The deadline for submissions to be considered for the Winter Quarter 2008 issue is **November, 26, 2007.**

All entries must be in Word document form. They may be sent via email. Only one entry per student is permitted each quarter. Students may enter a submission each quarter.

Entries should be submitted to:

Stacy Oliver, Assistant Director  
Center for the Writing Arts, at:  
[words@northwestern.edu](mailto:words@northwestern.edu)

## STUDENT VOICES: Sometimes It's About What You Write and Sometimes It's About Just Writing

Steven Aquino, senior,  
Medill School

To this point in my life, I have experienced precisely two authorial triumphs that, for me, have solidified the importance of writing. The first came when I was eleven and sparked my love of writing. My fifth-grade teacher,

Mr. Aston—a tall, lanky guy who wore glasses with such a strong prescription in the lens that their magnification made him look constantly wide-eyed—had our class write short fictional narratives for homework.

The night before the story was due, while lying in front of the television in my family room, I imagined a simple plot: Two ten-year-old twins, Matt and Jill, find tickets to a Halloween football game in their mailbox and, intrigued by the game's starting

time (midnight) and its competitors (monsters versus ghosts), they attend the game and have a wonderful yet spooky time. (I owe this premise to my dad, who, it seemed, made sure "The X-Files" occupied our television screen at least half the time it was turned on, back then.) I retrieved a few sheets of loose-leaf paper and a pen from my Trapper Keeper and, using one of my mom's J.C. Penny catalogues as a desk, lay down on my living room carpet and wrote the entire story without stopping. I called it "Football Terror."

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A few weeks after turning it in to my teacher, I was walking through my school's cafeteria when I noticed a bulletin board with the phrase "Great Work!" spelled out on it in gold-colored cardboard block letters. My story hung under the declaration with a crimson "A" inked next to the title. I remember thinking, "So I am a good writer."

Within a few years I realized what I loved so much about writing: Even in its humblest form, writing evokes the emotions that make us human. I remember feeling as though I owed a debt to writers such as Hemingway and Joyce for conjuring in me fear, hope, love, shame, disdain and desire with their words.

But I never thought I would be able to affect someone else's life in a similar way with my own writing, which is how I achieved my second triumph with writing. Three years ago I came to Northwestern as a freshman from North Canton, Ohio, and every week I wrote my father an email, usually filled with boring details of my collegiate life: how I was enjoying my classes; how cheaply I was able to purchase my textbooks; rants about my roommate. When I returned home for Thanksgiving break, visited my grandmother, Lola, at her house just a few miles away from mine in North Canton. At 86, my grandmother started to experience failing health. Anemia and a collapsed vertebra in her lower back made it impossible for her to leave the house on her own.



Steven Aquino

(She never said it, but this frustrated my grandmother to no end. My grandfather had died in the winter of 1968, so for the following 35 years his widow had learned to do everything on her own. She never even wanted to rely on a car; she walked everywhere she needed to go.)

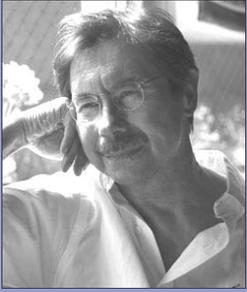
After giving my grandmother a hug, I sat down on her living room couch. She sat in her chair, looked at me and said, "I want to thank you for your beautiful letters." "What letters?" "The letters you've been writing." She reached to a small pile of paper on the table next to her chair, took the top sheet off the pile and held it out towards me. I took the paper. It was a printout of one of the emails I had sent to my dad the previous quarter. I read the first line to myself: "Dad—paid the credit card bill today. I changed my flight to Tuesday. United. I'm still flying in to Akron."

I felt puzzled about why my grandmother would thank me for

writing emails about the mundane details of my life. I realized, though, that writing—boring though mine was—lifted my grandmother's spirit by letting her leave the loneliness of her solitude. When I returned to school, I found myself writing longer, more detailed emails; my words meant something to someone. After my grandmother died this August, I found another set of emails in the night stand next to her bed in the nursing home where she spent the final year of her life.



## Stuart Dybek Named 2007 MacArthur Fellow



**Stuart Dybek**

Stuart Dybek, the first Distinguished Writer in Residence at Northwestern University, received two major awards this October. He has been named a 2007 MacArthur Fellow,

an honor that carries a \$500,000 “no strings attached” award. Dybek is also the recipient of the 2007 Rea Award for the Short Story, with a \$30,000 prize.

Widely recognized as the living American author most identified with Chicago, Dybek joins the rarefied group of MacArthur Fellows, including 24 for 2007. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation offers the unrestricted fellow-

ships annually to individuals who have exhibited extraordinary “creativity, originality and potential to make important contributions in the future.”

In a sense, Dybek returned home last year with his Northwestern appointment. The University’s Evanston campus is only a few miles from Chicago, the home of his richly imagined South Side boyhood neighborhood, which he captures with so much heart and hilarity in

his writing. Dybek is the author of three books of fiction. *Childhood and Other Neighborhoods* (1980) is his first book; *The Coast of Chicago* (1990) was the 2004 selection of Chicago’s “One Book, One Chicago,” in essence a citywide book club; and *I Sailed with Magellan* (2003) was chosen by the New York Times and the American Library Association as a notable book of the year and by the Chicago Tribune as the best book of the year.

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**WRITING MATTERS**  
NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER  
FOR THE WRITING ARTS  
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