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Stine and Ager Highlight National Poetry Month

By Don Brenner

Thursday night SUNY Fredonia welcomed its last two visiting writers of the semester, poets Deborah Ager and Alison Stine, for the Mary Louise White Visiting Writers Series. Coincidental, or not, the poets visit was during the heart of national poetry month and their craft talk and reading added an exclamation mark to the celebration. Over two hundred students showed up for both the craft talk and the poetry reading in McEwen hall, and gave the poets a great reception and ovation.

The craft talk was at 4 PM and after a brief introduction to both poets, Deborah Ager started her craft talk. Her main point was the idea of voice in a poem. She focused a lot on the emotional texture of a poem and line length, comparing Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, and how their different line lengths affect the voice of the poem. Ager continued on and gave all of the attendees a poem written by Sylvia Plath, called "Edge." She stressed how the tense of the poem can create a distance, or even bring a reader closer to the poem.

For example, writing in a future tense will create a distance from the reader, and writing in the present tense, like Plath does in her poem,



Poets during the Craft Talk

puts the reader right into the poem. These differences can change meaning, mood, tone, sound, and pretty much anything the author really wants to change.

Alison Stine's half of the craft talk was dedicated to a personal story about herself that she shared with the audience. She talked about when she gave up on poetry and started writing only prose. She then began to write a novel, but in two weeks she started writing poetry again. Her main point, though, was that if you are stuck in your genre switch to something else. She said, "If you write a poem, you can write a story. If you write a story, you can write a novel." She encouraged the audience to write in

an uncomfortable genre, whether it be poetry, prose, or even an essay, and bring the things you learn back to your original genre. She went on

to discuss poems that had more than one story in them and read, "All Law Enforcement is Local," by Bob Hicok, and "Trash," by Ruth Stone. She ended her talk telling everyone to practice writing a poem with every line having a brand new subject.

A little after 7 PM poet and SUNY Fredonia English professor Aimee Nezhukumatathil gave a rousing introduction for both poets and their reading started. Alison Stine began the event, reading from her book *Ohio Violence*, and stepped up to the microphone in Midwestern form wearing cowboy boots. With a set list of poems written on her hand, she started off with the poem "The Rescue." She continued on to read poems like "School," "Fields Beyond Fields," and "The Curfew." She talked about her new book of poems which is coming out next year and read a few of those new poems as well. These included, "Wait," which was originally titled "Persephone in Hell," "Child Bride," and "Letter After Dis- memberment." Alison Stine

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Professors in PJs

By Sarah J. Black



Dr. VanDette
serving milk and
animal crackers.

On Monday, April 19th, Sigma Tau Delta held their annual “Bedtime Stories” in the Fenton Hall Reading Room. Several faculty and students were present, clad in comfy pajamas, and eagerly awaiting the stories. A host of pint-sized future Blue Devils was also in attendance. Sporting their favorite bedtime wear, the children gathered on blankets, spread out on the floor, and settled in for story-time. Boxes of animal crackers and cups of milk were the fare of the evening.

In keeping with Earth Week, and the several events occurring on campus, all the stories were environmentally themed. The first story, *Hug Time*, by Patrick McDonnell, was read by Dr. McCormick. The children participated in the story by making the sounds of the animals the hero encountered on his journey. Even though they growled like tigers, the children had a group hug when the story ended with “it’s hug time.” Dr. Iclal Vanwesenbeck followed with *A House for Hermit Crab*, by Eric Carle. The children received an extra treat when Dr. Vanwesenbeck passed out coloring sheets featuring the sea creatures from the story. Melissa Mallabar, a student at SUNY Fredonia, read *And if the Moon Could Talk* by Kate Banks. As Dr. Gerber settled in to read *Miss Rumphius*, by Barbara Cooney, a small

voice piped up from the audience proclaiming: “that’s my momma.” Dr. Jarvis talked to the children about Earth Day and the things they might do to celebrate this national event before reading *If I Ran the Rainforest: All About Tropical Rainforests* by Dr. Seuss.

The children were beginning to grow restless at this point, but have no fear; they were rescued from an attack of the wiggles by Dr. Siegle Drege. Shod in elf slippers,

feature, Dr. Simon’s daughter read *Goodnight Gorilla* by Peggy Rathman. The program closed with Dr. VanDette’s reading of *Do Princesses Really Kiss Frogs?* by Carmela LaVigna Coyle.

As the semester draws to a close, everyone, students and professors alike, are swamped with final projects and papers. The “Bedtime Story” evening provides a chance to gather together and enjoy each other’s company in a relaxed setting.



Dr. Simon reading
Goodnight Moon



**Getting ready for story -
time.**

she had all the kids stand up to stretch and shimmy. Settled back on the blankets, boxes of animal crackers in hand, the children turned their attention to Dr. Simon, who read *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown. As the story came to a close the audience joined in reciting the lines to this familiar and much loved book. Billing themselves as a double

The magic of being read to bringing us all back to our younger, simpler, days. Surrounded by happy children and the beautiful sounds of storytelling, the evening was nothing short of food for the soul.

The Art of Storytelling

This spring Sigma Tau Delta has started what might become a new tradition for them. STD advisor, Dr. Siegle Drege, working with Martha Diaz, from the Office of Volunteer and Community Services, has created the “WCA Short-Story Series.” Members of STD visit the WCA Home here in Fredonia to read short stories to the residents and hold discussion groups based on the reading. The program is scheduled to last for seven weeks and consists of fifteen students, who visit the home in groups of two or three.

Dr. Siegle Drege met with me to share some of the particulars of the project. I asked what types of stories the students are reading. The students are choosing their own stories for the reading and deciding how to direct the informal discussion groups afterward. They are focusing on stories about nature or ones that have a nostalgic quality. A few of the stories used so far are: “The White Heron” by Sarah Orne Jewett, “Everyday Use” by Alice Walker, and “New England Nun” by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. The resi-

dents are enjoying having the students visit and new members are joining the group each week. Students have returned from their reading and discussion leading feeling energized and wishing they could take another turn.

I asked Dr. Siegle Drege if they were planning on repeating the program next year. She said that the project was worthy of doing again. She hopes to build on the enthusiasm generated by this semester’s student groups in order to get more volunteers. Sigma Tau Delta focuses on department and campus literacy events. Some of their other projects include: “Coffee Talks,” where students have an opportunity to get to know their professors more personally; “Scary Stories” in the fall, and “Bedtime Stories” in the spring; they also host “Meet the Up-pers,” where they encourage freshman to come and meet some upperclassmen in order to get a student perspective from those who have been there be-

fore. STD is also involved with Writers’ Ring and some of the campus poetry readings.

The final pair of readers will be visiting the WCA Home on May 6th. I was able to catch up with them and ask about their plans for the event.

They will be reading a short-story to the residents, after which there will be an informal discussion about the selection. The eager students are still trying to decide on the perfect story to tell that will engage their listeners.

Maximillian Soule-Oneto

will be inducted into Sigma Tau Delta this spring at the English Department Awards Ceremony. He is looking forward to participating in the many events that STD hosts.

Jackie Herbert has been a member of STD for one year, serving as secretary this past year. She remarked that visiting the WCA Home was a good volunteer opportunity. Both students were excited about the opportunity.



Maximillian Soule-Oneto and Jackie Herbert, STD members and final reading group.

Day of Poetry & Prose



Dr. Albert A. Dunn

The second annual Albert A. Dunn Day of Poetry and Prose was held on April 20th in the Williams Center. This event, held during National Poetry Month, honored Dr. Albert Dunn, a professor at SUNY Fredonia for 35 years. Dr. Dunn was an inspiring teacher and lover of literature until his passing in 2007.

Members of the faculty,

community, and student-body gathered together to participate in this fitting tribute. Readings included selections from Yeats, Frost, Carroll, Dickens, and Hopkins to name a few.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the Albert A. Dunn Memorial Scholarship and Book Grant Endowment.



David Holton reading “A Transcription of Organ Music” by Allen Ginsburg

Coffee Talk



Dr. KimMarie Cole & Dr. Susan Spangler during STD's Coffee Talk.

Sigma Tau Delta conducted its final Coffee Talk for the spring semester on April 9. The guests of honor were Dr. Susan Spangler and Dr. KimMarie Cole. Both professors are involved in the English Adolescent Education program.

The talk opened with the professors sharing their journeys that led them here to Fredonia. Dr. Cole and Dr. Spangler took very different but equally interesting routes to arrive where they are now. They then shared their ideas about teaching and about teaching teachers. Dr. Cole men-

tioned that she focuses on how to create effective classrooms and that we need to keep in mind that the learner is connected to the community. Dr. Spangler likes to “disturb the comfortable,” and wants her students to be exposed to, and to implement, alternative ways to thinking about teaching.

They also talked about the “screening process,” which all junior English Ed majors go through, from the teachers’ perspective. Screening is a difficult procedure for the professors, but one they consider vital to the pro-

gram. It also provides them with an opportunity to examine which aspects of the program are working and which ones need work.

The students in attendance were full of questions and highly engaged in the talk. These two brilliant professors shared their experiences, their beliefs about teaching, and offered a little life advice too. Simply by being, they model what it takes to be a great teacher.

Ager and Stine Cont.

made it a point to note that she is not the speaker of a lot of her poems. She mentioned she likes to write about weird news stories, saying that she loves reading weird news. She finished with the poem, “Moon Lake Electric.” She talked about how she likes to write first thing in the morning, before she becomes too stressed or tired. Stine got a lot of laughs from the audience when she said, “Poems are like pop tarts,” alluding to the fact that poems can sit and wait to be revised just like an over abundance of pop tarts might fit in the cupboards.

Deb Ager was next in the reading and said she felt like a rock star because for the first time she made a set list of her poems, and started with “Deborah Sampson,” a poem about a

woman enlisting as a man to join into the Revolutionary War. She continued to read from her book, *Midnight Voices*, while the audience listened intently. She read poems like, “The Accident,” “Night in Iowa,” and “Lament of the Telephone,” among others, from her book. She also read a few poems from a book that she hopes to soon have published. She said she is working on writing a book of poems about the recent recession, which was highlighted especially by the titles of her new poems. These titles included, “The Year of Living Miserably,” a poem where she talks about losing her job, and losing her job again, “Pink Slip,” and “Company Man.” Ager finished her reading with “Water’s Lament.” Ager mentioned to the audi-

ence that she writes whenever, and does not have a set schedule for her writing. She also offered a bit of inspiration to the aspiring writers in the room saying, “As an artist, the only rules are the ones you set for yourself.”

After the reading, a lemon loaf provided by the Upper Crust Bakery was raffled off, along with a gift certificate for The Book Nook, and two copies of *32 Poems*, a poetry magazine founded by Deborah Ager.

Overall this was a great semester for the Mary Louise White Visiting Writers Series. The series brought in three great writers, Laura van den Berg, Alison Stine, and Deborah Ager, who audiences seemed to really enjoy. Hopefully next year will be more of the same.

2010 Student Research and Creativity Exposition



The 12th annual Student Research and Creativity Exposition took place on Tuesday, April 27, from 12 to 7 PM in the Williams Center. This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Jaime Wasilenko, a 2000 graduate from SUNY Fredonia. Currently she is a Research Microbiologist working with highly pathogenic influenza viruses.

The exposition showcased a wide range of student creativity and scholarship. One could not help but be impressed with the high quality of the student work which spanned the range of disciplines. There was something there for any interest and the exposition provided a great opportunity to learn, not just about something new, but about what students are engaged in here at SUNY Fredonia.

Students from Professor Nezhukumatathil's Advanced Poetry Class had a display of their visual poetry. The students were present at the display to discuss their work and the craft of visual poetry. Each visual poem was written with a writing implement of the student's own making, helping them further in the process of re-visualizing poems in new ways. The students also presented their collected works from the semester in a chapbook that they had designed and bound themselves.

The staff from *The Trident*, under the direction of Professor Parsons, had a display featuring this year's recently published version of the magazine, as well as an historical look at the magazine. Free copies of the magazine were available to all who desired one. As part of their display there was a reading of some of the works from this year's *Trident* by the contributing authors.

Joseph Lantz and Julie Pannoni created a display about The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference they attended this past November in Philadelphia. Mr. Lantz spoke with me about the many great experiences he had while attending the conference. He said that even though the

group consisted of pre-service teachers, they were made to feel welcome and encouraged by the teachers and staff at the event. At the conference the students were given the opportunity to learn about new ways of teaching literature and exposed to a great deal of professional development activities. During their visit the group had the chance to visit the Edgar Allen Poe House; whose basement I am told is just like the one in Poe's short story "The Black Cat." The NCTE display featured brochures from the conference, samples of the ideas presented at the conference, and a brilliant collection of photographs of the places visited and people they met, including authors such as Nicholas Sparks and Laurie Halse Anderson. Dr. Siegle Drege was the faculty advisor for the students.

Twenty-six students from Dr. McCormick's Women Writers class gave oral presentations on contemporary women poets. Students working in pairs selected a poet and researched some of their work. The groups presented their critical findings along with information about the poet and a reading of the poem(s) they had selected.

These are just a few examples of the many ingenious displays that could be seen at the exposition.



Students from the Women Writers class delivering their poetry presentations



Joseph Lantz beside the NCTE display



Advanced Poetry Class and Trident displays

English Department Awards Ceremony

The English Department Awards Ceremony will be held on May 7th at 4PM in the Horizon Room at the Williams Center. Sigma Tau Delta will present honor cords to its graduating members and induct this years new candidates. In addition, the following awards will be presented:

Freshmen Writing Award

For the best paper written by a first-year student in an English class

Awardee: Caitlin Skellet

Undergraduate Writing Beyond the First Year

For the best paper written outside of English Composition

1st: Catherine Colmerauer

2nd: Brielle Messina

Laura Foster Award

Awarded to a student with at least junior standing who displays excellence in the study of literature

Awardee: Ashley Zengerski

Henry Salerno Scholarship

Awarded to a senior who has done superior work and is going on to graduate school

Awardee: Samantha Stryker

The Herkimer & Maytum Strong Scholarship

Awardees: Andrew Garvey, Dan Laurie, and Max Soule-Oneto

College of Ed Excellence in Student Teaching

Awardee: Cait Oddo

The Cresence Graham Emhke

Awardees: Julie Pannoni, Jennifer Lanigan, and Kristi Pappert

John and Eleanor Courts Award

Awardee: Gary Baier

1929 Graduate Fund Award

An annual award given for the best paper written by a first-year graduate student

1st place: Tulin Tosun

2nd place: Jesse Sherwood

Graduate Research Award

For excellence in research

Awardee: Jesse Sherwood

Mary Louise White Poetry Awards

1st: Don Brenner

Honorable Mention: Julie Pannoni and Alex

Duringer

Mary Louise White Fiction Awards

1st: Lacey Daley

Honorable Mention: James Hill and Julie Pan-

noni

Mary Louise White Creative Writing Award

genre alternates—this semester fiction

1st: Alex Duringer

Honorable Mention: Molly Gutschow and Blane

Kelly

Sigma Tau Delta:

Graduating Members

Amanda Anderson
Gary Baier
Paul Beverly
Gillian Cleveland
Catherine Colmerauer

Ashley DeJohn
Susan Francis Jaynes
Danika Johnson
Peter Larson
Daniel Lewandowski

Joshua Matecki
Ashley Zengerski
Jillian Ziemianski

Upcoming Dates

May 7: English Department Awards Ceremony, 4PM in the Williams Center

May 10-14: Finals

May 15: Commencement, 10AM & 3PM in Steele Hall Arena

The English Department is now on Facebook. “Become a fan” and be the first to hear about events, news, and all things English.

Sigma Tau Delta Inducts New Members

As part of the English Department Awards Ceremony the following students will be inducted into Sigma Tau Delta:

Matthew Alexander
Amanda Anderson
Sarah Black
Gillian Cleveland
Kimberlee Dorow
Alexander Duringer

Eric Ellison
Louis Frankel
Andrew Garvey
Kathryn Goldbach
Molly Gutschow
James Hill
Jared Lincourt
Melissa Mallaber
Joseph Moynihan
Karen Nelson

Kailee Plucknett
Calee Prindle
Maximillian Soule-Oneto
Tomi Stratton
Leah Urtel
Jillian Ziemianski

Congratulations to the new members.

