

11-28-2007

## Spring 2008 New Writing Series

English Department

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# CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES GRANT APPLICATION

PROVIDE 12 (TWELVE) COPIES, INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL.  
PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF EACH COPY

I. Applicant/Organization: New Writing Series

II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Steve Evans

b. Title: Associate Professor of English, NWS Coordinator

c. Campus Address (include EMail and Telephone): 208 Neville Hall, 581-3818 (cell: 356-5921),  
steven.evans@maine.edu

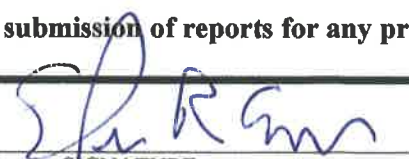
III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date (s):

**New Writing Series Spring 2008. A slate of seven events featuring six poets and four fiction writers. Most events Thursday afternoons at 4:30pm in the Soderberg Auditorium.**

IV. Budget Proposal Form must be attached.

**Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of reports for any previous grant awards, including final budget and attendance figures.**

Signature of responsible organization officer/date:

  
SIGNATURE

11-28-07  
DATE

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION TO: CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES COMMITTEE  
C/O PRESIDENT'S OFFICE  
200 ALUMNI HALL, CAMPUS

28 November 2007

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I write to request the Committee's support for the spring 2008 New Writing Series, an innovative literary arts program sponsored by the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation.

The amount we request, **\$4,000**, is less than one-third of the projected operating budget for the fall Series of \$13,105. The majority of the financial support for the Series will be provided by the English Department, through its Elliott (\$5905) and Ellis (\$1200) funds. The National Poetry Foundation will provide important logistical support and a financial contribution of \$500. A co-sponsorship with the Honors College (\$1500 for poets Thomas Sayers Ellis and Otrude Moyo) makes up the remainder of our funding package. The detailed budget appended to this letter provides an overview of projected expenses and revenue sources.

The spring Series is projected to comprise seven events featuring ten writers (six poets and four fiction writers). The exciting line-up foregrounds women writers, at various stages of their careers, who test the boundaries of genre and gender expectations: poets **Anne Boyer**, **Mel Nichols**, **Eléna Rivera** (also a notable translator of francophone poetry), and fiction writers **Diane Williams**, **Julia Elliott**, and **Lydia Millet** all fall into this category, with Williams, who also edits the influential journal *Noon*, being the best known and most prolific. The Zimbabwe-born poet and scholar **Otrude Moyo** brings an international perspective to the mix. **Thomas Sayers Ellis**, who received a prestigious Whiting award in 2005, is a widely-published and highly-regarded poet and the cofounder of the Dark Room Collective, which brought together emerging African-American writers in the Boston area in the mid-1990s and beyond. The reclusive, brilliant **Russell Edson**, whose signature handling of the prose poem is a defining fact of contemporary literary practice, also blurs genre boundaries and brings a dark and unsparing wit to bear on the smallest details of everyday life. **Rodney Koeneke** is two books into a promising career as a poet and is associated with the increasingly notorious literary movement known as "Flarf," which involves "sculpting" Google search returns into "found poems" of often hilarious and disturbing impact. Capsule biographies of all ten writers are appended to this letter.

Over and above the excellent credentials of the individual writers forecast for the spring Series, we believe there are other compelling reasons to support the New Writing Series.

- **A cutting-edge research university with an institutional commitment to innovation deserves literary arts programming that is diverse, daring, and**

**original.** The New Writing Series is such a program. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, we take care to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing. Our programming is consistently among the most diverse on the campus (and by extension in the region), foregrounding ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and sexual diversity (see the appended document "About the New Writing Series" for details). And our programming is original: no other institution in Maine, and only a few others in the country, have shown the kind of commitment the New Writing Series has toward the full-range of contemporary literary practice. We seek to confer recognition with our programming, not just to ratify judgments made somewhere up the literary food chain.

- **The New Writing Series does a lot with a little.** For what would be a modest honorarium if paid in a lump sum to a single celebrity on campus for one evening, the New Writing Series creates a coherent sequence of events that adds a distinctive dimension to the intellectual and artistic climate on campus and in the region. The honoraria we offer are low (between \$250 and \$1000) and we economize in every way we can on other expenses (see appended budget). Because the Series has an established identity—in terms of time (Thursday afternoons), place (the Soderberg Center Auditorium), and "look" (MaJo Keleshian's bold designs, echoed in our electronic publicity)—we get more out of each individual event. This has been a key to our successful audience development. Inertia is the enemy of artistic creation: the New Writing Series creates momentum around the act of literary creation, stirring up lively conversations that resonate beyond the cube-like walls of the Soderberg Auditorium.

- **The New Writing Series has a strong local audience, but it also brings national visibility to the University of Maine.** The off-campus publicity for the New Writing Series always spotlights UMaine (rather than the English Department or the NPF): our goal is to keep Orono on the national map when it comes to the literary arts, and to emphasize that the UMS flagship campus is at the leading edge of literary artistic practice. No other college in the state or campus in the UM system can demonstrate the depth of commitment and ongoing excellence that the New Writing Series, with the Committee's support, has achieved.

- **Literary culture is an essential piece in the "creative economy" puzzle.** A university campus that fails to stay in touch with contemporary literary practice is depriving itself of access to the fresh thinking that writers, often in advance of their colleagues in other disciplines, bring to the world around us. The literary arts are essential to the creation of an atmosphere of free exploration of any and all aspects of contemporary existence, an atmosphere as decisive in the sciences as in the humanities.

• **The "New" in New Writing Series.** We have been fortunate to receive Committee support for the NWS in the past and we are deeply grateful for it. But the enduring institutional framework of the Series should not mask the fact that we bring new voices and visions to campus with every fresh season of the NWS. We are, in other words, offering "new programming" for the Committee's consideration, programming that will disappear from the cultural calendar without your support.

I have included an itemized budget (using an Excel spreadsheet in lieu of the supplied form) for the fall New Writing Series. Our travel policy allots to invited writers "up to \$500 for travel" (note that airfares even from the Northeast often exceed that sum). We work with individuals to minimize that expense whenever possible. Accommodations are for two nights at the University Inn in Orono at winter/spring season rates of \$74 (single). Meal and reception expenses do not factor into our request for Committee support: they are included here for informational purposes only. In those cases where scheduling or other difficulties preclude a proposed writer from participating in the Series, we seek replacements of comparable rank and reputation to fill the slot. I believe the other items should be self-explanatory, but I am more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Steve Evans

Associate Professor of English  
New Writing Series Coordinator

*Bio-bibliographical Information for Proposed Readers (Alphabetical)*

**ANNE BOYER (POETRY)**

Anne Boyer was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1973. She was raised in Salina, Kansas, and educated in the public universities of Kansas. She is the author of *The Romance of Happy Workers* (Coffee House Press, forthcoming 2008), *Selected Dreams with a Note on Phrenology* (Dusie Collective, 2007), and *Anne Boyer's Good Apocalypse* (Effing Press, 2006). Along with K. Silem Mohammad, she edits the print journal *Abraham Lincoln*. She teaches at the Kansas City Art Institute and lives in Northeastern Kansas with her daughter Hazel and the cat Ulysses.

**RUSSELL EDSON (FICTION, POETRY)**

The author of more than twelve books—including the novel *The Song of Percival Peacock* (1992) and *The Falling Sickness: A Book of Plays* (1975), and numerous poetry titles such as *The Tormented Mirror* (2001), *The Wounded Breakfast* (1985), *The Clam Theater* (1973), *The Childhood Of An Equestrian* (1973), and *The Very Thing That Happens* (1964)—Russell Edson is a preeminent practitioner of the brief, often enigmatic and humorous, prose poem. A Guggenheim fellow in 1974, Edson lives and works in Connecticut. His book *The Rooster's Life* was published by BOA Press in 2005. Though Edson is notoriously reclusive, we hope to tempt him to the NWS this spring.

**JULIA ELLIOTT (FICTION)**

Elliott is a short story writer whose fiction explores the unstable linguistic territory between the mundane and the fantastic. Her fiction appears regularly in *Conjunctions* and has been published by *Georgia Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Mississippi Review*, *3rd Bed*, *Fence*, *Black Warrior Review*, *New Delta Review*, *Tin Roof*, and other magazines as well as in the anthology *Best American Fantasy*. She is also lead singer-collaborator in the band *Grey Egg*. She teaches at the University of South Carolina.

**THOMAS SAYERS ELLIS (POETRY)**

Thomas Sayers Ellis was born and raised in Washington, D.C., where he attended Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. He co-founded *The Dark Room Collective* in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1988 and earned a M.F.A. from Brown University in 1995. His work has appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *Poetry*, *Grand Street*, *Tin House*, *Ploughshares* and *The Best American Poetry*, 1997 and 2001. He has received fellowships and grants from *The Fine Arts Work Center*, the *Ohio Arts Council*, *Yaddo* and *The MacDowell Colony*. Mr. Ellis is a contributing editor to *Callaloo* and *Poets and Writers*. In 2005 he was awarded a *Mrs. Giles Whiting Writers' Award*. His first, full collection, *The Maverick Room*, was published by *Graywolf Press* in 2005 and awarded *The 2006 John C. Zacharis First Book Award*. He is also the author of *The Good Junk* (*Take Three #1*, *Graywolf* 1996); a chapbook *The Genuine Negro Hero* (*Kent State University Press*, 2001) and the chaplet *Song On* (*WinteRed Press* 2005). An Assistant

Professor of Creative Writing at Sarah Lawrence College and a faculty member of The Lesley University low-residency M.F.A program (Cambridge, Massachusetts), his *Breakfast and Blackfist: Notes for Black Poets* is also forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press, Poets on Poetry Series.

### **RODNEY KOENEKE (POETRY)**

Rodney Koeneke is the author of the poetry collections *Musee Mechanique* (BlazeVOX, 2006) and *Rouge State* (Pavement Saw, 2003). His new manuscript is called *Etruria*. Koeneke lives in Portland with his wife, Lesley Poirier, and their curly-headed son.

### **LYDIA MILLET (FICTION)**

Millet is the author of five darkly humorous novels: *Omnivores*, *George Bush: Dark Prince of Love*, *My Happy Life*, *Everyone's Pretty*, and *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*. Her third novel, *My Happy Life*, won the 2003 PEN-USA Award for Fiction. Her fifth novel, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart* has been short-listed for the 2007 Arthur C. Clarke Award. Her new novel, *How the Dead Dream: Counterpoint*, will be published in January 2008. Ms. Millet was invited to the NWS last spring but was unable to accept because she was on maternity leave at the time.

### **OTRUDE MOYO (POETRY)**

Otrude Moyo, poet and professor at the University of Southern Maine, has just published her book *Trampled No More: Voices from Bulawayo's Townships About Families, Life, Survival and Societal Change in Zimbabwe* (Rowman-Littlefield paperback).

### **MEL NICHOLS (POETRY)**

Mel Nichols teaches digital poetry, creative writing, literature, composition, and writing for artists at George Mason University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous magazines, including *Fascicle*, *New Ohio Review*, *PipLit*, *Forklift: Ohio*, *The Tangent*, and *Gargoyle*. She is co-editor of the journal *illuminated meat*, and an editor of *English Matters*. With Kaplan Harris she curates the *Ruthless Grip Poetry Series* at Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center. *Day Poems* was published by Edge Books in 2005 and *The Beginning of Beauty (Part 1: hottest new ringtones mnichol6)* in 2007.

### **ELENA RIVERA (POETRY)**

Eléna Rivera was born in Mexico City and spent her childhood in Paris. She is the author of *Suggestions at Every Turn* (Seeing Eye Books, 2005; available from Guy Benet), *Unknowne Land* (Kelsey St. Press, 2000), *Wale; or, the Corse* (Leave Books, 1995; available as a pdf file at Duration Press), and a recent pamphlet entitled *Disturbances in the Ocean of Air* (Phylum Press, 2005). She won first prize in the 1998 Stand Magazine International Poetry Competition, the 1999 Frances Jaffer Book Award, and a Gertrude Stein Award for Innovative Writing 1995. She currently lives in New York City.

## **DIANE WILLIAMS (FICTION)**

Diane Williams is the author of *It Was Like My Trying to Have a Tender-Hearted Nature*, a novella and stories forthcoming from Fiction Collective 2 (FC2) in the fall of 2007. She is also the author of *Romancer Erector* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), *Excitability: Selected Stories* (Dalkey Archive Press, 1998), *The Stupefaction* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), *Some Sexual Success Stories Plus Other Stories in Which God Might Choose to Appear* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1992), and *This Is About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1990). Williams served as the publisher and co-editor of *StoryQuarterly* from 1985 to 1997. She has been the publisher and founding editor of *NOON* since 2000.



## **About the New Writing Series — A Brief History**

The New Writing Series was formally inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal drafted by Steve Evans in consultation with Benjamin Friedlander and Burton Hatlen received unanimous approval from the English department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the seventeen semesters of its existence, it has served as an instrument for investigating the state of contemporary writing here in Maine, in the U.S. and Canada more broadly, and to some extent the world (Nigerian, Australian, Jamaican, English, Chilean, and other writers have come to Orono through the Series). The Series receives primary funding through the English Department's Lloyd H. Elliott fund and has received consistent administrative support from the National Poetry Foundation, matching funds through the Cultural Affairs Committee, and co-sponsorships from a wide variety of departments and programs (the Honors College, Art, Multicultural Programs, Women in the Curriculum, Wilde Stein, Modern Languages & Classics, and others).

The primary objectives of the New Writing Series are (i) to make contemporary poetry and fiction a valued part of the cultural life at the University of Maine, (ii) to broaden the University's local, national, and international reputation as a site of vibrant cultural exchange and creativity, and (iii) to cultivate links within the University as well as between the University and area secondary schools that foster imaginative approaches to thinking about contemporary literary practices. Whereas developing an audience for individual events can be difficult, a Series creates an ongoing context for the exploration of contemporary writing and signals a more serious level of commitment to the inclusion of the literary arts in the cultural repertoire of campus and community life.

Since 2000, the Series has hosted more than 120 events, featuring more than 155 individual writers, and it has earned a loyal local audience (typical event attendance ranges between 40 and 150 people) as well as a strong national reputation. Extended residencies by Robert Creeley (between 2000-2003) and Alice Notley (2004) have been coordinated in conjunction with the Series, as has a Libra Professorship that brought four African American poets—Jay Wright, Jayne Cortez, Lorenzo Thomas, and Amiri Baraka—to campus in 2001.

A Series weblog was created in the fall of 2006 and a substantial archive of materials of research and pedagogical value (countless hours of sound recordings, videotapes of live readings, forty professional quality digital-video "Poet Profiles" of NWS participants) has been carefully gathered and organized over the years.

I	Event Expenses	honorarium	travel by	travel from	trav	accommod	meals	cosponsor
	writer							
1	Lydia Millet (fiction)	\$300	plane	NYC or AZ	\$500	148	50	
1	Julia Elliott (fiction)	\$300	plane	Columbia SC	\$500	148	50	
2	Russell Edson (fiction)	\$1,000	plane	NYC	\$500	148	50	
3	Diane Williams (fiction)	\$1,000	plane	NYC	\$500	148	50	
4	Anne Boyer (poetry)	\$300	plane	Kansas City	\$500	148	50	
4	Mel Nichols (poetry)	\$300	plane	DC	\$500	148	50	
5	Rodney Koeneke (poetry)	\$300	plane	Seattle	\$500	148	50	
5	Elena Rivera (poetry)	\$300	plane	NYC	\$500	148	50	
6	Thomas Sayers Ellis (poetry)	\$500	plane	NYC	\$500	148	50	(500) Honors
7	Otrude Moyo (poetry)	\$300	car	Portland ME	\$500	148	50	(500) Honors
		\$4,600			\$5,000	1480	500	
II	<b>Fixed Expenses</b>							
	Agent	Expense	Service	Note				
	MaJo Kaleshian	225	Poster Design					
	Printer	150	Poster Printing					
	Marketing Dept	560	Event Taping					
	Pulp & Paper	donated	Room	\$350 value				
	Local print news sources	500	Advertising					
		<b>1435</b>						
III	<b>Total Series Expenses</b>							
	Honoraria	4600						
	Travel	5000						
	Accommodations	1480						
	Meals	500						
	Fixed	1435						
	total	<b>13015</b>						
IV	<b>Overview</b>							
	Elliott Commitment	5905						
	Ellis Commitment	1200						
	Honors Commitment	1500						
	NPF Commitment	500						
	Cultural Affairs Request	4000						
		<b>13105</b>						