

By Ellen Hobbs

When Diane Wakoski invites you into a poem, she asks you to take a look at the world through her eyes, and perhaps through her you may learn to be more compassionate and understanding.

Wakoski, who will do a reading tonight at 7:30 in 165 Blocker, has been publishing her works since the early 1960s. Her poems pan a large breadth of styles, forms and ideas.

In the introduction to "Trilogy" (1980), a collection of three of her earliest books, she says she writes several different kinds of poems, and each book is an attempt at showing her reader one kind of writing she does.

The linking of her work is apparent not only through technique but through theme.

"Coins and Coffins" (1962), the first work in "Trilogy," is a trip into Wakoski's stream of consciousness. The surrealistic images spill over into her next work, "Discrepancies and Apparitions" (1967).

In the "Trilogy" introduction, Wakoski says, "I believe in the use of extravagant, surrealist imagery, like the girl riding naked on a zebra wearing only diamonds, as a way of making the reader accept the specialness of the feelings of the speaker in the poem."

That example comes from the poem "Apparitions are Not Singular Occurrences" from "Discrepancies and Apparitions":

"When I rode the zebra past your door, wearing nothing but my diamonds, I expected to hear bells

and your face behind the thin curtains. But instead I saw you, a bird, wearing the mask of a bird,

with all the curtains drawn, the lights blazing,

and Death drinking cocktails with you." Don't balk, though, if sometimes difficult-to-

The Piano

The Piano all strings contained, remains silent, until someone plays.

The obvious. As when a white jade animal falls you are aware of its substance. It rattles on the floor.

But the obvious piano is not always played. Three more analogies are implied. Love, the poem, exploits them.

— Diane Wakoski, "Discrepancies and Apparitions"



understand imagery frightens you away from poetry. True to her word, these are only one kind of poems Wakoski writes, and while many of her poems contain surrealistic images, many do not rely on them.

"Virtuoso Literature for Two and Four Hands," a poem that appears in a book of the same title (1975) and in the collection "Why My Mother Likes Liberace" (1985), is an example of a poem that is made up of more realistic images. In these lines, she tells the story of a man at a party of "intellectuals and poets" who is overcome by his own ability to play music:

"a man, an old friend,

a writer and teacher, sat down at the piano/he was drunk and nostalgic,

and bending over the keys like the limbs of a willow, he played 'Stella by Starlight,' here in this company of intellectuals and poets,

he forgot where he was. He forgot the rain and of evening talk, and played as if he were in some 1940s piano bar,

a song none of us knew the words to, here in the company of intellectuals and poets

he played 'Stella by Starlight' ... " In "The Collected Greed," a long poem written in many parts between 1967 and 1983, Wakoski experiments with different forms and the effects of form on poetry.

In many places in "Greed," Wakoski slips out of "classic" poetic form into actual prose. In Part 12 she includes a short play (actually a *masque*) in two acts. This variation of form is intriguing and keeps the reader moving from one part to the next.

To those of us who are a bit intimidated by the mysteries of poetry, Wakoski gives us a few hints — her introductions to her collections are clear and helpful to the reader's understanding and interpretation of the poems. One reason "Why My Mother Likes Liberace" is one of my favorite books of poetry is because of the graceful and insightful preface.

Tonight's reading is sponsored by the Department of English and MSC Literary Arts. Go for an introduction into the varied and exciting world of her poetry. You're sure to find something that will touch you.



Sara Laughs

College music scene crowded with talent

By Rob Newberry

Music is still a very important part of the college entertainment scene, if this past week's National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) National Convention in Nashville was any indication. At the conference, I got a chance to see a few up-and-coming live rock acts, and picked up lots of releases from some of the nation's new performers.

As for the live sets, the most enjoyable rock act at this year's convention was Connecticut's 17 Relics. In support of their third independent release, *Water*, the band performed four songs in a 20-minute afternoon set. 17 Relics is fronted by singer Micheal Fitzgerald, and driven by guitarist Alex Pellish and bassist David Bentley. Drummer Rich Freitas does as much kick-ass work behind the kit as I've seen in a while. Musically, the band is a grad of the R.E.M. musical influence school — jangly guitars and upbeat tunes. Fitzgerald's lyrics are heavy on the religious allusions.

Another hot live act at NACA was Virginia's Waxing Poetics. Their third release *Bed Time Story* on Emergo Records is a collection of straightforward rockers with an emphasis on raw feeling instead of production. At NACA, the quartet performed "Sugar daddy" and "Frankenstein's Daughter" from the record, as well as a stirring "East O' Jesus." Their set even included frontman David Middleton tearing through a guitar solo with his teeth.

Among the many tapes I had a chance to listen to, Boston-based Sara Laughs stood out most with their two EPs, a self-titled work, and the more recent *Don't You Want Me*.

acoustic-folk duo of S. Amilia White and Jennifer Staton. These days, the band sports drummer Chris Buleson, guitarist Jean-Paul Perrotte and bassist Claire Harding. The resulting sound falls somewhere on the rockier side of the Cocteau Twins, but with more emphasis on the lyrical side, and more towards the standard four-piece sound characteristic of Austin bands like the Wild Seeds and the Reivers.

Slash Orchestra's new CD *Hypothetical World* on Bean Creek Recordings is a collection of technorock tunes from this New York-based duo. With former Texan Konrad Kinnard on bass, vocals and remote control (the Orchestra uses a TV for live shows), and James Lo taking care of drums and electronics, Slash Orchestra mixes up a lot of strange samples and rhythmic grooves for a head-on industrial ball.

I also picked up the latest tape from the Virginia-based band the Boneshakers. The title track "Oh, So Black" is a short acoustic number, but most of the rest of the album falls in the contemporary pop-metal genre. The Boneshakers are more geared toward the mainstream of AOR than most of the other bands I got to look at.

Left Exit, a six-piece band out of Chesterfield, Virginia, had copies of their latest, *Do It Anyway*. Left Exit's style is almost funky and almost jazzy, but slightly more mainstream than the music of Poi Dog Pondering. The music sports lots of island-sounding harmonies, as well as congas and marimbas, to back up synth and horn melodies and Jim Malone's vocals.

On the humorous side of the new band scene is the Norfolk, Virginia, band Left Wing Fascists. The lyrics of songs like "I Drive A Yugo," "K-Mart Shopper," "We I.D. Under 75," and "Bitch (You're Not Good Lookin' Enough)" will keep you laughing hard, but the music never suffers: straight-ahead five-piece rock 'n' roll with lots of guitar and traditional rock drum and bass rhythms. The closest comparison I could make would be the Dead Milkmen, but Left Wing Fascists are definitely originals.

Funk and reggae acts were not to be ignored at the convention, and they're still a big influence on the campus scene.

Megaphonics demo tape from Cellar Door Entertainment is reminiscent of the funk-metal bands heating up the Texas scene like Bouffant Jellyfish and Joe Rockhead. Fast Lane Productions, based in Washington, D.C., also showed off some of their funk acts with a compilation tape. Listen for bands like Urban Blight, NY Citizens, Circus Mind, Shockra and Chucklehead to invade the funk airwaves soon.

Fast Lane also handed out a couple of reggae compilations. One cassette contains U.S.-based progressive and roots reggae, so expect to hear from American bands like Black Sheep, Bomb Shelter, House of Assembly and Local Hero if you dig U.S. reggae. The other cassette has more international reggae acts such as Alpha Blondy, Bigga and HR. Proof positive that reggae music is still being made for the college scene.

On the jazzier side of reggae and funk is the U.K.'s Mad Professor.

The Professor's new disc *Science and the Witchdoctor* is a collection of samples and tape dubs put together for dance-club play, but it's unlikely that this album will do much in the American club scene. The music here is too close to the reggae side to be trendy enough for dance clubs, but fans of reggae or dance sounds should like the album enough.

Syracuse, New York's Jamie Notharthomas was handing out copies of his latest self-titled solo CD. Notharthomas' tunes are heavy on the emotional side of rock, like many other solo singer-guitarists. Notharthomas has a backup band for most of the songs, and members of 10,000 Maniacs contribute to two of the better tracks on the disc, "Minus One" and "On My Own." Notharthomas is capable of some tough rock 'n' roll, as evidenced by songs like "Good-Bye, Good-bye," but he also does some nifty acoustic stuff with "Christina" and "Hope for the World."

L.A.'s Tom Heil completes my line-up of worthwhile acts I was introduced to at NACA. Heil's sound is similar to much of the music on the Windham Hill new-age label, what he terms "not jazz and not pop and not classical, but it incorporates all of that." Heil's first album, *Please*, is a collection of moving solo piano pieces, while the more recent *Geometry* has several synthesizer compositions.

I left NACA thinking the college music scene was a lot more crowded than I thought it was. But with as much good music as I came across, I'm not sure you can get too much of a good thing.

Publisher looks to students for help with guidebook

By Lisa Young

Members of Texas A&M's Association of Black Journalists are sharpening their pencils and rolling up their sleeves for a major project they're about to undertake with educator and publisher Barry Beckham.

The association of black journalists will assist Beckham House Publishers in organizing and completing the third edition of "The Black Student's Guide to Colleges," Beckham says.

"I didn't know what to expect from college in 1962, and there are many black students who are in the same predicament today," Beckham says.

"At the time I entered Brown, there were very few black students and no black professors," Beckham says. "It's important for black students to have someone they feel comfortable talking to."

Beckham says that students are better able to achieve in school if they're mentally prepared for the social and cultural changes they may have to adapt to while in college.

"Many black students come from segregated high schools and may feel intimidated because of their skin color once they get to college," Beckham says he knows exactly

how it feels to be a minority at a predominantly white institution.

"There were approximately 450 freshmen entering Brown University in 1962 and only six of them were black," Beckham says. "I was one of only three black males that graduated from Brown in 1966."

"The main disadvantage for black students is that there is no communication source available to them," Beckham said. "Black students need information on what to expect once they get to college."

"The Black Student's Guide to Colleges" profiles various universities across America Beckham says. "It informs its readers about the college's curriculum, organizations and the number of minority students and professors.

Surveys are sent to a wide variety of colleges to obtain information that will help students formulate a clear picture of what to expect once they get to school Beckham says.

"The schools that we profile are segregated, non-segregated, public, private, co-ed, single-sexed, large, small and in various geographical regions," he says. "The

guide has at least one representative of each type of school."

Beckham says the key to academic success is largely due to psychological comfort.

"Many times, black students are placed in uncomfortable situations because of skin color," he says. "Black students not only have to worry about academic pressures, they may also have to face a hostile environment because of their skin color."

Beckham says when he first proposed the idea of writing the black student's guide, the project received virtually no support and was pushed around for several years before it was finally taken seriously.

"The first edition was financially supported by Brown University (where I was teaching at the time) and published by E.P. Dutton in 1982," Beckham says. "The university even implemented a group independent studies project class of about 20 students to help research and profile over 100 schools."

In the early 1980s, Beckham says, he felt it was time to write a second guide when black students complained of the negative experiences

they were having on college campuses. Beckham says he realized there were terrible omissions in publications when he had trouble finding a company to fund and publish the project.

The third edition will be different from the first two, he says. "I plan for the third edition to profile approximately 200 schools," he says. "I plan for the guide to have less statistics and more input from the students whose colleges are profiled."

Beckham would like to see more large-scale publishing companies owned by minorities, he says. "Blacks are less represented in book publishing than in any other form of the media."

He plans for his publishing company to be an outlet for black creativity and expression. "I want Beckham House to be sensitive to the needs of the black community."

Barry Beckham and Beckham House Publishers hope to have a positive effect on the black community. They will not only help young black people get into college, but continue to help them once they're out as well.