



UNH Poet Featured In Prestigious 'American Poetry Review'

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DURHAM, N.H. - For University of New Hampshire professor David Rivard, writing poetry is a refreshing exercise that allows him to discover things he didn't know about the world or himself. A writer for more than 30 years, Rivard says writing poetry "makes me feel that there's a little mystery always available in being alive."

Rivard is featured on the cover of the November/December 2008 issue of the prestigious "American Poetry Review." Fourteen of his poems are included in the issue. "The American Poetry Review" has been published since 1972 and has included the work of more than 1,500 writers, including nine Nobel Prize laureates and 33 Pulitzer Prize winners.

An associate professor of English, Rivard teaches poetry and advanced poetry at UNH. He holds a bachelor's from the University of Massachusetts and a master of fine arts from the University of Arizona.

"I like the feeling of making something out of nothing but the blank page and whatever's happening in my imagination on any particular day. And I especially like seeing how the poem takes shape over a period of time, how some of that happens by accident and some of it through very conscious decisions. Really, I don't think of what I do as any different from what a carpenter or a potter does -- I'm a maker, which is how poets were referred to long ago," Rivard says.

Rivard's favorite poets are many. There's William Carlos Williams, who Rivard loves for the verbal energy Williams brings, "an energy that's bound up with everyday speech." He enjoys Robert Frost for his "sense of getting how people actually talk into the poem and for his sense of the tragic." And then there's Frank O'Hara and his "gossipy heart." The list goes on: Emily Dickinson, Gary Snyder, Czeslaw Milosz, Jean Valentine, Edward Thomas, Cesar Vallejo, and a couple of dozen others.

When pondering writing a poem, Rivard says he doesn't think much about the subject or theme.

"A lot of the material I bring into a poem comes out of the city where I live (Cambridge), and city life in general -- I like street life, the energy of it. And I like to be in touch with whatever it is that makes us American, the beautiful and malevolent texture of life at this moment. And of course there's my life with my family and friends. I'm just trying to write about how surprising it all is -- both the good and the bad," he says.

Although he doesn't have a favorite poem that he has penned, one that he is partial to is "Forehead," which he wrote for his wife.

"Maybe I like it because it was one of the rare ones that seemed to write itself. I like how it's clear and direct, but also how it keeps being interrupted by these odd images and feelings that seem to fly in out of nowhere. There's something I don't quite understand about it -- and

since it's a love poem, that's good! -- it must mean there's still a mystery in it all. It floats," he says.

Rivard is the author of four books, including his most recent, "Sugartown." In 2006, he was awarded the O.B. Hardison Jr. Poetry Prize by the Folger Shakespeare Library for his teaching and writing.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a New England liberal arts college and a major research university with a strong focus on undergraduate-oriented research. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

FOREHEAD

I love you
 I know as much as anything
 for your courage
 so companionably invisible
 as it is
 that it passes mostly
 as simple
 good sense. I don't mean you're
 practical at all-god forbid-
 only persistent
 as far as dying brothers & cold calls
 are concerned-not violent,
 not weak, but like a lantern afloat on a wave
 open if necessary
 to sinking your light
 offshore. Onshore
 I am as you would know
 strongly sometimes
 impatient & inside a swarm of loud thoughts
 self-absorbed & locked-up.
 If you were to die
 who would remove me
 from those thoughts?
 When you lean your forehead
 against mine
 what you hear inside there
 are all those
 sounds likely, vibrations
 like windowpanes rattled by headland squalls
 or bullet trains
 late forever & loaded down
 with passengers green
 as hoodie-wearing witches.
 I lean my forehead against
 your forehead
 gently knowing both
 will shortly vanish.
 "First of all," says
 Virgil, "find
 a protected place
 for the bees
 to make their

honey, a place that's
safe from wind."

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