

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Newsletter No. 12

www.emrsociety.com

March 2011

13th Annual Roberts Conference

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will hold its XIII Annual Conference in beautiful Harrodsburg and Springfield (Saint Catharine College), Kentucky, April 16-18, 2011. The conference headquarters—site of the opening banquet, keynote session, and annual business meeting—is the lovely and legendary Beaumont Inn in historic Harrodsburg. Academic paper sessions will be held at Saint Catharine College, just outside of Springfield, Roberts' hometown.

Please direct conference inquiries (registration, lodging, special events, etc.) to the Conference Director, H. R. Stoneback, at:

H. R. Stoneback
English Dept.
SUNY-New Paltz
New Paltz, NY 12561
or
Stoney_Sparrow@webtv.net.



EMR: In the New Year

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

William Boyle

It's an old song, but it's a good one: the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society continues to grow. Our annual conference continues to attract scholars, professors, students, and casual fans from across the globe. Our growth has been astounding and inspiring. Dr. H. R. Stoneback's tireless commitment to Roberts' work and to the Society continues to be the main source of spreading the good news. The work is being done in other ways now, too. Former students of Stoneback's teach Roberts in New York, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi, and a new generation of readers and writers have begun to understand Roberts in the way that so many of us have been lucky enough to this past decade. And the Sparrow Stoneback and Terry Ward Memorial Awards continue to attract the best and brightest young graduate students to Roberts' work and to Kentucky.

The word is out on Roberts, no doubt. More and more I hear Roberts mentioned in the same breath as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. More and more I hear of PhD students who are including Roberts in their dissertations, of creative writing teachers who are pointing to Roberts as an exemplary craftswoman. The timing of this coincides with the increasing influence of *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery*, two books which have become landmarks of Roberts scholarship.

Roberts scholars presented this past

year at the Imagism Conference at Brunnenburg Castle in Dorf Tirol, Italy; at the Southern Writers/Southern Writing Conference in Oxford, Mississippi; at the American Literature Association Conference in Savannah, Georgia; at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference in Atlanta, Georgia; and at the International Hemingway Society Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. Roberts' presence was felt at all of these conferences, both implicitly and explicitly. Panels at ALA, SAMLA, and SWSW were dedicated to Roberts, while her work was a touchstone at Brunnenburg and in Lausanne.

In my first year as president, I received many enthusiastic e-mails from casual fans of Roberts, people who had just discovered her work (through our efforts or on their own), and people who had returned to her work after years of neglect. I was especially excited to receive e-mails offering financial assistance to the Society, as it is imperative that we have the funds to be able to reach out to a new generation of students and scholars.

Perhaps the most exciting news was that Suzanne Gray of the Kentucky Arts Council e-mailed me in June to inquire about including Roberts in a literary map of Kentucky. I forwarded the message to Jane Keller, and Jane provided Suzanne with a new and improved biographical sketch of Roberts. We can look forward to seeing this map in the months to come.

Our Society continues down an overwhelmingly positive path, yet there is much more work to be done. We

continued on page 8

Eleanores Revisited

Rebecca Roberts Owens

I spent many years driving by my great-grandparents' house at 510 North Walnut Street in Springfield, KY, always wondering what it was like within. I marveled at the size (3,895 square feet), which is not huge by today's standards but is large indeed for its time and the modest folk who dwelt there. But, city-raised girl that I am, my amazement stemmed more from the fact that the property covered an entire city block! How I wish I could have enjoyed the lush gardens my great-grandmother and great-aunt Elizabeth were so fond of tending or seen the light streaming from the front windows, beckoning the Roberts children home after a lively day of play on cemetery hill. The opportunity to visit this home presented itself in the form of a gracious invitation from the current owner Joan Hamilton to the members of the EMR Society for a tour during our annual conference. Thus, with great anticipation on April 25, 2010, I climbed the front steps of the Roberts house and was warmly welcomed inside.

On October 1, 1904, Simpson Roberts bought from Emma T. and John D. Robards "a house and lot on the west side of the Springfield and Willisburg Turnpike known as Walnut Street." After adding two small adjoining lots, the tract included a frame house, barn, and other out buildings, which were sold by Simpson and wife Mary E. to their daughter Elizabeth; part of the purchase price had already been advanced for improvements and repairs. Elizabeth named the refurbished home "Eleanores," and it is still marked to this day by a roadside bronze plaque.

When Simpson Roberts suffered a stroke and died in 1932, the majority of his estate consisted of three notes from his daughter Elizabeth on the purchase of Eleanores. When Elizabeth herself passed in 1941, her will specified



The Roberts Family on the steps of Eleanores

that the estate was to be kept intact for the lifetime of her mother, Mary Elizabeth Brent Roberts, to reside at "the home place called Eleanores." When her mother died, Elizabeth's remaining estate was to be divided equally among her surviving siblings. As executor of Elizabeth's estate and with Power of Attorney from his siblings, youngest brother Ivor sold Eleanores to John Pile and wife Lillian on June 23, 1948. In poor health and unable to walk due to a broken hip, Mary Elizabeth Brent Roberts lived the last few years of her life in the Puritan Apartments in Louisville, KY, and the remainder of Elizabeth's estate was not settled until 1952, more than a year after her mother's passing.

On October 15, 1983, the Roberts house and surrounding grounds, totaling 4 ½ acres, were sold at auction as part of the estate sale of Mrs. John Pile. The rear yard, which faces Lincoln Park Road, was divided into three lots sold separately. The Roberts house and remaining grounds were purchased by Joan Hamilton.

Janet Lewis described the house after a visit in 1921: "The Roberts house was at the edge of town. From her bedroom window Elizabeth could see a hillside where cows were grazing. There was garden space surrounding the house. Elizabeth's room was at the front, linked with her parents' room by a small, square hallway, almost large enough to be used as a parlor. The parents' chamber was a complete sitting and bedroom in itself, as was Elizabeth's. It was large, high-ceilinged, with its own stove, with a rocking chair for her father, and certainly a particular chair and sewing table for her mother. We did not casually enter the parents' chamber. When I met Mrs. Roberts it was most often in the kitchen. The entry hall led into a narrow dining room which in turn led into the kitchen. At meals I was the only guest, and Elizabeth was the only child of the house."

William Ralph Roberts, the son of Elizabeth's brother Brent, often visited his grandparents and his Aunt Elizabeth in Springfield. He remembers that "Elizabeth generally stayed secluded in her part of the house, where she had her own kitchen, cooked her own meals, and ate by herself. The rest of the family always was quiet in the afternoon while Elizabeth rested."

In the spring and summer months, Miss Roberts' routine was varied by her interest in her small flower garden. This garden was a source of great pleasure to her. She planted a hedge which grew high enough to completely enclose the garden, shutting her in from the public gaze. She put out her favorite perennials and annuals until she had a rich, diverse garden. Here she went from mid-spring to mid-fall

continued on page 5

Roberts in Italy— and Georgia & Switzerland

H. R. Stoneback

At the II International Imagism Conference held at Brunnenburg Castle in Italy (June 2010), Roberts was included in several conference papers and her work was the subject of much discussion among scholars from England, France, and Italy who had never before heard her name. The significance of such academic and literary conversation cannot be overstated, and it is very good news for Roberts aficionados that such—call it *evangelizing* if you wish—occurred at four national and international conferences in 2010.

After the Imagism Conference in Italy, Mary de Rachewiltz (Ezra Pound's daughter and our conference host) wrote me to say that she was reading and enjoying Roberts. And she was also studying the critical volume that had been left with her as a gift—*Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation*. She was particularly interested, of course, in the ways that Ezra Pound had influenced Roberts.

Moreover, at the International Hemingway Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, Roberts' name and work came up in several papers and numerous conversations. Among the more than 300 participants at this conference were many Europeans—and *many* Americans—who had never heard of Roberts.

And once again in 2010, there was Georgia. At the SAMLA Convention in Atlanta, the Roberts Society presented two sessions with eight papers on Roberts. Finally, in my one-hour plenary address at the ALA Conference in Savannah, I featured Roberts along with Faulkner and Hemingway as *the* writers of fiction who were above all poets—great poets whose poetry flowed from the intersection of dialect, dialogue, and interior monologue. In sum, Roberts Society members continue to excel in their mission of spreading the Roberts gospel, nationwide and worldwide.

The Time of Man in a Southern Women Writers Course

Mary Ann Wilson

Thanks to my graduate student, Matt Nickel, I was introduced to Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man*. His small, battered paperback copy sat on my shelf for months before I actually took it down and read it. My interest in southern women writers made me curious about this largely unknown writer who, in the best feminist fashion, was being rediscovered, rehabilitated, reassessed.

I sent an abstract to one of the EMR panels at the 2010 SAMLA and was accepted. I was also concurrently putting together ideas for a graduate course I am presently teaching here at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, called "Southern Women Writers and Theories of the Body." These two activities fed into each other in surprising ways. The result was a paper called "The Fable of the Southern (Woman) Writer: Elizabeth Madox Roberts," a title I stole and adapted from famed southern literature critic Lewis P. Simpson, who was coincidentally my dissertation director at LSU back in the 1970s.

As I read Roberts' novel and planned for my graduate course, I could not help but see the female body everywhere in this writer deemed "mystical," "mythical," and "spiritual." The tale of Ellen Chesser's evolving consciousness may be about "mind" and "history," as Lewis Simpson would have it, but I think he would concur that it is also about a world Ellen experiences chiefly through her bodily relation to it—through her farming chores, her dancing and singing, her emerging sexuality, and later in the book, her nurturing, maternal actions. So the paper took on a life of its own, fed by the twin streams of my interest in women's studies and literary theory, and my preparation for the upcoming graduate course.

I read the paper to my graduate class during the last of two three-hour classes we had on *The Time of Man*. They were duly appreciative and praising, as good graduate students must be when co-opted by their professor. But apart from my modeling good conference paper reading behavior, I also realized that I was in effect having a conversation with a beloved professor and mentor who shaped my career and my thinking about southern literature. I could see him nodding at various places in my argument, wrinkling his forehead at a couple of junctures, but on the whole pleased to hear what I had to say as I feminized his foundational thinking about the role of the southern writer—male and female—in an ever-changing cultural landscape.

News & Notes

Help Spread the Word on Roberts

Please request that your local libraries order copies of *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* (Eds. Stoneback and Florczyk, Wind Publications, 2008) and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery* (Eds. Stoneback, Camastra, and Florczyk, Quincy & Harrod Press, 2008). These volumes offer not only reprints of valuable touchstone articles but also the most recent essays on Roberts' work as well as original pieces of writing by her that have never before been published. The books are essential to the ongoing discussion about her life and work, and we hope that they will become available in libraries across the country for current and future readers alike. For more information regarding ordering, please visit www.emrsociety.com.

Books on Roberts Receive Awards

At the 2010 Roberts Conference, St. Catharine College presented the award "For Outstanding Books on Kentucky Literature" to *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery*. In a conference program ceremony, Dr. David Arnold, Vice President of St. Catharine College, presented the plaque to H. R. Stoneback; he accepted the award on behalf of his co-editors, Nicole Camastra and Steven Florczyk and all the Roberts Society members who contributed essays to these volumes. As *The Springfield Sun* reported ("Group Gathers to Extoll Roberts' Works"—May 5, 2010), Arnold cited the "glowing reviews" these books had received in such leading literary journals as *The Mississippi Quarterly* and *The Sewanee Review*, and lauded the role of these books in the "restoration of Elizabeth Madox Roberts' name in the consciousness of scholars and readers of American literature." In addition, the books on Roberts received another award for outstanding work on Kentucky literature at the Kentucky Writers Day program.

EMR Panels at SAMLA 2010

The Roberts Society was well-represented this year at the SAMLA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Cristin Rogowski-Vita chaired the Regular Session of the EMR Society where several presentations were given: Michelle S. Kramisen, "'I'm Ellen Chesser and I'm lovely': Rediscovery of Feminine Independence"; Jane Massey Dionne, "Living in Great Meadow Country: Helping Students Find Sense of Time and Place"; Jessica Conti, "Man's Place and Song in the Work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts"; and Cristin Rogowski-Vita, "'I'll go where you go and live where you live...': Femininity and Place in Roberts' Fiction."

Alex Shakespeare chaired the Second Session of the EMR Society where several papers were given on Roberts and the Southern Renaissance: Matthew Nickel, "'Get God Into It': Roberts and Mysticism"; Alex Shakespeare, "A Novel Renaissance: Elizabeth Madox Roberts & Allen Tate"; Mary Ann Wilson, "The Fable of the Southern (Woman) Writer: Elizabeth Madox Roberts and the Feminization of History"; Chris Lawrence, "An Ecocritical Reading of Southern Agrarianism in The Time of Man and Wendell Berry's *The Art of the Commonplace*."

In addition, Roberts Society Honorary President H. R. Stoneback and Society Members Brad McDuffie, Matthew Nickel, and Alex Shakespeare read poems for a Special Poets Session of Des Hymnagistes Poets.

CFP: SAMLA 2011

The Poetry of Elizabeth Madox Roberts

Papers for this session should deal with Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Poetry. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following: an analysis of the contrasting images and poems in *In The Great Steep's Garden*; Roberts' poetry as children's verse (especially throughout *Under the Tree* and *Song in the Meadow*); the historic and folkloric—even mythic—contexts of her poems; Roberts as mystical poet; Roberts and the ballad form; Roberts as an Imagist; intertextualities between Roberts and other poets; Roberts' philosophy on poetry and art; and Roberts' prose and dialogue as poetry. Papers should run between fifteen and twenty minutes long. Please submit a title and a 250-word abstract to Matthew Nickel (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) at mnickel@louisiana.edu by June 1, 2011.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Discovery and Recovery

Papers for this session may deal with all aspects of Roberts' work and life. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following: Roberts in the context of Southern literature; Roberts and other writers; Roberts and Southern Agrarianism; Roberts' literary and stylistic influences; Roberts and nature writing; Roberts and Modernism; Roberts and the novel; Roberts and Regionalism; Roberts and Feminism; and Roberts and Kentucky. Papers should run between fifteen and twenty minutes long. Please submit a title and a 250-word abstract to Cristin Rogowski-Vita (Independent Scholar) at CrissyRogowski@gmail.com by June 1, 2011.

2010 Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Award:

2010 Terry Ward Memorial Awards were given to: Sarah Gray (Nyack College) and Allen Jones (University of

continued on page 11

Eleanores Revisited *from page 2*

for her sun baths.

In 1928, with her writing career established, Elizabeth turned her mind to the composition of *The Great Meadow*. Materially, things had improved for her. The success of *The Time of Man* had given her sufficient money to build a handsome brick residence. Since her mother and father could not be induced to leave their old home, Miss Roberts built her new house as an adjunct to the older frame residence. The central room of the new house was a spacious, book-lined study and library. There was still the large, tree-studded front lawn, still the simple, sunny flower garden in the rear. It was an admirable spot for writing—quiet, spacious, and comfortable—and it was there that most of *The Great Meadow* was written.

As I stood there in the foyer, the first thing I saw was the works of EMR displayed on a beautiful antique sideboard. From there we could see into the afore-mentioned book-lined study and library. It was like being transported back in time. While it had all the modern amenities one would expect to find in such a room, I could almost feel the presence of my great-aunt in that library—researching, outlining ideas, clacking away on her portable Smith-Corona typewriter.

From there we progressed into the light-filled formal dining room, now adorned with cow-themed wall treatment. It was surprising, in a good way, to find that the current owners are not afraid to put their stamp on the Roberts home and make it their own—rather than have it be simply a mausoleum of the past. We then moved on to the first of two kitchens, and I marveled at how anyone could serve a meal out of what appeared to be a retrofitted butler's pantry. I silently wondered if my great-grandmother had fed eight children under similar (or worse) circumstances. The second of two kitchens was much larger and today serves as part of a rental unit/guest quarters.

Finishing off the tour of the first floor were two spacious bedrooms, with lovely fireplaces, one with adjoining sitting room/living area which also is encompassed in the rental unit/guest quarters. The corner bedroom is what I believe was my great-grandparents' bedroom at one time. Again I can picture the massive walnut poster bed in that

room—my mother used to speak of it often—which belonged to my great-grandmother. It could have looked similar to the one residing in the Roberts house today. The bed was sold at auction when the Piles purchased the home. My mother wanted it very badly, but the war was not long over, everyone was poor, and the bed was too tall to fit in a house of conventional ceiling height. The other sunny front bedroom was Elizabeth's as previously described by Janet Lewis.

Outside, the lovely gardens are gone; the yard is dotted with a few trees and an iris border lining the drive. Another, circular driveway has been added to the front lawn, a convenience my father would have appreciated as he frequently chauffeured EMR around the Little Country in her new Dodge.

I suppose the house lived up to all my expectations, well-loved and lived in. Not a shrine or a stuffy museum. A home to three generations of Roberts family, now home to another fine family who was kind enough to share it with us and keen enough to realize its significance in the regional historical experience.

That Sunday, I sat on the front porch of the original wing of the house in the exact spot where my grandparents sat some 75 years ago. In the warm spring evening, I felt the cloak of my family wrapped around me—my great-grandparents, my grandparents, and my dad—I could hear Aunt Elizabeth's lilting hymn ringing in my ears:

The day is done;
The lamps are lit;
Woods-ward the birds are flown.
Shadows draw close, —
Peace be unto this house.

Becki Roberts Owens on the steps of Eleanores



After the Penn's Store Flood: The Benefit & the Book

H. R. Stoneback

In the spring of 2010 a great flood inundated Penn's Store, which is located at the convergence of the North Rolling Fork River with the Little South Rolling Fork, near Gravel Switch, Kentucky. The old country store is situated at the edge of the tobacco and corn bottomlands that front these two rivers. To the uninformed eye of the casual passerby the store might appear to be just another ramshackle structure in a dying agrarian community. But this store is a historic landmark and it is said to be America's oldest country store run by the same family—since at least the 1840s. The Penn family that still runs the store is related to the great Kentucky writer, Robert Penn Warren. (No one knows if Warren ever visited the store, but with his passion for Kentucky history and the burden of the past, it is quite possible that he did. And I'm willing to bet that Elizabeth Madox Roberts stopped at Penn's Store on one of her rides through the countryside that she loved so much.)

More recently, since Jeanne Penn Lane took over the store after the passing of Haskell Penn, the store has become *famous* as the site of the Great Outhouse Blowout, billed as "America's Oldest Outhouse Race." This annual event has witnessed performances by many well-known country musicians—the legendary guitarist Chet Atkins, the singer-songwriter Billy Edd Wheeler, and many others. More significantly for many poets, the store has been for over a decade the location of the annual Kentucky Writers Day celebration every April. One group that has participated in this event since 2000 is the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society. Many society members are from New York and for the past decade I have led hundreds of students and Roberts aficionados to Penn's Store, where—together with other society members from a dozen states and several countries along with all the Kentucky natives who participate and attend the event—we celebrate writing and songwriting in Kentucky, with performance of poems and songs and passages read from the work of Roberts and Warren and other Kentucky writers. Song and Story, Ballad and Poetry, in a numinous place redolent with a sense of the past.

Some of the poets who participated in the benefit had just been at Penn's Store a week before the flood, reading our poems and singing old songs at the Kentucky Writers Day program that Jeanne Penn Lane runs every year. One week after we left, the stage where we performed was under five feet of water and the river was inside the store. Its survival was in question.

Something had to be done so I dreamed up and then organized a national (indeed international) poetry contest for poems written on the theme of "the old country store." Poets sent in poems, from many states and four countries, together with a contest entry fee (all the proceeds to go to our Save Penn's Store Fund). We put on a grand gala Penn's Store Benefit Poetry Reading at a club in New Paltz, New York. When the reporter from the *Louisville Courier-Journal* asked me during our telephone interview—"Why this Benefit in New York?"—I thought but did not say *Why not in Kentucky?*

It was a remarkable occasion and many students from the State University of New York at New Paltz said it was by far the best literary event they had ever attended. About 50 "country store" poems were read, some by the poets themselves, others by readers standing in for the absent poets. Interspersed among the many poems read were musical interludes—an accordionist played, a guitarist sang and played, and I wrote a Penn's Store song to the tune of "You Are My Sunshine"—and everybody sang along. One thing that I learned in my decades as a performer and singer-songwriter is that if you want people to give generously to support a cause—get them singing first. One thing that made the benefit remarkable was the generosity of many impoverished students, such as the young man who came up to the donation table and emptied his pockets of a few crumpled dollar bills and a handful of change and said: "It's all I got. Hope it helps." And then there was the poet who gave a dime for every word in his rather long poem—it adds up when a poem is over 300 words—and challenged his audience to match his dime-a-word donation. Two persons matched. Another remarkable thing was that some of the poets who wrote poems on the country store theme had never seen a country store; I had advised them to write their dream-vision of a country-store, or to make an analogy from their own experience that would express a location with a strong sense of place, sense of community—so we had poems read that night about a Brooklyn Laundry, a sidewalk café in Venice, a river in Prague. Yet another remarkable occurrence was the fact that some of the poets who read said with touching humility—as did others who sent in poems from around the country—that they had never written a poem before but they were moved to do so by the hope of helping to save Penn's Store.

A direct result of the Benefit was the publication of a substantial volume entitled *From Penn's Store to the World: An Anthology of Poems*. This book is in press at the moment of this writing, and it will have its premiere and official release ceremony at the Kentucky Writers Day program at Penn's Store—April 17, 2011. In case there

continued on page 9

Some Hymnagistes Poets

Michael Renganeschi

Eds. H. R. Stoneback and Matthew Nickel, *Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology*, New York: Des Hymnagistes Press, 2010.

It doesn't seem like too much of a stretch to say that American Poetry has never been known for its poetic movements. Poetic schools bring to mind the French Symbolists, the British Romantics, or the Spanish Generation of '98. Imagism—our one definitive poetic movement—was, while incredibly influential, short-lived and more of an amalgam of expatriates and Brits than a homogenous American school. Nonetheless, Ezra Pound and the Imagists developed an aesthetic that set the course for twentieth century American literature. And while Ezra Pound, Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, and Robert Penn Warren are undeniably some of the most important names in American poetry, for many, names like Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie, Johnny Cash, and Bob Dylan are even more important. The collection of poems recently released by Des Hymnagistes Press, *Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology*, is exactly what our poetry needs: throughout, it is a testament to the power of a poetic form built upon the lyrical beauty of hymnody and resonating with literary history and folk tradition.

Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology lives up to the expectations set for it by the resonances of its title and its cover. The volume is an exact facsimile of the original *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (1914), a landmark publication of modern literature. The design, while faithful down to the pagination, is by no means the only aspect of the book that resonates with the Imagist movement. While from cover to cover the poems reflect the concision of Imagist form and the concentration of emotional detail, the anthology also features poems from descendants of original Imagist poets. The anthology opens with Catherine Aldington, the daughter of Richard Aldington, whose "Four Poems" incorporates the Imagist aesthetic into an idyllic meditation on "a country of dreams and dreads." The book also features poems by Mary de Rachewiltz and Patrizia de Rachewiltz, the daughter and grand-daughter of Ezra Pound. Mary's reflections in "Rereading Walt Whitman" transport us momentarily into Pound's library, where we feel like we are re-reading Whitman with Pound's notes in the margins, while Patrizia's poetry gives us an intimate glimpse of Pound as he returns to Italy in 1958 after twelve years in St. Elizabeths Hospital. Valerie Hemingway, Hemingway's secretary and daughter-in-law, contributes "My Life on the Rocks," which offers a lyrical portrait that spans from the beaches of Brighton to the afternoon cocktails shared poolside with Hemingway in Spain. The anthology also features poems by renowned Kentucky

poet and New Paltz Distinguished Professor H. R. Stoneback, co-editor of the anthology, whose poems stretch from Beijing to Honduras and evoke, in vivid and honest detail, just about everything in between. Along with Stoneback is an extraordinary collection of young Hymnagiste poets, whose work is a distillation of a long history of American literature, folk music, and church hymnals. It is worth stressing, especially for readers of this newsletter, that half of these poets have New Paltz connections, a reminder that Hymnagism is an international poetic movement that had its beginnings in poetry readings in New Paltz, Kentucky, and France during the years 2004-2008. Alex Andriessse's "No Wind is the King's Wind: 1916" laments, with images of decay and darkness, the spiritual confusion that results from the diminished role of tradition in our modern society. Andriessse has the unique ability to write poems that are at once contemporary and deeply rooted in tradition and history. A. B.'s "The Fleeting" reads like an exercise in Imagist aesthetics, a meditation on the transience of our most important moments without one superfluous word or slithering emotion. In William Boyle's poems, you can find echoes of Tom Waits and Vic Chestnutt bouncing off sentences from Hemingway novels. The result sounds like dirges commemorating a river gone dry. Brad McDuffie contributes "Seven Hymns from the West," a self-contained cycle of song built upon the "former days" of Psalm 77 prefaced in the subtitle. McDuffie's hymns move from the desert hills of Nevada to the snow-covered valleys of the Hudson, building an American landscape with glimpses of barren wastelands and fertile Edens. Matthew Nickel, the other co-editor of the anthology, contributes six poems, including "Portraite d'une Sainte," a two-line complex of emotion and intellect. Nickel's "An Original Sin Image" is perhaps most exemplary of the aesthetics that bring *Des Hymnagistes* together. The poem is an allusive tribute to T. E. Hulme that moves across the war-torn landscape of post-WWI Europe. Jamie Marcel Stamant rounds out the sextet of New Paltz alumni with two poems that offer concentrated images of youth and home across America. The volume also includes poems from John Gery, the founding Director of the Ezra Pound Center for Literature at Brunnenburg, Dorf Tirol, Italy, and Jeff Grieneisen, a founding editor of the literary journal *Florida English*. The anthology closes with a poem by the late Sparrow Stoneback, whose "At Mas 'Les Pellegrins': Rose Trémière" reaffirms the value of place, tradition, friendship, and family that resonates throughout the volume.

In April, the book was published in simultaneous hardcover and paperback editions. The American premiere took place during the 2010 Kentucky Writers Day Celebration at the Historic Penn's Store, the oldest country store owned and

continued on page 8

Paris In Our Time

Matthew Nickel

H. R. Stoneback, *Hemingway's Paris: Our Paris?*, Wickford, RI: New Street Communications, LLC, 2010.

H. R. Stoneback's recently re-published *Hemingway's Paris: Our Paris?* exemplifies Stoneback's masterful rendering of place details with the lyrical balance Stoneback is so well-known for, where Hemingway criticism becomes a personalized quest into the *deus loci* or spirit of place. The book is part narrative part examination of conscience with a pilgrimage into Hemingway's fiction. At first, Stoneback explains how he had dismissed Hemingway when he was living in Paris in the 1970s, for he had "graduated to Faulkner a long time ago." But Hemingway was everywhere. Writers and poets could not escape his presence, even after rejecting him, and many still tried to drink themselves into some "lost generation" myth that Hemingway never promoted. Then he tells how one day, living across from Val-de-Grâce on the rue Saint-Jacques, he was rereading *The Sun Also Rises* and "Paris came alive." The epiphany is an oft-told tale in Hemingway criticism, alluded to throughout Stoneback's many essays on *The Sun Also Rises*, retold in his line-by-line analysis *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (Kent State University Press 2007), and referred to by several dozen

professors and teachers each year in their own classrooms.

But here in *Hemingway's Paris: Our Paris?* the old story is refreshing and feels new. There is the familiar recognition of feeling like Jake (and Stoneback) as if the Boulevard Raspail was peculiarly "ugly" or offering with Jake (and Stoneback) the unconscious salute that we always seem to make to Marshall Ney beyond the tables of the Closerie des Lilas. And the reader familiar with Paris, perhaps also having once dismissed Hemingway, will not only remember Hemingway's text, but will begin to feel a part of Stoneback's discovery, as if the reader too were sitting across from Val-de-Grâce on the rue Saint-Jacques rereading *The Sun Also Rises* with Stoneback. And this is the genius of Stoneback's style and the heart of his narrative: to take readers into that liminal sacred space of historical and symbolic landscape.

And if one is finding Stoneback's story for the first time or discovering Paris through this book, then he or she will find access to the timeless truths of a very ancient and new city as complex as the winding medieval streets Hemingway loved. If the reader has never been to Paris then he or she can begin to dream of being there, for "Chapter V" arrives at the precise moment to carry the reader through a litany of place particulars, a hymn to Paris itself. Stoneback's song is personal, and it is through

continued on page 12

EMR: In the New Year from page 1

have to assure that the Roberts books that are in print stay in print. We must continue to assign these books to our students. We have to aim to get Roberts' books that have long been out of print back in print. We also have to make our scholarship more widely available—in libraries and bookstores and online research databases. Too often do we see young scholars resorting to the same old tired sources when writing about Roberts. I urge you to insist that the library at your institution order copies of *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery* so that students and scholars may be exposed to the good work that we have been doing in the Society.

Above all, I want to take this time to thank you for your support and to toast another successful year for the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society. I look forward, as I always do, to spending three days in Springfield and Harrodsburg this coming April. I look forward to seeing old friends and meeting new friends. I look forward to celebrating the life and work of Roberts who continues to bring us together.

Some Hymnagistes Poets from page 7

operated by the same family. In the open fields surrounding the store, contributors to the volume read a selection of their work. In late June, the anthology had its international premiere at the home of Mary de Rachewiltz in Brunnenburg Castle alongside a collection of Ezra Pound's manuscripts and the numinous mountains of Dorf Tirol. The location was fitting: the poems in this anthology evoke a deep sense of place—from Kentucky to the mountains of Italy, from the Hudson Valley to the shores of the Mediterranean—and resound with a profound understanding of our literary past. At the 2010 SAMLA Convention in Atlanta, a lively special session devoted to this volume was held, where Hymnagistes McDuffie, Nickel, Andriesse, and Stoneback read and discussed their work.

Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology is a unique offering to American poetry. By combining the traditions of church hymns, American folk music, and modernist poetry, the Hymnagistes achieve a poetic form that captures the lyricism of the hymn and the emotional force of the Imagist poem. At the end of the anthology an anonymous 21st century quote defines the role of the poet:

If poets don't make people laugh,
They'll never make them cry.
If poets don't make people sing,
They'll never make them pray.

Throughout this volume, these Hymnagiste poets offer words to make us laugh and cry, and songs to help us pray.

After the Penn's Store Flood *from page 6*

are readers who find the title of this book curious or nonsensical, I should explain that I have crafted this title for its resonance (and, too, it is a literary allusion). *From Penn's Store to the World*: for me and for some readers that will suggest a key tenet of my old teachers and mentors in my Vanderbilt days—those great Kentucky writers and poets, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. As the Vanderbilt Agrarians and Roberts knew very well, the only way to access the Universal is to begin with the Local. (All those bumper stickers should read: *Think Locally Act Globally*.) It's rather like Faulkner's "postage stamp of native soil," his Yoknapatawpha Chronicle that gave the world one of its most perdurable and universal visions of human experience; and it's very much like the "Little Country" chronicle that Roberts created. From Penn's Store, then, many songs, many poems, many visions of place have been given to the

world—and in the benefit and the book the world gives back.

And in the case of the Penn's Store Benefit, the poetry that made the book, the giving has also been monetary. All funds raised by the benefit went directly to Penn's Store as a gift. (And any profits made by the book will also go to benefit the Store.) It is the hope of all poets who participated that Penn's Store will survive. And perhaps you, dear reader, will have the chance to purchase a copy of the book at Penn's Store in the near future. W. H. Auden was not the first or the last to say that *poetry makes nothing happen*. I beg to differ: poetry can make things happen, especially when words are anchored in the spirit of human community and deeds of concrete compassion. In this crusade to save Penn's Store words were deeds, poems were cash.

Here follows the list of Benefit participants and donors:

FRIENDS OF PENN'S STORE

(Asterisk indicates donors whose poems for Penn's Store were read at the Benefit. Donations and poems were submitted from four countries and eleven states, with New York then Louisiana leading the way.)

HONOR ROLL

(donations of \$25 or more):

Amanda Boyle* (NY)
 Jessica Conti (LA)
 John Andrew Dixon (KY)
 Tina Iraca (NY)
 Chris Lawrence* (NY)
 Seth & Patti Nadel (NY)
 Matthew Nickel* (LA)
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 Adam Romano (China)
 William Slavick (ME)
 David & Joyce Stoneback (NJ)
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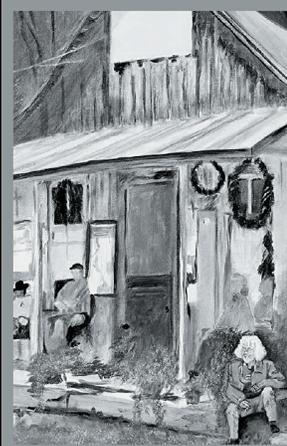
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CONTRIBUTORS

(donations of \$10-\$24):

John Victor Anderson* (LA)
 Michael Beilfuss* (TX)
 Craig Biddy* (LA)
 William Boyle* (MS)
 Helen Brew* (LA)
 Edward Butler* (NJ)
 Vincent Canale* (LA)
 Megan Carnahan* (NY)

*From Penn's Store to the World:
 An Anthology of Poems
 Eds. Stoneback, Boyle, & McDuffie
 (Des Hymnagistes Press 2011)*



From Penn's Store to the World

**FROM PENN'S STORE
 TO THE WORLD**
 AN ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS



Edited by
 H. R. STONEBACK
 WITH
 AMANDA BOYLE & BRAD McDUFFIE

DES HYMNAGISTES PRESS 2011

2010 Conference Report

Alex Shakespeare

April 2010 saw the twelfth annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference. The conference began Saturday, April 24, with a greeting from Gregg Neikirk, President of the Roberts Society, followed by Keynote Speaker H. R. Stoneback, Honorary President of the Society, whose talk was entitled “Let Us Now Praise Famous Women: On Chimerical Cameras & Alarm Clocks, Photofakery, Accuracy & Poetry—Time’s Tenantry in Agee & Roberts.” The Terry Ward and Sparrow Memorial Awards were presented to several new Roberts scholars. On Sunday, April 25, the group spent the afternoon between Roncevaux Farm and Kentucky Writers Day at Historic Penn’s Store in Gravel Switch, Kentucky. In the evening, attendees were honored in Springfield, Kentucky, by the Mayor and City of Springfield and Nell R. Haydon, Director of the City of Springfield, Main Street/Renaissance, where they heard readings of Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ works from Washington County High School students: Samantha Seger, Katie Justice, Marisha Abbi, Josette Taylor, Mary Kutter, and Clare Lutz. Attendees then proceeded to a tour of Eleanores, Roberts’ home in Springfield. Academic papers were delivered on the following day, Monday, April 26, at St. Catharine College. Dr. Leo Hamelin greeted the group, and Dr. David Arnold, Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Dr. William D. Huston, President of the College, presented Dr. Stoneback with an award of appreciation. After the papers, the group adjourned to read poems at Roberts’ grave.

2010 Conference Program

Session One: **William Slavick** (University of Southern Maine) “Ellen’s Time”; **Jane Massey Dionne** (Independent Scholar, Greensboro, NC) “Teaching Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ *Song in the Meadow*”; **Meghan Rogers** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “The Heartfelt Honey of Life”; **Jane Eblen Keller** (University of Baltimore): “‘The Phantom Wedding Ring’: Glenway Wescott’s Personal Note to His ‘Personal Note About Miss Roberts.’”

Session Two: **Alicia Brienza** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “Coming of Age: The Interconnection of People, Places, and Experience”; **Michelle S. Kramisen**

(SUNY-NewPaltz) “The Divided Self of Ellen Chesser”; **Jaime Moore** (Nyack College) “The Time of Man as a Saying”; **Michael Renganeschi** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “‘Our Place to Keep’: A Sense of Home in *The Time of Man*”; **Natasha Miller** (Nyack College) “‘All My Enduren Life’: Word and Deed in Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ *The Time of Man* and William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*.”

Session Three: **Goretti Vianney-Benca** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “Connections, Compassion, and Psalms: Righteousness in Roberts’ ‘Holy Morning’”; **Joseph Thompson** (University of Mississippi) “Perhaps We All Awaited a Resurrection: A Different Kind of Ghost in Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping* and *The Haunted Mirror*”; **Jessica Conti** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “It is known how Lovely Ellen Chesser Is: Grace amid Evil in *The Time of Man*”; **Matthew Nickel** (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) “E. M. Roberts, Dark Nights, and Mysticism.”

Session Four: **Amanda Boyle** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “‘Tell Me More, Sir, About the Old Race’: Indian Signs in *The Great Meadow*”; **Jerry Salyer** (Bellarmine University) “Kentucky Muse: Elizabeth Madox Roberts & The Classical Tradition”; **Crissy Rogowski** (SUNY-NewPaltz) “‘You always felt at home in the world’: Humanity and Existence in *The Great Meadow*.”

Session Five: **Sarah Gray** (Nyack College) “The Anti-Heroine as a Haunted Palace: Elizabeth Madox Roberts’s ‘The Haunted Palace’”; **Allen Jones** (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) “‘Self-Haunted’: Post-structural Voices in ‘Death at Bearwallow’”; **Alex Shakespeare** (Boston College) “What is a Traditional Imagiste? Allen Tate, Ezra Pound, and *Under the Tree*”; **Brad McDuffie** (Indiana University-Pennsylvania) “‘Bring Me Up a Broken Moon’: Imagism in *Under the Tree*.”

*The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society at Eleanores
with our host Joan Hamilton*



News and Notes from page 4

Louisiana at Lafayette). 2010 Sparrow Memorial Awards were given to: Alicia Brienza (SUNY-New Paltz), Jessica Conti (SUNY-New Paltz), Natasha Miller (Nyack College), Michael Renganeschi (SUNY-New Paltz). Donations to sustain the Memorial Awards program may be made at any time. Contact Tina Iraca, EMRS Treasurer, at tinair@hotmail.com, or send a check made out to Tina Iraca with notation of amounts to be applied to the Sparrow Memorial Award and the Terry Ward Memorial Grant, to: Tina Iraca, 16 Montgomery Street, Tivoli, NY 12583.

Publication Notes

The American Premiere of *Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology* (Eds. H. R. Stoneback and Matthew Nickel, Des Hymnagistes Press 2010) took place during Kentucky Writers Day at Penn's Store last April 2010 with a reading by many of the *Hymnagistes* in the volume. This book had its World Premiere and formal release celebration in June 2010 at Brunnenburg Castle in Italy, former home of Ezra Pound and now the residence of his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz. Please see "Some Hymnagistes Poets" in this newsletter (pages 7-8) for a very favorable review of the anthology.

Many Roberts Society members were also published in *Knowledge Carried to the Heart: A Festschrift for H. R. Stoneback* (Ed. Matthew Nickel, Des Hymnagistes Press 2010). H. R. Stoneback published *Hemingway's Paris: Our Paris?* (New Street Communications, LLC, 2010)—see in this newsletter "Paris In Our Time" (pages 8, 12)—and a volume of his own poetry *Fitzgerald Variations* (Des Hymnagistes Press 2010). Anyone interested in ordering volumes by Des Hymnagistes Press can visit deshymnagistes.blogspot.com or email deshymnagistes@gmail.com for more information. Stoneback's *Hemingway's Paris: Our Paris?* is available on Amazon.com.

EMR and MLA

The work of Roberts scholars appeared in the MLA International Bibliography for 2008. Scholars and aficionados alike should see listings of the most recent essays from *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery*. If you have published a Roberts-related essay, please ask the MLA bibliographers to index the article so that all those interested may consult your work.

Reminder: we would also like to know about any work published by society members that should be mentioned in the Newsletter, as per standard practice of most literary societies. Please notify Matthew Nickel at mnickel@louisiana.edu.

EMR Digital Archive

Past issues of *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter* are available online at www.emrsociety.com.

Kentucky Memories

Michael Beilfuss

I first fell in love with Kentucky about fifteen years ago. I had skipped out on a spring semester of community college on Long Island for a job that I knew would last no more than three weeks, selling posters at three universities—UK, Purdue, and Notre Dame. Kentucky already held some mystical allure to me even though I had never been there. But the appeal was vague and filled with romantic notions of rural life ruled by whiskey, guns, tobacco, and Rebels. Elizabeth Madox Roberts had nothing to do with it at the time.

That first visit confirmed my love for the state, and prepared me to meet and fall in love with Miss Roberts years later. My second trip to Kentucky was for the annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference where I reveled in the deep dark valleys as roads meandered around tree-covered streams. Penn's Store and Roncevaux Farms gave me a sense of what rural Kentucky really meant. I learned how to just "set" on a porch and enjoy the spring, and I was proud to be part of a group staying in Harrodsburg to honor Roberts' memory and to help "illuminate and praise" her works.

Kentucky gave me Roberts; Roberts gave me Kentucky. When I visited the Fort in Harrodsburg I could look past the reenactments and see Berk sitting in a small cabin, telling his long story by firelight. I could see Roberts just up the road in her brick house writing the tale. I could see Ellen sitting on the side of the road waiting for the wagon to be fixed, and later making a place for herself among the men and women and chickens on the various farms, and still later growing into the land and expanding out into the community.

I recently committed to write a few entries on Roberts for an encyclopedia about literature and the environment. She will also factor into my dissertation. Though these efforts seem small, they are representative of the work we all do and must keep doing to keep Roberts alive. I also continue to teach Roberts here in Texas, and many of my students get it, sometimes in small things like the bluegrass and Kentucky knobs—far different than their own arid hills around San Antonio, the flat pine forests outside Houston, the long-gone buffalo grass plains just west of Dallas-Fort Worth. And best of all, many of my students recognize her passion, her pride in Kentucky, the dignity, the love of a specific place, a numinous place that Roberts opens to anyone willing to read, and look, and love.

Paris In Our Time *from page 8*

this form that his song attains that bright universality of timeless Truth. If we are attentive enough, we may—whether we have lived in Paris or not—as Lawrence Durrell suggests, “tune in, without reverence, idly—but with real inward attention” to find ourselves eating *cassoulet* and ordering another mug of *mutzig* at the Brasserie, or we may feel a great shadow flowing beneath us on that bridge as we look up at Notre Dame against the fading sky, or there may be a sudden wind through the Luxembourg at the café where we feed the sparrows and where all our friends and loved ones return to, where there will always be a seat reserved at the café for any late guest. Where are we, in Paris? Who is that singing, Piaf? “Non, rien de rien . . .”

Thus, here is the magic of Stoneback’s prose. In his conclusion, he examines the difficulty of writing about Paris after Hemingway: “All roads lead to Paris, but for a writer, the burden of the effort to write in Hemingway’s shadow may make it seem that all roads lead from Paris.” Naturally then Stoneback had hoped to write about another part of France that he believed Hemingway had not written about—the Camargue, but then Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden* was published, and writing about Provence was no longer viable. Stoneback’s closing comment is a poignant conclusion to this exploration of Hemingway’s ever-present shadow: “I believe that Hemingway’s extra dimension is compounded of memory, mystery, and love, consummated in the exhilaration and the annealment of the act of writing. It is precisely because Hemingway *did* achieve this dimension when he wrote of Paris—and a few other places—that it is very difficult for anyone to write about these places, and when we go to these places we will always go with Hemingway.” It may be difficult to write about Paris after Hemingway, but Stoneback’s book proves it is not impossible.

The only criticism I have for *Hemingway’s Paris: Our Paris?* is that it had to end and that we are not flying over the Atlantic toward the City of Light right now. Still, I am reminded of Hemingway’s comment in *A Moveable Feast*: “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.” But this must be appended, for if you are lucky enough to have read *Hemingway’s Paris: Our Paris?* and you are carried there, then you can always return. Stoneback’s story exists for anyone who listens attentively with reverence to the *deus loci* and for all who read aright the cartography of the palimpsest that is Paris. Stoneback’s Paris can be Our Paris *in our time* and always will be a moveable feast with Hemingway seated at the table.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

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Mission Statement

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society seeks to promote scholarship in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and to encourage the teaching of her literature. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but we are always interested in Kentucky membership and establishing a liaison with members in the Springfield area in particular. Anyone interested in membership can contact President Bill Boyle at [wboyle@olemiss.edu](mailto:w Boyle@olemiss.edu).