

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Newsletter No. 18

www.emrsociety.com

March 2017

19th Annual Roberts Conference

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will hold its XIX Annual Conference in Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill and in Springfield, Kentucky, April 21-24, 2017. We are excited to return our conference headquarters to Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill—a location quintessentially Kentuckian, an agrarian and historic venue rich with resonances of Roberts Country. Academic paper sessions will be held at Shaker Village and the Saint Catharine College Motherhouse, just outside of Springfield, Roberts' hometown.

Please direct conference inquiries (registration, lodging, special events, etc.) to the Co-Conference Directors:

H. R. Stoneback, English Dept., SUNY-New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561 and Matthew Nickel, English Dept., Misericordia University, 301 Lake Street, Dallas, PA 18612 or at:

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President's Message 2017

GORETTI VIANNEY-BENCA

In April of 2004, I embarked on a journey that changed my life. I am entirely aware of how cheesy and cliché that opening sounds. But, there is really no other way I can put into words how I feel about that first trip to my first literary conference to a state I had previously only associated with fried chicken. It has been twelve years since that first conference, and I have watched as the society has continued to grow to include students, scholars, teachers, book collectors, and other Elizabeth Madox Roberts aficionados. I have seen the society spread its wings to major conferences across the United States and throughout Europe. And I have seen the society publish books of essays, anthologies of poetry, and even a play. I am so proud and honored to be a member of such a prestigious group.

Like so many others before me, I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor H. R. Stoneback for introducing me to Roberts in his graduate American Literature class and for encouraging me to present at the Sixth Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference. I often credit Professor Stoneback and this society for helping to define my career path. My introduction to Elizabeth Madox Roberts and the EMR Society has been a seminal part of my professional growth. I am grateful for the mentorships and the friendships that have developed from this society, and I would like to take this opportunity as the Society's president

to give back to a group that has already given me so much.

As we turn the page to a new chapter of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society with a new president, we also sadly recognize that St. Catharine College closed its doors this past year. We will always fondly remember the faculty and administrators from the college who supported our annual meetings.

As time marches on, and the winds of change blow, there are some things that remain steadfast. I would be remiss if I did not thank Nell Haydon for her true friendship to the society and her role in securing a portion of the Roberts archive that was previously housed at St. Catharine College. Her warm and welcoming smile is always a highlight during our conference meeting, and the shape and direction of our conference would not be the same without her.

Before I close, I would like to take a moment to also thank my predecessor, Matthew Nickel, for his hard work and dedication. He continues to work tirelessly for the Roberts Society and for that I am, on behalf of the entire society, ever grateful.

I look forward to our next meeting in April and to serving as your president. I do not think I need a catchy slogan to mark my presidency. This society is already great. And, of course, we are all with her—EMR that is. Instead, I will close with a request that you continue on this odyssey with all of us in the society and continue to read, teach, and share the works of Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

St. Catharine College Closed

JANE KELLER

St. Catharine College in Springfield, KY—the home-base for Roberts Conferences for almost two decades—closed in June 2016. This came as a terrible shock to those of us in the Roberts Society who have for so long enjoyed our yearly visit to the lovely campus and our relationships with so many wonderful people there. There are too many to name, but I do think especially of Terry Ward, the great arranger of things until his death, and Leah Bayens, another great arranger who always found time in the midst of the busiest moments of the semester to make us feel welcome.

For some of us, of course, our second thought, after the generalized sorrow for the college and for Springfield, was the fate of the invaluable collection of Roberts papers housed in the new library. What would happen to all of that marvelous and utterly irreplaceable material? Again, there is not enough space to give an adequate description of the treasures there, but I can tell you about some of the things that gave me a particular thrill: dozens of photos of EMR and her family and friends (most undatable but thrilling nonetheless); her father's library of some two hundred books; her 1900 high school diploma (issued to Elizabeth Eleanore [*sic*] Roberts); the *only* extant "panel picture," an outtake from her first book, *In the Great Steep's Garden*, with her poem, "Columbine in the Hills," and Kenneth Hartley's photograph of same, offered for sale (75¢) in Colorado Springs, 1915; her copies, many annotated in her hand, of *Poetry* magazine; rare (very, very rare) copies of the beautiful little chapbooks her University of Chicago friends published in the 1920s, all designed by Monroe Wheeler; and dozens of letters, to and from her.

The other two major Roberts collections, at the Library of Congress and the Filson Historical Society, Louisville, are bigger in terms of linear feet, but the one that was housed at St. Catharine was every bit as valuable and in some ways more intimate. There, for example, was a high school report card from 1899. Roberts' brother and sister destroyed other report cards once in the Library of Congress on the grounds that these and dozens of other documents were "too personal." Roberts' siblings also purged and destroyed whole boxes of materials once at the Filson. (Long sad stories.) Somehow, though, this one report card survived at St. Catharine. I'm guessing that other materials were also escapees from the flames that obliterated so much else.

Most of Roberts' letters are in other collections, but those at St. Catharine were important. Some were donated by William Slavick who worked long and hard to make St.

Catharine an important center for Roberts studies. Others were donated by Chad Horn, another champion of all things relating to EMR. Becki Roberts, Roberts' great niece and active EMR Society member, had given a number of her family's possession to St. Catharine as well.

Many of us feared above all else that these materials would simply disappear, especially if they were sold at auction to all comers. Nell Hayden in Springfield, with the support of the city's mayor, Debbie Wakefield, took what can only be called heroic action to try to rescue the collection before it was put up for sale, and our society is eternally grateful for their presence, guidance, and support.

In the end though, when the materials were, after all, offered at auction in December 2016, most (letters, photos, the diploma, report card, etc.) went to the Filson Historical Society, the best possible place for them. The Filson has just opened a new building, has state-of-the-art facilities, and professional curators. We are extremely grateful to everyone there and especially to James Holmberg, Curator of Collections, who spearheaded the purchase. For EMR researchers, the Filson was already an essential resource, and it is now all the more so.

The City of Springfield also purchased some of the collection, specifically the periodicals, including Roberts' copies of *Poetry*, and these have been donated to the Filson. Again, thank you Springfield and thank you Nell!

Alas, the books and everything else went to private and anonymous bidders, and there is no way to know what might happen to them. For now, all this has indeed disappeared. But the most important parts of the collection were saved and will be cared for and available to scholars for as long as is likely to matter. The fate of the St. Catharine College campus remains undecided.

Annual EMR Graveside Reading



Elizabeth Madox Roberts Going Strong

MATTHEW NICKEL

In what seems to have become a perennial scavenger hunt every February, I have continued my quest to document for the record the fact that Elizabeth Madox Roberts is not—contrary to what many people believe—a *neglected* author. Academics are one thing and the general reader is quite another. I have used as my authority for popularity the modern-day oracle Google to identify Roberts' presence in dozens of articles, notes, asides, and mentions on the Internet. You may be familiar with some of the citations below, and I am sure you will recognize a few of the sources (*The New Yorker*, *GQ*, Barnes and Noble), but even I was surprised to discover many of them. The following is not exhaustive, by any means, but it serves as a record that Roberts, though possibly under-appreciated, is not *neglected*.

GQ magazine—that's right—Roberts gets a nod in *GQ*, April 6, 2016. In the article, "21 Books You've Never Heard Of," C. E. Morgan "suggests *The Time of Man* by Elizabeth Madox Roberts (1926): A portrait of a poor woman's life rendered in sublime prose and granted bone-deep dignity, this is a modernist masterpiece by a once internationally acclaimed writer. It should be read by everyone who loves truly great literature." Roberts is joined in the list by writers such as Jean Rhys, Denis Johnson, John Williams, and others.

In *The New Yorker*, Salvatore Scibona tells us what he is reading during the summer of 2011. He lists books by Nietzsche, George Eliot, Freud, The Bible, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man*—recommended, again, by C. E. Morgan, "the writer of the lovely novel 'All the Living'; if she says it's good, it's good."

Anne Compton, Prince Edward Island award-winning poet, cites Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man* as one of her "openings" into literature. The *New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia* tells us: "Roberts's novel showed Compton that 'literature could be made out of the ordinary things of daily life.'"

In the Scottsdale Book Club Meetup Group (Arizona), they discussed *The Time of Man* by Elizabeth Madox Roberts on March 12, 2017. I think we've missed that one, but we might consider inviting the whole Book Club to our next conference.

On the website *Fine Books & Collections*, Nate Pedersen writes "Slow Books Movement" (March 2012), an article

exploring Maura Kelly's article in the *Atlantic* and the effect of reading literature on one's overall health and life. In the article, Pedersen focuses on a poignant moment in his life: "Thanks to antiquarian booksellers you can stumble across forgotten classics awaiting re-discovery. For example, I would never have read Elizabeth Madox Roberts, one of the great Southern writers now vastly under-appreciated, if I had not bumped into *The Great Meadow* in an antiquarian bookshop in North Carolina."

On the website *Ecotone: Reimagining Place* (UNC-Wilmington), Abigail Greenbaum describes her pursuit of wild boar hunting as depicted in Southern Literature. She notes Roberts' *The Great Meadow* and "Bangum and the Boar." Her discovery of the novel led to a revelation: "the South, though people on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line love to claim otherwise, isn't one consistent place." There you go!

Roberts is mentioned in an article about E. E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room* by Linda Tate on *StoryWeb* (an affiliate of Barnes & Noble). Tate discusses her class with Professor Walter Rideout at the University of Wisconsin who assigned Hemingway's *In Our Time*, Cummings' *The Enormous Room*, and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, alongside Roberts' *The Time of Man*.

On the website *Legends and Lore*—which features a puppet store and puppets in the news—Roberts' poem "Water Noises" is published under others by Robert Frost, Lewis Carroll, Elinor Wylie, William Butler Yeats, Louis Untermeyer, and many others. If someone still needs a topic for a paper on Roberts, the puppet store should provide plenty of material (they've been making puppets for 29 years), even if most of the puppets are sold out (e.g., Sudsy Dog, Leapin' Lizzard, Bubbles Elephant, Baaabra Lamb, Rootin' Tootin' Rhino, etc. ad infinitum). Some hip pop-culture guru might get a title and paper out of the juxtaposition.

On Reddit, Roberts' name was mentioned under the conversation "What are some once-acclaimed books that are now largely forgotten." Judging from the above list, *The Time of Man* is not as forgotten as many novels written during the 1920s. Take for instance, *Doodab* (not to mention Harold Loeb's other titles like *Tumbling Mustard*, *The Professors Like Vodka*, etc.). Loeb is still discussed in literary circles, because of his fame as being written about as Robert Cohn in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, but I've never seen *Doodab* on a syllabus nor in the hands of a fellow passenger on a plane. To be accurate, there is exactly one copy for sale on Amazon (at a whopping \$400) and

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Going Strong from previous page

there are three for sale on Abebooks (\$400, \$650, \$648.92). *The Time of Man* is still in print by two publishers and is readily available.

A Spring 2013 article in *Journal of the Short Story in English* by Jolene Hubbs, “The First Fruits of Literary Rebellion: Flannery O’Connor’s ‘The Crop,’” deals with parallels between O’Connor and Roberts, particularly *The Time of Man*.

This one goes way back, but it resonates. In 1968, Thomas Lask in the *New York Times* reviewed Cormac McCarthy’s novel *Outer Dark* “as if Elizabeth Madox Roberts’s *The Time of Man*, with its earthbound folkways and inarticulate people, had been mated with one of Isak Dinesen’s gothic tales.” I always felt Roberts’ characters were far more articulate and that their speech was rendered more precisely than those of most writers—certainly better than some of McCarthy’s. Yet, the comment tells us that Roberts wasn’t neglected in the 1960s either (of course, our Honorary President has been telling us this for years now).

And I would be remiss not to mention again Earl Hamner’s blog, *You Me and the Lamp Post*. We have featured Hamner and his blog in this Newsletter before (2013 and 2014), and the Roberts Society honored Hamner with *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Award for Southern and Appalachian Writing*. Hamner, the creator of one of the most popular shows on television, *The Waltons*, wrote to Stoneback, “in very compelling terms about how *The Time of Man* is the one book that had the greatest influence on his life and work.” Hamner’s words about Roberts, *The Time of Man*, and his own process of discovery are compelling, and we are grateful for what Hamner wrote about our efforts.

My Discovery of Elizabeth Madox Roberts

WAYNE CATAN

During the International Ernest Hemingway Conference in Oak Park, IL, July 2016, one of the presenters referenced Elizabeth Madox Roberts during her presentation. I shelved her name because I had never heard of Roberts at that time. Shame on me. Then, I stumbled upon the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society webpage while I was conducting research for a paper I was writing about William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. I noticed, on the site, that there is an annual conference celebrating the works of Roberts. This is an impressive fact, because there are not a lot of authors who can draw scholars, critics, and fans annually.

Then, a few days later I came across *The Time of Man* at Changing Hands Bookstore in Tempe, Arizona. (I teach English at Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix.) Fellow Kentuckian Robert Penn Warren wrote one of the two introductions in the copy I own. Warren’s name provided automatic credibility and his testimony about the novel, that “It was received with almost universal acclaim. Edward Garnett flatly described the author as a genius” (xvii), forced me to ponder why more universities and high schools do not teach Roberts. Esteemed Bellarmine University professor Wade Hall penned the other introduction, updating Warren’s earlier version and providing crucial insight from one of Kentucky’s top scholars.

While I was reading *The Time of Man*, I learned to appreciate Roberts’ profundity of the natural world and her real-life depictions of itinerant farm workers. And, as readers of this newsletter understand, Roberts masterfully rolls these elements into the challenging coming-of-age story of Ellen Chesser. Roberts’ poetic prose (she was also a poet) helps the reader understand what it was like to live below the poverty line, performing quotidian duties: “‘The time of man,’ as a saying, fell over and over in Ellen’s mind. The strange men that lived here before our men, a strange race doing things in strange ways, and other men before them, and before again” (87).

I discovered Elizabeth Madox Roberts later in my career, but I plan on reading all of her work as soon as I can. I am not a big fan of comparing classics—I consider *The Time of Man* very much a classic—but I am comparing *The Time of Man* to *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Tobacco Road*, and Caroline Miller’s *Lamb in His Bosom*, which won the 1934 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. I asked Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Vice President, Matthew Nickel which title I should read next and he recommended *The Great Meadow*. I flew home to New York last week to see my mother, so I stopped in The Strand Bookstore and requested a copy, which I thought they would carry. Guess what? They do not carry any Elizabeth Madox Roberts. That is heresy, but it is okay because I ordered my copy online. I am grateful that I discovered Elizabeth Madox Roberts later in my career. If you are curious about my age . . . I graduated from Syracuse University in 1986.

Roberts, Elizabeth Madox. *The Time of Man*. Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 2000.

Hemingway (and Roberts?) in Paris

H. R. STONEBACK

A reminder: as most readers of this Newsletter have heard, the XVIII International Hemingway Conference—*Paris est une fete . . . Hemingway's Moveable Feast*—will be held in Paris July 22-28, 2018. This major international conference will be co-directed by Roberts Society officers H. R. Stoneback and Matthew Nickel. Our host institution will be the American University of Paris, centrally located in the heart of historic Paris, in the 7th arrondissement near the Seine and the Eiffel Tower. All the usual Hemingway topics and papers for special sessions on the Centenary of the End of World War One are invited (see complete list of suggested topics in conference announcement on the Hemingway Society website (<hemingwaysociety.org>). And since the conference co-directors are EMRS officers we particularly urge our society members to consider doing a paper dealing with Hemingway and Roberts; for example, since long ago *The Time of Man* and *The Sun Also Rises* were declared to be the two most important American novels of 1926, a comparative study of these two novels—perhaps “Sense of Place in TOM and SAR”; “Symbolic Landscape in TOM and SAR”; “Food and Drink in TOM and SAR”; or maybe you have some ideas re: “Roberts and War”; or what have you?

Information about the Hemingway Paris 2018 conference will be available at this April's EMR Conference; and you will have a chance in Kentucky to discuss your Paris paper ideas with co-directors Nickel and Stoneback. Remember: this is a major international conference and thus the abstract deadline is early—August 2017.

Enthusiasm for the Paris 2018 conference is running high, in the U. S. and abroad. With the Paris location and the many special events planned, this conference promises *l'embarras des richesses*—an abundant array of riches. And this word from an old Paris hand: don't be scared by that word “riches”—Paris is inexpensive compared with many conference venues. In sum, we hope to see many Roberts Society members at the Hemingway Paris Conference. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of Hemingway's Moveable Feast. Start your planning now, remember the August abstract deadline, watch the Hemingway Society and Roberts Society websites for updates, and remember to book Paris lodging early (this coming Fall). Also remember that the 2018 Roberts Conference will be held in the South of France immediately after the Hemingway Conference. See the following item.

Roberts in the South of France 2018

H. R. STONEBACK

When I talked with Glenway Wescott at Bill Slavick's Roberts Centenary Conference in 1981, we discussed several things: Wescott's role in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, EMR's use of folksong in her fiction, the weather in Kentucky, and how Wescott had urged her to move to the South of France for health reasons, a better climate, more sunshine. Jane Keller's forthcoming EMR biography confirms that Wescott and his companion Monroe Wheeler urged Roberts to visit the sunny South of France “where Wescott and Wheeler begged her to settle.” Alas—she never got there.

But now the EMRS will take her to the South of France in 2018. As we voted at the EMR Conference society meeting in April 2016, for the first time our annual Roberts Conference will be held outside Kentucky. Under the joint sponsorship of the EMRS, the X International Aldington Society, and the VI International Imagism Conference, our conference will be held in Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer July 30-August 1, 2018. Readers will note that these dates have been selected for the convenience of attendees at the Paris Hemingway Conference (July 22-28), allowing a day-and-a-half for participants in both conferences to get from Paris to Les Saintes (a 6-hour drive—the co-directors of both conferences will lead a highway convoy south—or a faster train or plane ride).

Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer is an ancient beachfront pilgrimage village, on the Mediterranean seashore, in the heart of the numinous Camargue. The perfect place for rejuvenation after a week in the big city. The conference co-directors, Nickel and Stoneback, invite papers on *all Roberts topics* as well as a wide range of other possible papers dealing with Imagism, Aldington, Pound, H.D., Hemingway et al. Please see both the conference flyer and the CFP, both of which should be posted on our Society website when this Newsletter reaches you (<emrsociety.com>). You will have the opportunity to discuss possible papers with the conference co-directors in Kentucky this April. The abstract deadline will be earlier than usual—September 2017. And, again, since this is not Kentucky but France, the magical destination of world tourism, lodging should be booked by this Fall. (A lodging briefing should be posted, at the latest, by this coming summer.) Plan now to attend both conferences, to make your late July-early August of 2018 a truly moveable feast, combining Paris with a pilgrimage to the Mediterranean. (And do not be alarmed—we will return to Kentucky in April 2019.)

The Earth Abides for Ellen and Jake

JOHN MOOERS

When Ernest Hemingway struggled for a title for his 1926 novel, he took a reference from Ecclesiastes: *The Sun Also Rises*. But he could just as easily have taken a different reference from the same book: The Earth Abideth Forever. Hemingway wrote to his editor Maxwell Perkins that “the point of the book to me was that the earth abideth forever—having a great deal of fondness and admiration for the earth . . . I didn’t mean the book to be a hollow or bitter satire but a damn tragedy with the earth abiding for ever as the hero” (*Selected Letters* 229).

Little did he know that another 1926 novel written by Elizabeth Madox Roberts, called *The Time of Man*, could also have been given the same title. For at their deep core both novels say the same thing: whether they be Kentucky farmers living through the time of man or a lost generation wandering about Paris, lives can be tragedies unless they connect to the earth and spiritualize with its creative, transcendent, healing, and heroic power.

The Sun Rises

There are moments, in the time of man, when the sun with its warmth and joy and life giving powers ascends. Because of Hemingway’s writing style, it is more difficult to sense the inner thoughts of Jake Barnes than it is Ellen Chesser. But Jake enjoys the many small things in life as does Ellen. Jake loves living in Paris, he enjoys his job as a reporter, the company of Robert Cohn, tennis, and he loves Brett. He enjoys the joking banter with Bill Gorton, fishing in secluded unspoiled streams, the beauty of the landscape, the festival of San Fermín, *torero*, Pamplona, and his fellow aficionado Montoya. All of these details provide him with the joy of life.

Ellen Chesser also finds joy in life. From the very first scene she merges herself with the life around her by writing her name in the air itself. She feels excitement in seeing others on the turnpike, feels happiness in the presence of Joe Trent or Jonas Prather, finds beauty in stolen moments from her hard-working day surrounded by gentle “folds of being” where “if words could have become grass in Ellen’s hand: ‘It’s pretty stuff, clover a-growen. And in myself I know I’m lovely. It’s unknown how beautiful I am. I’m Ellen Chesser and I’m lovely’” (73). She enjoys the fact that a “warmth of being beat in her blood” (80) from the sun in their wagon trip to the Wakefield farm. And there, whether it is walking down the stairs in different ways, or

merging with her friends under a star lit walk, or a quick kiss from Jonas, or simply that “Sunday were fragrant days, filled from morning until sundown with the bright dress and the flowered hat” (137), she manages to enjoy these small golden moments for “all her enduring life” (72). The ultimate realization is when she visits the grave of Judge Gowen and her insight of the moment is clear and true: “I’m better’n you. I’m a-liven and you ain’t!” (103).

The Sun Sets

But there are times, in the time of man, when the sun sets and leaves pain and suffering and anguish. Jake suffers the consequences of his war wound, jealousy mars his relationship with Cohn, his addiction to Brett damages his relationship with Montoya, and when as Jake says, “Everyone behaves badly” (181), it sours the entire San Fermín festival.

Ellen must settle on a farm of hard work and she is unable to travel the roads with Tessie. Her budding romances with Joe Trent and Jonas Prather both end; her friend, Cassie MacMurtrie, hangs herself; her future husband, Jasper, is accused of a barn burning; she endures Jasper accusing her of infidelity while he is guilty of the same; she gives birth alone; she watches her baby die; she and Jasper are beaten when a second barn burns. Ellen has moments of deep despair for life itself: “On and on, without end, she felt herself and all other things going And what was it for anyway?” (97). It all just ends in death, not a-liven: “You breathe and breathe, on and on, and then you do not breathe any more. For you forever. Forever. It goes out, everything goes, and you are nothing” (35).

The Earth Abides

But Jake survives and renews by his linkage with the earth. The hiking and fishing in the deep forest, “God’s first temples” (*The Sun Also Rises* 122), help restore balance. Jake restores in himself the “values” that the Count (who received several “arrow wounds”) represents by visiting San Sebastián (Saint Sebastian received several “arrow wounds” as well). By his deep baptismal swim in the waters at San Sebastián Jake gains control in his life. Finally, it is through *torero* and the mastery, grace and dignity of Pedro Romero that Jake gains his greatest understanding:

The fight with Cohn had not touched his spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt. He was wiping all that out now. Each thing that he did with this

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bull wiped that out a little cleaner. . . . All the passes he linked up, all completed, all slow, templed and smooth. There were no tricks and no mystifications. There was no brusqueness. And each pass as it reached the summit gave you a sudden ache inside. (219-220)

Romero and the raw driving symbol of the power of the earth, of life, danced around each other, and Romero and the bull became one. Understanding this gives Jake the ability to overcome the setting sun and revive in himself the rising sun of life. He can now help Brett in Madrid, not by his addiction to her, but through helping a fellow traveler struggling through the time of man.

Ellen makes life a joy because she has merged with the creative power of the earth: “Up in the narrow ravine she sat with her feet in the water, as still as stone, waiting for the life which her coming had disturbed to return” (*The Time of Man* 21). Here’s another example: “She liked to sit in the corn after it grew waist-high or more. In the soft clods of the bright days or in the soft loam of the days after showers she would sit, looking about, feeling herself moving with the corn” (31-32). But it is her affinity with stones that connects her life with the earth. At the Wakefield farm her father plows as she clears the stones. Henry tells her “not in the whole time of man” (87) was the hill ever plowed. The ebb and flow of the time of man had not touched this earth. In discussing where stones come from Henry tells her that they grow. Amazed, she says that “maybe they’ve got another kind of way to be alive” (87). Then, “wondering and wondering she laid stones on her altar” (87).

So, the earth breeds life in many different forms. And on this sacred untouched spot she builds her altar to that life. It is here that she shouts, “I’m Ellen Chesser! I’m here!” For a moment she searched the air with her senses and then she turned back to the stones again. ‘You didn’t hear e’er a thing,’ she said under her breath. ‘Did you think you heard something a-callen?’” (89). This is also where she flees for safety after Cassie kills herself to “where the stone piles stood in the brambles” (230), a return in the face of death to the living creative earth. But it is in her night-walk with her cow that she achieves her greatest vision. Coming atop the hill she “lifted her eyes” and saw with clarity the hills and pastures and mountains rolling on and on. The mountains she sees are “shapes dimly remembered and recognized, . . . carved forever into memory, into all memory” (237). With that came her unifying recognition of those structures within herself “gathered into one final inner motion which might have been called spirit” (237). It is standing near the tower of St. Lucy, a tower made of stone like the stone of the hills for the patron saint of eyes and sight and vision, that Ellen has her all-encompassing vision of herself and her cow as part of the all abiding earth.

It is through the bovine spirit that both Jake and Ellen achieve transcendent understanding: Jake watching Romero with the bulls in Pamplona and Ellen quietly walking with her cow on the hills of St. Lucy.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts states it best in a manuscript fragment: “We are creatures of the earth and the ground, and we like to smell the earth and the soil—and call it a benediction” (qtd. in *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment & Reclamation* 334). Yes, indeed, a benediction. A benediction for both Jake and Ellen to the healing, creative, forever abiding earth for all their enduring lives.

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Kentucky Writers Day 2016
Penn’s Store
Gravel Switch, KY



Conference Report 2016

JESSICA M. NICKEL, DANIEL J. PIZAPPI,
GREGORY BRUNO

The XVIII Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference took place April 22-25, 2016. Our conference began with a gracious reception at Shaker Village, after which many Roberts Society members participated in a poetry reading featuring *Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and the Lyrical Landscape*. Our first day of academic papers was held at the beautiful Shaker Village. In the evening, Matthew Nickel, President of the Society, welcomed us to our conference banquet at Shaker Village, followed by H. R. Stoneback's keynote, "C. E. Morgan's *The Sport of Kings: A Preliminary Report with Notes on Some Personal Connections and Further Reflections on Roberts and Morgan*." We enjoyed a great meal topped off with the presentations of the Sparrow Memorial Award and a book display of first editions courtesy of Don Scriven.

On Sunday, after a wonderful reception at Roncevaux Farms, conferees enjoyed readings and performances at Penn's store for Kentucky Writers Day. In the afternoon, the Society was honored at Mordecai's Restaurant by Mayor Debbie Wakefield, The Springfield City Council, Nell Haydon and Main Street Renaissance, and the Ladies of Springfield. Conference participants were then given a tour of Elenores, Roberts' house, hosted by Joan Hamilton.

Monday morning the Society was greeted by President Cindy Gnadinger and Leah Bayens at Saint Catharine College. Academic papers were presented throughout the day by many new and veteran Roberts scholars and we closed with our annual traditional graveside reading.

April 23 Sessions:

Session 1: Jane Keller (University of Baltimore): "Something of Myself": Readings from the (nearly completed!) draft of the biography of Elizabeth Madox Roberts; **Bill Slavick** (U. of Southern Maine): Harriette Arnow: "Probably Wrong on All Counts"; **Gregory Bruno** (SUNY-New Paltz): Reconciling Romantic Sentiments in *Song in the Meadow*.

Session 2: Matthew Nickel (Misericordia University): "The earth abideth forever": Ecclesiastes, Values, and Modernism; **Eleanor Hough** (SUNY-New Paltz): The Heart of her Hurt and the Heart of her Hate: Representations of Love and Abuse in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *Black is My Truelove's Hair*; **Daniel J. Pizappi** (U. of Tennessee): "You won't get shed": Kentucky Homecomings in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Haunted Mirror* and Chris Offutt's *Out of the Woods*; **Jaelyn Houlahan** (SUNY-New Paltz): Diony's Journey: Exploring the Forces that Realize the Self.

Session 3: Jessica M. Nickel (Misericordia University):

"Distance would still remain": Yearning for Communion in the Works of C. E. Morgan and E. M. Roberts; **Mickey D'Addario** (SUNY-New Paltz): "Mind, Soul, Spirit, Myself": Ellen, Diony, and Identity; **Amanda Capelli** (UL-Lafayette): Shadows of the Southern Renaissance: The "politics of location" in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *My Heart and My Flesh* and Natasha Trethewey's *Native Guard*; **Donald C. Scriven** (Scott Scriven & Wahoff LLP, Columbus, Ohio): More Thoughts—and a Few Tribulations—on Collecting Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

April 24 Sessions:

Session 1: Gregg Neikirk (Westfield State U.): Play-ing in *The Great Meadow*: The Dramatic Acts of Settling Kentucky; **Jared Young** (Oklahoma State U.): EMR, the Naturalist: *The Time of Man* and its Transcendental Narrative; **Adam Neikirk** (Westfield State U.): The Idea of the Holy and 'Holy Children' in Roberts and Wordsworth; **Gisèle Sigal** (Université de Pau, France): Historicity in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' Short Stories: Insights into the Social Terrain and the Sense of Place.

Session 2: Terry Ward Memorial Essay Prize winner Alexander Knowles (St. Catharine College): Proletariat Struggle in *Song in the Meadow*; **Marc Cioffi** (Pacific College of Oriental Medicine): The Legacy of the Pioneers: How Artists Saved the Frontier from Certain Chaos; **Peter Camilleri** (SUNY-New Paltz): Philosophy and Feeling and Roberts; **Jane Dionne** (Independent Scholar): *Not By Strange Gods*—a Book of Short Stories by Elizabeth Madox Roberts: A Teaching Guide for Understanding and Enjoyment

Session 3: Terry Ward Memorial Essay Prize runner-up Sara Herbert (St. Catharine College): Class Struggle in "Children of the Earth"; **Nathan Lee** (SUNY-New Paltz): Peasant Dreams: Storytelling Tradition at Play in *Jingling in the Wind*; **James Stamant** (Agnes Scott College): Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves: Liminality in *A Buried Treasure*; **Zach Stewart** (SUNY-New Paltz): Voices Crying in the Wilderness: Speech and Storytelling in *The Great Meadow*

Session 4: Jessica Jones (SUNY-New Paltz): Relationships and Sense of Place in *The Time of Man*; **Elizabeth F. Oxler** (UL-Lafayette): The Open Boundary: Place and Space in the Fiction of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Eudora Welty; **Matt Wessels** (SUNY-New Paltz): To Till the Ground from which she was Taken: Felix Culpa in *The Time of Man*; **Autumn Holladay** (SUNY-New Paltz): Folk and Selfhood in *The Time of Man*

Session 5: Colleen Stewart (SUNY-New Paltz): Weaving Women into the Domestic Sphere; **Damian A. Carpenter** (East Tennessee State U.): Toward Communitas and Individuality: Elizabeth Madox Roberts' Folk Heroines and the Emerging Performance of Self; **Joseph Curra** (SUNY-New Paltz): *The Great Meadow*: Lyricism within Mirror Imagery; **Mike Marks** (SUNY-New Paltz): No Machine—Just Ellen—in the Garden

An Ode or an ‘Oh!’ To Miss Elizabeth Madox Roberts

EDWARD BUTLER

Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.
We’s a seeing a gal on that dusty road, a coming round that bend.
We’s a seeing that gal with that crooked smile lit-up on your face.
We’s a seeing that gal, we’s a seeing that gal all the same.
And ain’t that a glint we’s seeing in her eyes?
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.

We knows she has been to town today and the whole day, too.
We knows, we knows she been to town today.
We Knows, we knows.
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.

We’s a seeing her kickin-up her heels and making all that dust.
We knows she been to town today, we knows, we knows.
And did she see a fellow there, while she wus in that town?
Oh tell us, please tell us, fur we’s a wanting to hear,
If she is in to courting now.
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.

We knows she’s of that age when “sparking” takes a hold.
We knows whut that ol’ full moon in June
does to a young gal’s head.
We knows when “sparking” takes a hold.
We knows, we knows, we knows.
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.

Oh tell us Miss Roberts, tell us, we’s a wanting to hear.
Did she fall in love today fur ever and ever?
Tell us Miss Roberts, oh tell us cause we’s got to know.
Did she fall in love today?
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts, and oh and oh agin.

And wus it with that bare foot fellow
We saw the other day.
Oh tell us, do tell us, is he an itinerant, too.
Or did she step up a bit this June.
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts and oh and oh agin.

We knows she’s a living fur you done told us so.
And now she’s jist a smiling so.
We got to know, we got to know.
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts and oh and oh agin.
Oh tell us Miss Roberts, tell us, we’s awanting to know
How, oh how does this story go on?
Is she going to marry and start her family.
Or is she jist going to stay single and stay in love?
Oh, do tell us, tell us in this “Time of Man.”
Oh Miss Roberts, oh Miss Roberts and oh and oh agin.

“Unknowen How Lovely” It Is— The Latest News

H. R. STONEBACK

It is with great joy and delight that we announce this news: **Tina Iraca**, the longest-serving elected officer (as Treasurer) of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, will be returning to Kentucky for the first time in over a decade for the April 2017 conference. Thus an entire generation of Robertsonians who know Tina’s name only as the person to whom they mail their conference registration checks will have the pleasure of her company this year in Kentucky. Since Tina’s first EMR Conference was in 2000, she was not there in Kentucky in 1999 when six State University of New York faculty and graduate students founded the EMR Society. But we have long thought of her as an *almost co-founder*. On April 22, 2017, at the Saturday evening Conference Banquet at Shaker Village, she will be the Co-Keynote Speaker with H. R. Stoneback. And here is some more exciting news:

Tina (MA SUNY-New Paltz 2001) received her PhD from the University of Connecticut this year. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Epistemology, Education, and the Individual: Lockean Philosophy in Sarah Fielding’s Fiction*, examines Fielding’s novels in the context of Locke’s destabilizing designs of personal identity, liberty, power, and education that dismantle the intellectual and social fences surrounding women in eighteenth century England. Her MA thesis at SUNY-New Paltz, “On Samuel Richardson: There’s No Place Like Home for a Brothel and No Place in the World for Clarissa Harlowe,” was completed under the direction of Dr. Nancy Johnson. In 2004, Dr. Iraca was a keynote speaker at the SUNY-New Paltz Research Foundation Symposium where she presented a talk titled, “‘On This Side My Hand and On That Side Thine’: Bullingbrook and King Richard as Analogous Adversaries in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*.” In 2003, she received the Aetna Creative Nonfiction Prize at the University of Connecticut for her work, “The Other Child.” Tina has served as Treasurer of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society since 2002, and has presented papers at EMRS Conferences on *The Time of Man*, *My Heart and My Flesh*, *The Great Meadow*, and *Black is My Truelove’s Hair*. After teaching for ten years in the SUNY-New Paltz English Department, in 2011 she joined the English and Humanities Department at Dutchess County Community College where she is an Assistant Professor. **Congratulations Dr. Tina Iraca!**

News & Notes

Help Spread the Word on Roberts

Please request that your local libraries order copies of *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Prospect & Retrospect* (Eds. Stoneback, Boyle, and Nickel, 2012); *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment and 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).

EMR and RPW

Roberts Society Vice President, **James Stamant** (Agnes Scott College), is currently serving as President of the Robert Penn Warren Circle. His term will continue through the April 2018 meeting in Bowling Green and Guthrie, Kentucky.

Gale Series Children's Literature Review

Gale's Literature Criticism Online database, to which most North American university libraries subscribe, has added the works of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. A recent entry focuses on her works for children, and they previously included her other works in the Twentieth Century Literary Criticism series.

EMR Panels at the November 2016 SAML A Convention in Jacksonville, FL

Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Utopian, Dystopian, Kentuckian, chaired by **Daniel J. Pizappi** (University of Tennessee): **Gregory Bruno** (SUNY-New Paltz) "*The Great Meadow: Utopian Visions and Realities of Kentucky Settlement*"; **Christopher Paolini** (SUNY-New Paltz) "*Jingling in the Wind: Topos and Utopia*"; **Mickey D'Addario** (SUNY-New Paltz) "*Even the Crops Want to Hurt You: Transcending the Perils of the Tenant Farmer Lifestyle in *The Time of Man**."

CFP: SAML A 2017 (Atlanta, GA; Nov 3-5, 2017)

Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts society invites abstracts

for our affiliate panel at the 89th annual conference of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. Abstracts highlighting the theme of this year's conference—High Art/Low Art: Borders and Boundaries in Popular Culture—in conjunction with Roberts' life and works are of particular interest. By June 1, please send a 250-word abstract to **Nicole Stamant** (Agnes Scott College), at nstamant@agnesscott.edu.

2016 Roberts Society Award Winners:

The 2016 **Sparrow Memorial Awards** were given to: **Colleen Stewart** (SUNY-New Paltz), **Mickey D'Addario** (SUNY-New Paltz), and **Eleanor Hough** (SUNY-New Paltz).

The **Terry Ward Memorial Essay Prize** went to Saint Catharine College student Alexander Knowles and the Runner-Up award went to Sara Herbert.

The **2016 Honorary Lifetime Membership Award** went to **William Slavick**.

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.

Reading Roberts

In 2016, The Reading Roberts Series published *Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and the Lyrical Landscape*, an anthology of poems written by many Roberts Society members. For more information regarding ordering, please visit www.emrsociety.com.

EMR Digital Archive

Past issues of *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter* are now available online. Please go to www.emrsociety.com to browse the archives.

"The Sweet Enclosure of the Song": A Review

AMANDA M. CAPELLI

Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and the Lyrical Landscape. Eds. Matthew Nickel and Daniel J. Pizappi. Reading Roberts Series: The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, 2016.

Time works differently in poetry. It stretches to include wide swaths of history and contracts in an instant, collapsing the distinction between the past, present, and future. For Pound, a poem's true worth was measured by its ability to compress time, to make the emotional breadth of an entire lifetime palpable instantaneously through the use of a single image. The poems collected in *Kentucky Writers: The Deus Loci and The Lyrical Landscape*, the second collection of poetry published by the Reading Roberts Book Series,

continued on next page

though each very different in technique and tone, wrestle with this balance. The volume includes both re-prints and original poems; however, all of the work collected herein presents images that respond to, in one way or another, the ephemeral nature of memory, the temporality of place, and the contradictions of human existence.

Kentucky Writers is, in many ways, Matthew Nickel's and Daniel J. Pizappi's love song to the land, to Elizabeth Madox Roberts, to Kentucky itself. These poems all breathe the same air; they smell like bluegrass and warm soil. As Nickel writes in the preface, the poems invite readers to "listen to the spirits indwelling in our landscapes" and to "honor those places and the people that live there." From the beginning of *Kentucky Writers*, such motivation is clear.

The opening poem, Wendell Berry's "The Wheel," blurs the distinction between past and present. The fiddle's song signals the beginning of an ancient ritual where the living and the dead exist, for a moment, on the same plane, "the dance and the song / call each other into being." The language and the imagery highlight, with a stark beauty, those fleeting moments of unity, through "the sweet enclosure / of the song," when life makes sense and the dancing is easy, and the poem ends with the reminder that "timeless / is the wheel that brings it round."

Such layering of past and present is also evident in Dave Smith's "Muskrat." Both "The Wheel" and "Muskrat" present time, death, and reality as permeable conceptions based on a single moment's awareness; however, in "Muskrat" the visceral realities of death are made tangible. It is a stream of consciousness poem. The memory of the dead muskrat, killed in the speaker's youth, is a touchstone memory that catapults the speaker to his mother's death: "the world whirled / on, years walked, she died, who lay / rotting in bed where I was born." The image of the muskrat and the mother merge: "Bead-eyes like buttons on his black / sweater same as my mother's / hung in the kitchen." In the end, the mother's death is the same as the muskrat's. Like the bullet sound of the gun, the physical "touch of that one finger on my arm" is gone, yet the memory remains and is, here, immortalized in verse.

Despite its obvious merits, the anthology can, on the surface, feel disjointed. Authors are listed alphabetically, an ordering mechanism that seems to interrupt conversations between poems or poets rather than encourage them. However, the editors' choice to organize poems in this way resists a reading that would emphasize a single meaning or theme. The poems speak through one another in unexpected ways, allowing meaning to show itself, to build slowly over the course of the entire anthology. For instance, Damien Carpenter's "Little Billie Goes West," Marc

Cioffi's "Westward, Through Kentucky: Another Boone Enumeration," and H. R. Stoneback's "Blackberries at the Edge of the Abyss" celebrate folksong, shaping an oral tradition into written word. These poems develop place as character. In Stoneback's "Blackberries," the development of those old hills that "need eons to fold their fables above green valleys" and the quarry with its "dark earth-falling stream," is just as important as the burgeoning love between the blackberry picker and his "new lady friend."

Many of the poems respond to a feeling of placelessness, of searching for—and in some cases finding—home. In "The Temporary Crossroads of Salvation," Nickel captures the feeling of knowing place, of attempting to take it with you when you leave, as well as the realization that it can only be held loosely, if at all. Though the speaker pines for it, the *deus loci* is inscrutable, both within and somehow beyond the "lyrical landscapes" that flash by in the stanzas: the Atchafalaya Basin, the Kentucky hills, the Hudson river. In "Post," Pizappi speaks to a similar conflict. Here, the poem speaks to the poet's desire to transcribe the spirit, to capture the motion of time, that which is "amber-sealed, living. Past, not yet passed" in a frozen moment of prose. Penn's Store, the birds, the "Cola caps crushed into the drive," are all tangible, but the history embedded into the land is not. Home is a feeling. History, a memory. Both can only be known in time, and even then, the knowing is not guaranteed.

Many of the poems—including Bryan Gienza's "Annual Report," Emily Halbing's "Late April," and James Staman's "Food-Fueled Movements"—contain morsels for Roberts Society insiders to chew on as they work their way through the collection. In "Late April," Halbing recounts her first Roberts conference, blending anecdotal memories—"we drink beer / disguised in coffee cups"—and meditative reflections—"The air smells like / purity and feels like silence, the kind that makes you / think about everything in your life you've ever loved." It is a juxtaposition of feelings many conference attendees know well.

The poems in this anthology are a chorus, an homage to the lasting marks of place newly branded or long scarred over. Each work in *Kentucky Writers* contributes to a total vision of place, one which is rooted, as Vivian Shipley writes in "Digging Up Peonies," in Kentucky, "to bones of all / those who are in my bones," in *our* bones. In their attempt to reconcile "the wearying infinitives of the wilderness" with the limitations of the human mind, a portion of Roberts' quote in the anthology's epigraph, the editors have provided a collection of poems that will continue to reveal themselves with each consecutive reading.

Finding Roberts in *My Christmas Treasury*

JAMES STAMANT

One of the joys I've experienced, since having children, is watching and encouraging their love of books and words. After my son was born three years ago, I joked about his eventual first presentation at our annual conference in Kentucky—on a panel with other Roberts scholars' children. Though he is not quite there, is not yet ready to read *The Time of Man* in its entirety, there are works in Roberts that are accessible to children, even as they may hold some different meaning and value for children than they do for adults (and scholars). Until this past Christmas I did not realize that I had already passed on a book that contained one of these works, a slim book from my own library that had been given to me when I was younger than my son is now. *My Christmas Treasury* is part of the "Little Golden Book" series, and this particular book was in its third printing in 1979 when someone purchased it for me. My parents may be responsible, but my Godmother and Aunt, Sr. Mary Gallagher, is also a likely candidate. She worked as the librarian for the College of the Elms in Massachusetts and often gave me books as presents at my birthday and at Christmas. The slender volume is

a collection of poems and stories about Christmas, and Roberts' "Christmas Morning" resides in the middle of the book.

"Christmas Morning" is well-known to Roberts scholars as one of the poems in Roberts' *Under the Tree* (1922), but I am now trying to remember if it was well-known to me when I was a small child. Is it possible that I had come into contact with Roberts much earlier than I thought—years before I enrolled in Stoney's class at SUNY-New Paltz? If this book was read to me as a young child, I cannot remember it. Aside from my personal interest in the book, its reemergence into my life has also caused me to wonder about Roberts' presence in other books like this. The "Little Golden Book" series has had a connection to popular culture for decades and had sold over a billion and a half copies by 1992, the fiftieth anniversary of the series (looking at Amazon, there are still copies of *My Christmas Treasury* available for purchase). How many other children were introduced to Roberts through this series in the 1970s and 1980s? I do not have the answer to those questions; I can't even remember being introduced to her in this way myself. I can say, however, that one more child has been introduced to Roberts' writing in the 2010s. I will have to wait to see if he wants to report on the poem at a future conference in Kentucky.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

Honorary President: H. R. Stoneback, SUNY-New Paltz

President: Goretti Vianney-Benca, SUNY-Ulster

Vice President: James Stament, Agnes Scott College

Vice President: Matthew Nickel, Misericordia University

Secretary/Treasurer: Tina Iraca, Dutchess Community College

EMRS Newsletter Editors: Matthew Nickel / James Stament

Visit us on the web: <www.emrsociety.com>

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 Goretti Vianney-Benca at <gorettibenca@gmail.com>.