

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter

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

President: John Langan, CUNY Graduate Center

Advisory Council: Mark Bellomo, Lynne Crockett, Sheila Donnelly, Steven Florczyk, Breida Gallagher, Sharon Peelor, Susan Piperato, Terry Ward.

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First Annual Meeting

Most of us had never been to Kentucky before. As we drove, beginning to weary of the road, we began to see the redbuds blooming and the somehow inordinately green grass of that state. We entered the landscape as it entered us and an even deeper understanding of the writing of Elizabeth Madox Roberts was ours.

The first formal meeting of the Advisory Council of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society was held April 22, 1999 at the historic Beaumont Inn--one of the legendary inns of the South--in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Honorary President of the Society, H. R. Stoneback, called the meeting to order and the Advisory Council elected John Langan President. During the lunch featuring the famous Beaumont Inn House Specialties of Kentucky Cured Country Ham, Old Fashion Yellow-Legged Fried Chicken, Burgoo & Corn Pudding--true Robertsonian Place-food--members and officers articulated the Society's mission and planned future events.

The conference itself was held on the picturesque campus at Saint Catherine's College at Springfield, Kentucky. Breida Gallagher began the session by giving an overview of the extraordinary life of the author as well as discussing Roberts' view of the all important search for personal identity and the awareness of being with her paper, "Things to Put In Drawers and Drawers to Put Things In." John Langan performed a structural analysis of Roberts' third novel with his paper, "The Two Houses of The Great Meadow." Steven Florczyk's paper, "Sense of Past, Ritual, and Place in The Time of Man," explored the heroine's union with the land and the necessity of that union to the triumph of the human spirit. Mark Bellomo read his paper, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts, The Time of Man: Images of Home and the Road" and discussed the singular ability of the heroine to create and provide "home" for her family in the midst of their transient lifestyle. Susan Piperato presented a close reading of one of Roberts' lesser known novels in her paper "A Fresh Look at Looking in My Heart and My Flesh." The keynote address "Keenly Aware of the Ceremony": Elizabeth Madox Roberts and the Deus Loci" was given by H.R. Stoneback. This address, concerning the rituals and ceremonies of Place in the context of Southern Literature, also spoke to some of the reasons for the neglect of Roberts' work and called for its rediscovery.

In addition to the conference papers, the Roberts Memorial Poetry Reading was held at her gravesite in Springfield. Advisory Council members and officers read original poetry and passages from the author's work to close out the event.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Upcoming Events

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will be holding its second annual conference on April 16-17, 2000 in Kentucky. On Sunday, April 16, the conference will begin at 1pm with the Kentucky Writers Day program at Penn's Store (co-sponsored by the society) with discussion of and readings from Kentucky writers, singing of Kentucky folksongs, and poetry readings. On Monday, April 17, the conference will continue at Saint Catharine College in Springfield at which papers on Roberts' life and work will be presented. We anticipate a morning and an afternoon session of papers. Our keynote address, "Folksong and Folkplace in the Works of Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Or, Numinous Country and Country (Numinous) Music," will be delivered by the Society's Honorary President, Dr. H.R. Stoneback, Director of Graduate Studies at SUNY New Paltz. If you are interested in participating, please contact John Langan at langanj@matrix.newpaltz.edu or 583 Springtown Rd., New Paltz, NY 12561. ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Mission Statement

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society seeks to promote scholarship in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, to encourage its teaching, and to pursue the goal of returning such classic novels as The Time of Man and The Great Meadow to print and keeping them there. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but are particularly interested in encouraging Kentucky membership and establishing a liaison with members in the Springfield area. Anyone interested in membership, serving on the Advisory Council, or acting as a Kentucky/Springfield liaison, please contact John Langan at langanj@matrix.newpaltz.edu or 583 Springtown Rd., New Paltz, NY 12561.

Publication News

We are excited to announce that the University of Kentucky Press will be reprinting The Time of Man scheduled for release in March, 2000, thanks to the efforts of Professor Wade Hall of Bellarmine College in Louisville, KY. The reprint will include a forward by Professor Hall in addition to the Robert Penn Warren introduction included in previous editions. Order forms will be available at the upcoming conference in April.

We have also received word from Penguin Books regarding the possibility of including The Time of Man in the Twentieth Century Classics series. These efforts will allow teachers, scholars, and readers to gain access to Roberts' enduring literature so that we can continue to study and appreciate her work.