

Newsletter No. 4

February 2003

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Fifth Annual National Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference April 27-28, 2003

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 Great Meadow* and *The Time of Man* to print and keeping them there. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but we 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 Steve Florczyk at sflorczyk@msn.com or 123 Bath Street, A4, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society (EMRS) will hold its fifth annual conference on April 26-28, 2003, in Harrodsburg and Springfield, Kentucky. The conference will open on Sunday, April 27 at 6 p.m. with the annual conference banquet at the historic Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg. The evening will feature a keynote address by the Society's Honorary President, Dr. H.R. Stoneback, Director of Graduate Studies in English at the State University of New York at New Paltz. The conference will continue

Monday, April 28 at Saint Catharine College in Springfield with paper presentations on Roberts' life and work.

This year's conference director is Gregg Neikirk, Chairman of the English Department at Westfield State College in Westfield, MA. Dennis C. Winter, adjunct instructor at the State University of New York at New Paltz, is program chairman. Terry Ward, Chairman of Humanities at Saint Catharine College, is site coordinator for the conference.

Roberts Scholars Receive *Appalachian Heritage* Awards

EMR Society scholars Jane Keller and Gregg Neikirk received first and second place, respectively, in the annual *Appalachian Heritage*-Denny C. Plattner Awards for excellence in writing. The awards, made possible by Kenneth and Elissa Plattner, salute the finest contributors to *Appalachian Heritage*, according to the journal.

Keller was honored for her essay, "A Level Place in Up-Hill Times: The Medieval and the Appa-

lachian Woman," and Neikirk was honored for his essay, "The Great Miltonic Meadow: Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Paradise Lost." Both essays appeared in *Appalachian Heritage*, Summer 2001.

Keller is Professional Writer in Residence at the School of Communication Design, Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts, University of Delaware. Neikirk is Chairman of the English Department at Westfield State College, Westfield, MA.

2002 Conference Report

The Fourth Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference took place April 21-22, 2002. On Sunday, April 21, members of the Roberts Society took part in Kentucky Writers Day at Penn's Store in Gravel Switch, reading from the poetry and prose of Roberts and other Kentucky writers. An estimated crowd of one hundred people filled the lawn in front of Penn's Store to listen first to the readings, and then to the music of H.R. and Sparrow Stoneback, their son Gregg Neikirk, and their grandsons Brett and Bart Neikirk; as well as that of Dennis Winter. That night, the Society held its annual dinner at the Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg, enjoying the Inn's famous Sunday night buffet. After dinner, Gregg Neikirk gave a heartfelt and moving introduc-

tion to the keynote address by Honorary President H.R. Stoneback. Stoneback's provocative address, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts—Agrarian Visions and Revisions: In the Lowlands and 'On the Mountainside,'" began the Conference's scholarly activities in fine form.

On Monday, April 22, the conference proper was held at Saint Catherine College in Saint Catherine. John Langan gave the formal opening to the conference. The first session, chaired by Fiona Paton, featured four papers. John Langan's "Oh Where Are We Going On This River of Earth: Elizabeth Madox Roberts and James Still" considered the influence of *The Time of Man* on Still's masterpiece, *River of*

Kitchen: Symbols of Tolerance in Elizabeth Madox Roberts's *The Great Meadow*" persuasively suggested ways in which *The Great Meadow* engages issues of respect for the other. Finally, Jane Dionne's "Elizabeth Madox Roberts's Influence on Young Students: Instilling Sense of Place Through Poetry and Prose" explored the response of primary school students to selected poems and stories by Roberts.

The first session was followed by a featured paper delivered by noted Roberts scholar and authority William Slavick. Slavick's paper, "Synge in Roberts's Kentucky," brilliantly discussed the influence of John Millington Synge on Roberts's work, including a masterful discussion of Synge's stylistic effect on Roberts. Slavick's paper immediately established itself as the touchstone for any future discussions of the relation between Roberts and Synge.

After lunch at Saint Catharine's dining hall, the second session, chaired by Tina Green, featured four more papers. Jane Keller's "The Power of Cloth: Fabric



Musician and teacher Dennis C. Winter addressed the role of folk music in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' work at the 2002 EMR conference.

Earth. Michelle Gorey's "Ellen and the Soil: A Landscape of Development" examined Roberts's use of agricultural and vegetative images to trope Ellen Chesser's development in *The Time of Man*. Gregg Neikirk's "Hornets in the

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President's Message

2002 was another productive year for the society. As usual, the annual conference events in Kentucky continue to provide Roberts scholars with a forum for discussion and meeting place for those of us with the common goal of promoting her work. Besides our annual meeting, the society adopted our formal by-laws, laying the groundwork for the governance of our group for years to come. Our elections for officers have yielded the following results: H.R. Stoneback will continue to serve as Honorary President, Jane Keller and Gregg Neikirk will serve as Vice-Presidents, Tina Green will serve as Secretary/Treasurer, and I will serve as President. As one of the new officers looking toward the future of the

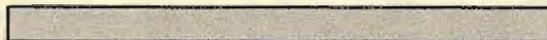
society, I would also like to offer many thanks to John Langan for his years of service as past President in the pioneering stages of our development.

As we look ahead to the coming years, we might do well to focus our goals for Roberts studies. Beside our group efforts at coming together each year for the annual conference, we should promote Roberts' literature in our work at other venues, participating in relevant conferences or teaching her work in our classrooms. We should look to place our work in print, as previous scholars have done with their essays in *Kentucky Humanities*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and *The Shawan-gunk Review*. Additionally, let's accumulate copies of Roberts' work for our own

collections and keep the drive alive to return and hold her works in print. While working toward these goals, we will continue to establish bonds with others moved by Roberts' literature so that our society can grow and prosper.

As we make the transition into a new chapter for this society, we might also recognize the work we have done to get us this far. Each year many of us pile into cars after teaching all day only to drive all night so that we may visit Roberts' home in honor of her work. We gather in lively conversation, cheerful banquets, and jubilant song to celebrate Roberts' life and literature. May we continue to gather each year in the Spring to keep this celebration alive.

— Steven Florczyk



~ Notes & Queries ~

Editor of Kentucky Humanities Guest of EMRS

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thompson attended the EMRS Beaumont Inn Banquet in April 2002 as honored guests of H.R. Stoneback and the Society. Charles Thompson is editor of *Kentucky Humanities*, which featured Stoneback's essay, "Roberts, Still, Stuart & Warren," in the 2001 Vols. 1 & 2 issue that appeared in February 2002. Thompson addressed the assembled conferees, thanked the EMRS for its efforts on behalf of Roberts and Kentucky literature, and distributed copies of the magazine. (The Roberts essay is available on-line, featured essay on the Kentucky Humanities website: <http://www.kyhumanities.org>. Hard copies of the issue may be obtained by writing the editor – see website for address.)

H.R. Stoneback

Scholarship Awards to New Society Members

Presented for the first time at the 4th National Roberts Conference in April 2002, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Scholarship Award, created, funded and awarded by the Honorary President's Scholarship fund, is designed to encourage the discovery and exploration of Roberts' work, especially by first-time participants in EMRS conferences. The Society's Honorary President, H. R. Stoneback, presented four awards at the Beaumont Inn Banquet. Recipients were Lawrence Bemer, Radmila Genyuk, Adam Romano, and Cristy Woehling.

H.R. Stoneback

The Great Meadow, The Movie

Some members of the society have expressed interest in viewing the film *The Great Meadow*, based on Roberts' novel. Since the film is not available in either VHS or DVD format, we may hope to see it televised on the Turner Classic Movies Network. A group effort in requesting that the film be scheduled in their line-up may yield results. If you have a chance, go to the website (www.turnerclassicmovies.com) and email a request for the 1931 film. If you see it scheduled for a telecast, drop me a line at sflorczyk@msn.com so I can spread the word.

Steven Florczyk

Locating Roberts' Books

Members looking to gather a collection of Roberts' works should check out deals on used book web-sites such as www.abe.com and www.powells.com. There is much to choose from!

Steven Florczyk

Submit Your Papers for the EMRS Archive

Ed Butler is working to collect the papers we have presented at our past conferences as a resource for future Roberts scholars. If you have presented a paper, please send a copy to Ed by email attachment as soon as possible (dionbutl@warwick.net).

Steven Florczyk

EMRS Bibliography Project

The members of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society are interested in assembling an up-to-date, annotated bibliography of her work and criticism of it. Anyone interested in this project should contact either John Langan at langanj@newpaltz.edu or Steven Florczyk at sflorczyk@msn.com.

Steven Florczyk

2002 Conference Continued

as Imagery in the Novels of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and James Still" was an elegant comparison of the works of Roberts and Still. Sharon Peelor's "The Mother and Child in Elizabeth Madox Roberts's Modern Georgic Vision" argued for the importance of the Virgilian Georgic to Roberts's work. Fiona Paton's "The Symphonic Structure of *The Time of Man*" read Roberts's greatest novel in relation to the formal arrangement of the musical symphony. Edwards Butler, the Roberts Society's archivist, spoke on the "Publication of the Conference Proceedings of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society."

The third and final session of the day was chaired by John Langan and featured four papers. Cristy Woehling's "The Soul of Ellen Chesser: Nature and Spiritual Harmony in *The Time of Man*" examined the

link between *The Time of Man's* images of nature and its spiritual concerns. Adam Romano's "Holding the Haunted Mirror Up to Nature" read Roberts's collection of short stories, *The Haunted Mirror*, as a thematic unity, with interesting results. Radmila Genyuk's "Sweet Lime and Spiced Sense in Elizabeth Madox Roberts's 'The Scarecrow'" offered a thorough and detailed analysis of one of Roberts's short stories. Tina Green

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Kentucky Writers Day 2002 at Penn's Store

Upcoming Events

In addition to the Fifth Annual Roberts Conference in Kentucky this Spring, the Roberts Society will also host a panel of paper presentations at the American Literature Association Conference in Cambridge, MA. The Conference is scheduled for May 22-25, 2003. Gregg Neikirk will chair the panel titled, Re-Discovering the Fiction of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Other panelists are Steven Florczyk, Jane Keller, and Tina Green.

Call for Papers

The call for papers for the 5th National Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference has been extended.

Papers are invited on any topic related to the work of novelist, short story writer, and poet Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Sample Topics include, but are in no way limited to: --Roberts as a Regionalist -- Roberts in the Context of Southern Literature -- Roberts as a Modernist -- Roberts' Influences (Literary, and the Chicago Milieu . . .) - Roberts and Linguistic Argot - Roberts and Southern Agrarianism - Stylistic and Literary Comparisons and Influences (i.e. Synge, Hardy, Faulkner, Warren, Joyce, Homer, Beethoven, Elizabethan Ballads, etc.) - Class, Gender, and Racial Perspectives - Roberts and Fellow Kentucky Writers - Folkloric and Regional Historical Connections -- Biblical Symbolism - Roberts the Poet - Roberts for Teaching Children and Young Readers -- Also, "First-time Reader Response Papers" are welcomed and encouraged. Seven-to-Eight page papers, absolutely limited to no more than 20 minute reading lengths, are requested.

Please send your abstract and title as soon as possible via regular mail or email to the program chair:

Dennis Winter

Department of English

SUNY New Paltz

New Paltz, NY 12561

winterdc@newpaltz.edu

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

Conference Registration and Membership Form

(please print)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email address _____

Telephone(____) _____ Fax (____) _____

Please detach this form and mail with check
(payable to Tina Green, Treasurer, EMR Society) to:

Tina Green
117 Kelly Road
Red Hook, NY 12571

- 1) Enclosed please find \$ _____ for _____ registration (s) for the Fifth National Roberts Conference.
- 2) Enclosed please find \$ _____ for _____ annual membership (s) in the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society.

Note:

- A) All Conference participants must pay annual dues of \$10.00 per person.
- B) The Conference registration fee is \$35.00. It includes the Sunday night banquet at the Beaumont Inn and all conference sessions and activities.

Conference Lodging Information:

Reserve your conference lodging at the Beaumont Inn (1-800-352-3992). Ask for the Roberts Conference room rate, which is guaranteed for April 26, 27, and 28. Questions about lodging, as well as other non-academic program events such as Kentucky Writer's Day, should be addressed to: Professor Gregg Neikirk, gneikirk@wisdom.wsc.ma.edu

2002 Conference continued

concluded the panel with her paper "The Fall of the House of Bell and the Ascent of Theodosia in Elizabeth Madox Roberts's *My Heart and My Flesh*" which offered a new and convincing reading of Roberts's cryptic second novel.

Following the third panel, conference participants were treated to a special performance and lecture by folksinger and teacher Dennis C. Winter. Ranging through various musical styles and instruments, Winter provided an enjoyable meditation on the role of music, especially folk music, in Roberts's work.

The conference over, attendees jour-

neyed to Roberts's grave in Springfield, where the Annual Graveside Reading took place, with selections from Roberts's prose and poetry read. That night, closing ceremonies took place at The Beaumont Inn's Goddard Hall, where a rousing evening of folk-song made for a memorable end to a memorable two days. Another conference successfully completed, attendees could look ahead to 2003 eagerly.

— John Langan

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

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

President: Steven Florczyk, Independent Scholar

Vice President: Gregg Neikirk, Westfield State College

Vice President: Jane Keller, University of Delaware

Secretary/Treasurer: Tina Iraca Green, University of Connecticut

EMRS Newsletter Editors: Steven Florczyk and Tina Iraca Green

The EMRS Newsletter welcomes contributions, including Roberts-related notes and queries, and brief excerpts from papers presented at EMRS conferences. Please send submissions to Steven Florczyk (sflorczyk@msn.com) or Tina Green (tinair@hotmail.com)