

The English Broadside

English Department Newsletter

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Miriam's Kitchen

by Tony Grooms

A homeless shelter is an unlikely place to host a literary event, but Miriam's Kitchen was the first stop on my book tour of Washington D. C. this past May. I was running late, was sweaty, and had no idea in the world what to expect. Entering the basement of the gothic Presbyterian church where the advocacy group for the homeless was located, I was met by a college-aged man who handed me a card with the number 115 on it. Apparently, he was a volunteer and I was to be the 115th diner. He pointed me toward the cafeteria line at the back of the low-ceilinged room, crammed with round tables.

"Oh, no, you don't understand," I said, "I'm the author."

Indeed, he didn't understand, and when I asked for the supervisor, he glanced around, trying to locate her in the room where mostly African American men sat eating lunches, drinking coffee, and playing board games. A group of women had formed a sewing circle. Then, as if she had heard her name in the din, Catherine, the Executive Director, popped up. With the spunk of a preschool teacher, she welcomed and ushered me to a corner where a group of middle-aged men sat. These were the readers, she told me. They shook my hand, smiling, and we exchanged names. Eventually, six tables were pushed together as the group grew to about 25 people. "It's the most tables we have ever pushed together for an event," Catherine said.

Soon the group was involved in an intense discussion about *Bombingham*, which had been selected as the Capital's common reader by the Hu-



manities Council's "Live to Read" program. The program distributes books to schools, senior citizens' centers, libraries, homeless shelters and other communities, and encourages reading and discussion of the book. *Bombingham* was selected as a part of Washington's commemoration of the Civil Rights Movement achievements of fifty years ago. As the author, I was invited to tour and discuss the book at institutions across the city. Though there were many good discussions, the Miriam's Kitchen discussion was notable. Nearly all of the participants had read the book to the end. Many were Viet Nam war veterans and gave insight into that aspect of the book. Charles, a former Black Panther, talked about the book in relation to his involvement with that group. Vida, one of the few women to join us, quietly challenged me to explain my characters. James, who had never

(Continued on page 3)

Dr. Jim Elledge and the Outsider Artist, Henry Darger

by Melissa Roberson

It was at a coffee shop in Brooklyn that Dr. Jim Elledge first heard the name Henry Darger. In April of 2002, the American Folk Art Museum in New York City hosted an exhibit of Darger's work. Dr. Elledge's drinking companion insisted he would be quite intrigued by the exhibit "because Darger painted a lot of little girls with penises." He recalls this with a laugh. The crowd in the auditorium of the Decatur Library stage encourages him on with their own interested laughter. "And of course I was intrigued!" He says. "The idea that someone would do that was quite amazing to me."



To prepare himself for the exhibit, Dr. Elledge started surveying the internet for any information he could find about the outsider artist. His efforts were rewarded with an onslaught of shallow, misleading writings on Darger that ventured little further into his artistic life than to reduce him to a sexual deviant with deep mental illness. Dr. Elledge continued to find these ideas repeated again and again throughout the writings on Darger. "When I looked at Darger's paintings, I did not see any of that. I saw an entirely different narrative taking place," Dr. Elledge explains.

Born in 1892, Henry Darger spent all

but a few years of his life in Chicago. His childhood was far from idyllic; he was institutionalized as a small child and incarcerated as a teenager. Darger spent much of his life struggling not only with the hardships of his childhood, but also of his sexuality in a time of great danger for gay men and women in the United States.

After his death at the age of 81, Darger's neighbor would discover over 300 paintings, three novels, and a wealth of personal notebooks and journals. Prior to this, no one had any idea he was an artist of any kind. Dr. Elledge points out that the paintings were not works unto themselves, but illustrations for the stories contained within the three novels Darger wrote over many thousands of pages. Despite the fascinating social, psychological, and medical implications of Darger and his work, Dr. Elledge laments that Darger was not a good writer, but that it was important for him to soldier through his writings to understand Henry Darger and the context of his art.

In fact, in a conversation between two of Darger's characters, Darger calls the young girls in his paintings "imitation little girls," suggesting they are perhaps something else, something more complex. Dr. Elledge discovered the key to this description at the University of Chicago, which possesses a large collection of autobiographies by gay men from the 1920s and 1930s. In these works, the men reflect on what made them gay, with the most recurring idea being that, while their bodies were male, their souls and inner psyche were female, making them innately attracted to men.

After laboring for over a decade researching Darger and the context of his art, Dr. Elledge finished his biography, the aptly titled *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist*. He celebrated the publication of his book by Overlook Press this past September.

Miriam's Kitchen (continued from page 1)

written a review before, shyly presented me with a book review. (It was well-written; he liked the book.)

After an hour of discussion, interrupted only by offers of coffee and dessert, Michael, my Humanities Council escort, insisted we leave for the next appointment. On the way out, Sam, a veteran, walked with us. He declared that he had never met an author before and was thrilled. Suddenly grasping my hand, he kissed me wetly on the cheek and thanked me for coming. The visit hadn't been my idea and was no great effort on my part. But on the way to the car, I began to feel heavy in



spite of the spritely breeze coming from the Potomac: How mercurial and punishing life is to have made those intelligent and engaging people homeless. How much by God's grace was I a fellow with them.

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"Words to the Wise" on iTunes.
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For further information, visit
<http://www.kennesaw.edu/writingcenter>.

MAPW Yellowstone Trip - June 2013

From left: Bill Rice, Christi Williams, Nena Greene, Michael Harrison, Candi Deal, Aneesah McDonald, Michael Heck,



In June of 2013, Dr. Beth Giddens and Dr. Bill Rice facilitated a trip for two of their MAPW writing classes to the grand landscapes of Yellowstone National Park. Participants immersed themselves in the rich cultural experience of the park, standing a stone's throw from bison, hiking across harsh terrain, and reliving the heavy historical sites of General Custer and the Battle of Little Big Horn. With a wealth of inspiration, the writers returned to pen pieces about their experiences for the accompanying courses. Below are samples of these vivid memories and accounts from MAPW students Michael Heck and Candi Deal. The pictures and captions were provided by Dr. Giddens.

from Wilderness Chow

by Michael Heck



Though it has no people, Trout Lake was a beautiful stop that everyone enjoyed, and it is inside the park.

On my first night in town, I dined with several fellow travelers at the restaurant associated with the Three Bear Lodge, an establishment that has been in West Yellowstone since the 1930s and maintains the look and feel of the frontier spirit. The restaurant is a log-walled building, and the interior features rustic prints and mounted heads of bison, elk, and bighorn sheep, which create a decidedly western ambience. The menu is varied, offering a variety of pasta, chicken, and beef entrees, but it also includes local specialties such as five dishes featuring bison. Rainbow trout is available seasoned, sautéed, and stuffed with crabmeat, but I opted for it grilled simply with butter....The fish was tender and flaky, with a pleasingly simple and fresh flavor. My choice of beverage was a pint of Moose Drool Brown Ale from Big Sky Brewing in nearby Missoula. I topped off this regional repast with a scoop of locally-churned ice cream made from huckleberries, a fruit native to the Yellowstone area that appears ubiquitously in candies, jams, and other gift-shop treats. Two of my tablemates ordered half-pound bison burgers, which they reported as lean and tasty, but remarkably juicy.

Yellowstone Continued...

from Darrell Geist: Defender of Buffalo

by Candi Deal

Although Geist's tone is composed and his words measured, there can be no mistaking his passion. He speaks reverently of the buffalo he devotes his life to defend. In the early 90s he witnessed a "devastating" event, which more than likely proved to be his moment of obligation. Your life can be traced by your Moments of Obligation—those times in your life in which you were compelled to take action for the greater good and made a commitment to see your work through. However small. However big. We all have many moments like this.

"Mike Mease and I were in Gardiner Basin on the Old Yellowstone Trail. We watched as the Montana Department of Livestock showed up and shot all these buffalo that were bedded down. It was during the winter, very cold and snowy, and Mike videotaped it. I was so shocked that the Department of Livestock would actually kill buffalo that were bedded down."

The kill took place near a residential area. Cattle ranch manager Al Jensen, having coffee with a neighbor, saw it happen through his kitchen window.

"Al was just outraged. Mike got his reaction on tape and CNN picked it up and broadcast the video about the state shooting these buffalo that were bedded down."

"At the time, that was a traumatic experience for everybody. It was so intense that it was unforgettable," says Geist, shaking his head at the memory. Adopting a more philosophical manner twenty years later, he adds, "But we've seen more; we've seen worse."

...Although there are other buffalo allies in Montana, the single-issue BFC is the only group working in the field every day to defend America's last continuously wild herd. The major task of patrols in the field, furnished with a two-way radio and video camera, is to document government actions taken against bison. A task necessary, believes Geist, because there is "no law anywhere that protects bison, either state or federal." He pauses for effect before adding, "Nothing. Nada."



Crow wikiup: Bill Rice, Candi Deal, Christi Williams.



At the falls: Aneesah McDonald, Michael Harrison, Candi Deal, Tanya Brown.

Looking for ways to get more involved?

Check out these unique initiatives:

EngageKSU

<http://www.kennesaw.edu/engageksu>

Imagining America

<http://imaginingamerica.org>

Professor Rebecca Moore Howard, her *Writing Matters* and The Citation Project

by Rochelle Harris and Beth Daniell

On October 24, 2013, Rebecca Moore Howard of Syracuse University spoke to the English Department's Composition Committee about her work on the Citation Project, an ongoing study that includes researchers at eleven universities in the U.S. and one in Australia. This project examines citations in the papers of students in first-year composition at sixteen U.S. campuses.

Professor Howard reports that the research shows that students tend to cite pages 1-3 of a source about 50% of the time. The page number most often cited is the first page of an article or book. What this seems to indicate is that students rarely read the entire sources, but rather rely on information from the first pages—and often a quotation from the first page of a source or from an abstract. Howard believes that students are trying to do what we ask—to use sources in research and to avoid plagiarism. The problem results from the lack of engagement in the assignments. Students, she says, often see writing assignments as chances to “perform,” not as opportunities to learn.

So what are the pedagogical implications? One is to design assignments to emphasize critical thinking, reading, and analysis rather than citation procedures. Howard says that in her own first-year classes she has begun to focus on reading and on analysis early in the course and then later on summary. The research also

suggests that teachers might decrease the number of sources in assignments to encourage more emphasis on the deep reading of sources, rather than on merely locating sources. Finally, Howard suggests that teachers might want to frame the work as “researched argument” rather than as a research paper. In addition, she says that teach-

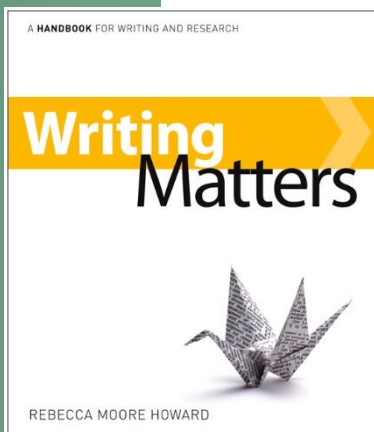


ers might want to make better use of librarians during the research process—to help students find the kind of information they actually need for their research. The point is to invite students become involved in conversations about topics they are interested in.

During the Q&A after Howard's talk, several key questions emerged for teaching writing/research at KSU:

- What types of research assignments could/should we do? How long should an assignment be?
- Should a class have a shared research topic or individual topics for each student?
- What is the role of procedural teaching in FYC?
- How do we balance engagement with material/research with the specific requirements needed to write about research?

Howard has included research results from the Citation Project into the second version of *Writing Matters*, one of the handbooks selected for our first-year writing courses.



KSU Foundation Honors Dr. Martha Bowden

by Melissa Roberson

Dr. Martha Bowden received Kennesaw State University's highest honor, the KSU Foundation's Distinguished Professor Award, at the 2013 Faculty Awards Ceremony. Accompanying this is a monetary award of \$17,000 for future professional development.

Dr. Bowden has been teaching at KSU since 1992, specializing in eighteenth-century literature. Provost Ken Harmon introduced her at the ceremony as a "triple-threat faculty member" saying, "Our recipient is a prolific nationally and internationally recognized scholar, an award-winning teacher and a dedicated professional service leader. Having held numerous leadership roles, our recipient sees her scholarship, teaching, and professional service as inseparable elements of a faculty member's professional identity and has exemplified that belief in her 20-year career."



Photo courtesy of Kennesaw State University.

The foundation distributed \$127,500 in cash and prizes to distinguished members of the university faculty and staff. Of this amount, \$110,000 was distributed for the professional development of KSU professors who demonstrated exceptional teaching and service to the university and their students this past year.

Important Dates and Upcoming Events

- ♦ **Third Annual World Literature and Film Conference:** Abstracts due for consideration by March 2, 2014. Conference to be held April 4, 2014 at KSU. Find the call for papers at: <http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/54191>.
- ♦ **Poet Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie:** Campus visit March, 2014. Final date TBA.
- ♦ **National Graduate Creative Writing Conference:** Submission deadline, January 17, 2014. Conference to be held March 27, 2014 at University of West Georgia. Find the call for papers at: <http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/53033>.
- ♦ **PlayPen Open Mic:** Every first Tuesday of the month at Johnnie MacCracken's in Marietta. Free open forum to read any type of writing to an interested crowd of listeners. Find future dates and events at: <https://www.facebook.com/playpenlive>.

Faculty Accolades and Accomplishments

Martha Bowden

Dr. Bowden, KSU Foundation Distinguished Professor, will deliver the commencement address for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences on December 12th at 2:00 p.m.

Jim Elledge

Dr. Elledge celebrated being the first biographer of artist Henry Darger. After nearly ten years of research and writing, his book *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist* was published in September by Overlook Press.

Letizia Guglielmo

Dr. Guglielmo celebrated the publication of an essay collection she compiled entitled *MTV and Teen Pregnancy: Critical Essays on 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom*. The collection was published in May by Scarecrow Press.

David King

Dr. King's essay "Hitched: The Similar Legacies of Flannery O'Connor and Alfred Hitchcock" appears in the 2013 volume of the *Flannery O'Connor Review*. He originally delivered this paper at the 2011 Flannery O'Connor conference.

Kendall Klym

Dr. Klym's short story "Pavlova" was chosen as the runner-up cash winner for the Howard Frank Mosher Short Fiction Prize. As part of the honor, the story will be published in an upcoming edition of *Hunger Mountain Journal of the Arts*.

Rob Montgomery

Dr. Montgomery's essay "Narrative Writing: The Orphan Child of the Common Core" was published on the blog "Writers Who Care: Teachers, Profs, Parents." His essay may be read at: <http://writerswhocare.wordpress.com/?s=Montgomery>.

Nina Morgan

Dr. Morgan and a group of dedicated advocates have been awarded grant funding from the American Legation in Tangier, Morocco. The team has been working to establish the Moroccan American Studies Program at Hassan II Mohammadia-Casablanca University. This funding will allow the group to hold an organizational meeting that will help them to take further steps toward achieving their goal.



Tammy Powell

Dr. Powell's article "The Ubiquitous Basketball as Essence of Genius: Narrative Structure in Sherman Alexie's 'Saint Junior'" was accepted for publication in *The Journal of Ethnic American Literatures*.

H. William Rice

Dr. Rice presented the paper "Charlie Parker and Bob Kaufman's 'Walking Parker Home'" at the School of Visual Arts National Conference on the Liberal Arts and Education of the Artist in October.

Dr. Rice's essay "Confessions of a Would-be Cowboy" will be published in *Big Sky Journal* in December. The University of South Carolina Press will publish his new book, *The Lost Woods: Stories*, in April of 2014.

Anne Richards

Dr. Richards, along with Iraj Omidvar, compiled and edited a collection entitled *Historical Engagements with Occidental Cultures, Religion, Power: Perceptions from Europe and Asia*. The collection will be published by Palgrave as part of its series on Postcolonialism and Religion.

Ryan Rish

Dr. Rish contributed a chapter entitled "Exploring Multimodal Composing Processes with Pre-Service Teachers" to the book *Preparing Teachers to Teach Writing Using Technology*. The book was recently published by ETC Press at Carnegie Mellon University. You may download the book for free at: <http://www.etc.cmu.edu/etcpress/>.

Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Professor Sadre-Orafai was interviewed on the "Readings & Workshops Blog" for the online edition of *Poets & Writers* magazine published August 16, 2013. She participated in a poetry reading hosted by the magazine with poet Heather Tosteson at the DeKalb Public Library this past spring.

Jeff Stepakoff

Dr. Stepakoff's third novel, *The Melody of Secrets*, was published in October by St. Martin's Press. *Reader's Digest* licensed the rights to the novel for their May 2014 publication of Select Editions. There are over a million copies of his works in circulation in eighteen different languages.

Yvonne Wichman

Ms. Yvonne Wichman has been elected President of the Part-time Faculty Council.

