

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Newsletter No. 22

emrsociety.com

May 2021

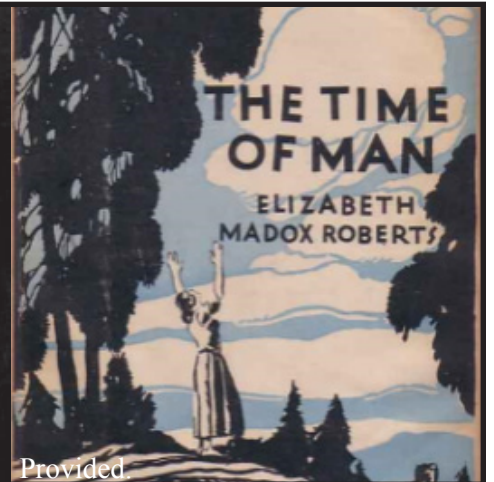
President's Message 2021

JAMES STAMANT

One year ago, I wrote about my enthusiasm for scholarship about Elizabeth Madox Roberts and her work in the coming decade. With all that has transpired since I wrote that note, early last spring, it may be hard to imagine that there is still any kind of optimism left anywhere, but as I compose this message, we have seen hope returning. The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society has decided to hold our conference in Kentucky this summer, something that was impossible to imagine at this time last year. With many of us receiving vaccines, and the continuing downward slope of the virus, it is once again possible for us to return to Kentucky to be in the places that hold special meaning, places that Roberts loved and ones that have become special for me over the last fifteen years. I imagine that physically being there, this summer, will be a breath of fresh air, a rejuvenating experience, a welcome respite after missing the annual trip last year. And we'll be there in the summer! Some years, the weather has kept us shivering a bit as we visited on the porch or even sent us to the store to add a layer of clothes or a winter hat to our ensemble. I don't imagine having such an experience this July. What I do expect to experience is the fellowship of our society's members and the people of Springfield. In addition, I am excited to hear what folks have been working on and thinking about in relation to Roberts and her work, and I continue to be enthusiastic for what I wrote about last year, my confidence in the future of the Roberts Society. This year has given us new (Cont. pg 2)



Provided.



Provided

The XXIII Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference: July 17-19, 2021

St. Catharine Mother House — Springfield, Kentucky

We welcome papers that deal intertextually with Roberts and other writers: especially Roberts and Modernists such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Virginia Woolf; Roberts in the context of European and Trans-Atlantic literature; Roberts and contemporary southern writers such as Earl Hamner, C. E. Morgan, and Chris Offut, as well as Roberts and William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, Caroline Gordon, Flannery O'Connor, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, James Still, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty, Thomas Wolfe, Cormac McCarthy, and others; Roberts in the context of the Southern Renaissance, regional and historical perspectives; Roberts and Religion, etc. First-time reader response papers or essays of discovery and celebration from new readers of Roberts are strongly encouraged. We also welcome papers on recently published works by Roberts. See emrsociety.com/Merchandise for more information about

Roberts Society publications and critical volumes. Address inquiries about purchasing these books to Conference Co-Directors Stament & Stoneback, e-mail addresses below.

Papers should be no more than 15 minutes in oral presentation. Academic paper sessions will be held at the St. Catharine Mother House in Springfield. Please submit abstracts no later than June 1st.

E-mail title and abstract to Program Co-Chairs:
Daniel Pizappi (University of Tennessee) dpizappi@vols.utk.edu
Eleanor Hough (University of Kentucky) hough.eleanor@gmail.com
Alex Pennisi (Independent Scholar) apennisi2@gmail.com

Direct all other conference inquiries to Conference Co-Directors: James Stament, jstament@agnesscott.edu (Dept. of English, Agnes Scott College) and H. R. Stoneback, hrs714@gmail.com (Dept. of English, SUNY New Paltz). Check the Society website emrsociety.com for conference updates.

(Cont. from Pg. 1) ways to consider and reconsider Roberts and her work. I expect that we will be viewing Roberts through new lenses, fresh eyes, and making connections with what's been said already. I still expect that the '20s will be an exciting time for our society and for Roberts scholarship. We are approaching important milestones and anniversaries, both for the society and for Roberts' texts. We will celebrate them together, and I imagine that her works will be honored with thoughtful meditations and exciting scholarship. We are only a couple of years away from the society's 25th anniversary and the centennial of *The Time of Man*. The year that Roberts published *The Time of Man* was the same year that Ale-8 hit the market. I like to imagine that Roberts hoisted one or two, with or without bourbon, in celebration of her publication. I hope to share one, too, as we remember and recognize these milestones together in the coming years in Kentucky. But why wait, I hope to see you all in July! Let's have an Ale-8 together (bourbon for me, please).

In This Long Season of Memorials

H. R. STONEBACK

Nothing is more important on this earth than our faithful presence at public *In Memoriam* ceremonies for the great ones as for the unsung ones—all those we have known and been blessed by our encounters with—even in this pandemic Season of Plague, with barely permitted or forbidden or postponed private memorial events for suddenly lost family members and friends.

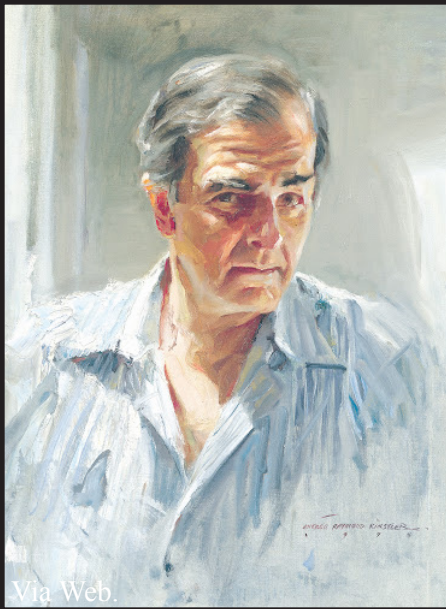
Several years ago, before the world changed as if overnight when the pandemic struck, I did not expect and could not foresee my necessary presence at any Memorials in the near future. I had said, publicly many years ago, that the one Memorial I vowed not to miss would be for Billy Graham. When he was a young rising star, on his way toward becoming "America's Pastor" and the man who preached the Gospel live to more millions of people than anybody in history, I sang (at age 8) on a radio program where Billy preached and we had a profound encounter and I saw him a few times after that. So I made my memorial vow. Still, I expected him to live almost forever. And he did. When he died at age 99 in February 2018, I was far away in the Holy Land, in Israel and Jordan and sailing the Red Sea and being held hostage in Egypt, and I could not get to Graham's Memorial service to honor him lying in state in the United States Capitol Rotunda. I first heard the news from a Greek Orthodox Priest who was sailing on my ship sliding slow through the Suez Canal and we wept together for Billy Graham at the poolside bar.

After that, maybe I thought *well that should do it for a while as far as essential Memorials go*. We always

want to think that those we love, those we must honor, will live forever. But on the eve of the pandemic, as the longest *In Memoriam* season approached, two more Memorials surprised me. One was for my dear friend Everett Raymond Kinstler, the famous painter widely celebrated as the world's greatest living portraitist. Ray's portraits of Presidents are displayed in the White House, his depictions of leaders and luminaries are in museums worldwide, and more than 100 of his works are in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. At first, I deflected his insistence that I sit as subject for his portraiture by asking him to do a portrait of Hemingway that I could unveil and feature at the 2018 International Hemingway Conference in Paris. Remarkably, though he usually required his subjects to have several live sittings, he produced in a few days a now much-acclaimed portrait of Hemingway. Seeing what he could create working from photographs alone, I raised the subject of his doing a portrait of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. He was amenable to my idea and asked me to supply as many photographs of EMR as I could assemble. I was in the midst of that process when we lost him. Alas! What a treasure it would have been to have a Kinstler portrait of EMR. Ray was *only* 92 and of all my accomplished friends and elder exemplars he seemed the youngest at heart. We had just had lunches and dinners together in Manhattan and at his home in Connecticut and we were discussing our collaboration on a book (featuring his paintings and my poems about them) and then one morning he was gone. And then I was making my presence at his Memorial at the National Arts Club in New York.

Also mourned on the eve of the pandemic was Emily Mitchell Wallace, a writer and leading scholar of Modernism, and a long-time faithful friend and promoter of several EMRS members. Emily was only 85 and she was still hoping she would be able to make her long-deferred trip to Kentucky to attend our next EMR Conference. And then she, too, was gone. Not trapped in some unholy land, I was able to revise my travel plans and join the people who came from around the world to attend her Memorial at the Franklin Inn Club in Philadelphia, where I read my *In Memoriam Ode* for Emily. The act of writing Memorial Odes was becoming all too familiar.

As 2020 dawned, I was edgy about planning the details and locations of my winter southern speaking tour, arranging my visiting lectures and poetry readings and concerts by strategic locations so that I would be reasonably close to wherever the next Memorial I had to attend would be. In more than 60 years of far-ranging world travel I had never once considered the likelihood of absolutely necessary attendance at possible Memorials in the making of my travel itineraries. January and February of 2020 were fine, and all my traveling performing gigs were good. Then the pandemic struck, the world shifted on its axis, and we were all forced home to lock-down



Via Web.



Via Web.



Via Web.

and quarantine in the unexpected longest season of Memorials.

All through that darkest season, in my last telephone conversations with my old friend Jerry Jeff Walker, the legendary singer-songwriter, I feared each talk might be our last. And then it was and this time my required Memorial was, for the first time, for someone younger than me (by 8 months). And Jerry Jeff's widow was asking me what words should be inscribed on his gravestone. And I wrote another Memorial Ode (publication forthcoming); and my book-length memoir with the working title *On the Road with Jerry Jeff Walker* is now in progress. And I made the long journey by train to sing a Gospel Medley (and my answer-song to Jerry Jeff's "Stoney") for my old friend at the grand Jerry Jeff Walker Memorial Concert in Luckenbach, Texas, wondering if any of his other old friends who would be on stage with me—like Jimmy Buffett, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Emmy Lou Harris, Steve Earle and many others—would even think of singing a Gospel song for Jerry Jeff. (This show will be carried *Live on Sirius Radio* and live-streamed on TV on June 5 @ 7 PM Central—details re: tuning in will be posted on <jerryjeff.com>.)

And the longest, hardest phone conversations of all were those with my older brother Dave, whose long slow decline was exactly coeval with the worst of the Plague Season—from March-to-March, 2020-2021. (See "In Memoriam: David N. Stoneback" in this issue.) And he will be honored in a unique fashion by his Memorial at our Roncevaux Farm reception during this year's EMR conference.

One more thing: when the great fire ravaged the Cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-Paris in 2019, I made a vow that somehow involved the deepest sense of Memorial: *I would be there when the Cathedral re-opened for public*

worship. I have been following closely (almost daily) the restoration news from Paris and, as this Newsletter goes to press, everything seems on track for the restored Cathedral's grand re-opening in the summer of 2024. (And there is only one thing that can prevent my presence there.) In fact, I'm planning a small conference in Paris to coincide with the re-opening of Notre-Dame in 2024. So you can plan now to be there, and if I can't make it, you can bill one of your best dinners in Paris to my estate.

Nothing is more important in this life than the unmissable Memorial Services that must be attended, all other obligations put aside to do so—even in pandemic times. To make a presence at a Memorial is to bear witness to the mystical solidarity and communion of saints and sinners on this earth. Memorials may seem far too much a major theme of this season, this Newsletter (see also "In Memoriam: Sister Elaine" and "In Memoriam: Donald Junkins") as well as our July 2021 Conference (with, e.g., our Jerry Jeff Walker Memorial Songwriting Contest for songs about a Country Store — see the similarities between the Luckenbach, Texas Country Store that Jerry Jeff made famous, and our own famous Penn's Store, which from the beginning of the EMRS has been a part of our conferences).

Tragedy and loss are what we are given freely and generously and always, however unexpectedly. Memorials celebrate the life and work of lost loved ones and exemplars. Joy and hope may also come through Memorials. Joy arrives like some mystery of the higher blessedness. Hope is what *we* must create and cultivate. Life is Memory and forever. Honor is Memorial and immemorial.

(P.S. Following an ancient ritual form of blessing, I vouchsafe a rising Memorial Salute to all EMRS members who lost family and friends in this longest season of Memorials.)



Provided.

Is EMR Hollywood's Next Star?

AUTUMN HOLLADAY

Lucy Hale blots her lips twice, discards the tissue, leans forward on her desk, and picks up what is supposed to be a book manuscript, but is instead my EMR Conference paper from 2018, and starts reading. The prop master assistant wasn't prepared that day and had run up to me that morning calling, "I need a document. Print out something. Anything. Hurry."

The movie we're making is *The Hating Game*, a rom-com based on the novel by Sally Thorne. Lucy Hale is playing Lucy Hutton, a charming and driven executive assistant at a publishing company. I am just an art PA, but upon discovering my English degree, the production designer asks me, "What does a bookworm keep at their office?"

I answer: "She keeps piles and piles of manuscript drafts; books she is currently reading or has read or is reviewing or wishes to read; books and literary magazines who hug pens and old letters and electric bills because who has time for bookmarks? She tapes lists of titles she needs to look up, impending deadlines, and post-it notes of cherished quotes on her computer. She has posters and badges and other relics of conferences she has attended." I show her photos of my office for reference. The production designer likes it. After some clearance

approvals, Lucy Hutton becomes a member of the Ernest Hemingway Society and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society.

On set, an EH Conference poster hangs behind Lucy's desk and an EMR poster is in the lobby. Dripping off Lucy's desk are conference badges and EMR Newsletters. Most of these things will probably not be seen. But if they do make the cut, it will be a good laugh for us and maybe even inspire a viewer to look up this "Ernest Hemingway" or this "Elizabeth Madox Roberts" or even better, inspire the viewer to read and attend conferences (I mean if *Lucy Hutton* is doing it then...). If none of these things happen, at least we know Lucy Hale read an entire paper on Elizabeth Madox Roberts and *Black is My Truelove's Hair*.

The Hating Game is expected to come out on all streaming platforms sometime in 2022.

CALL FOR SONGS FOR I'M A-LIVIN'

Autumn Holladay continues to complete her documentary on Roberts and the EMRS, *I'm A-Livin': The Story of Elizabeth Madox Roberts*, and is seeking contributions of recorded songs mentioned in Roberts' work. Those interested should contact Autumn at autumnholladay@gmail.com. She hopes to have all songs collected by September 1, 2021. Contact Autumn directly with any questions and to access a list of songs she is seeking.

An Announcement: Semi-Reluctantly Bringing the Digital Humanities to Roberts Scholarship

NATHAN L. LEE

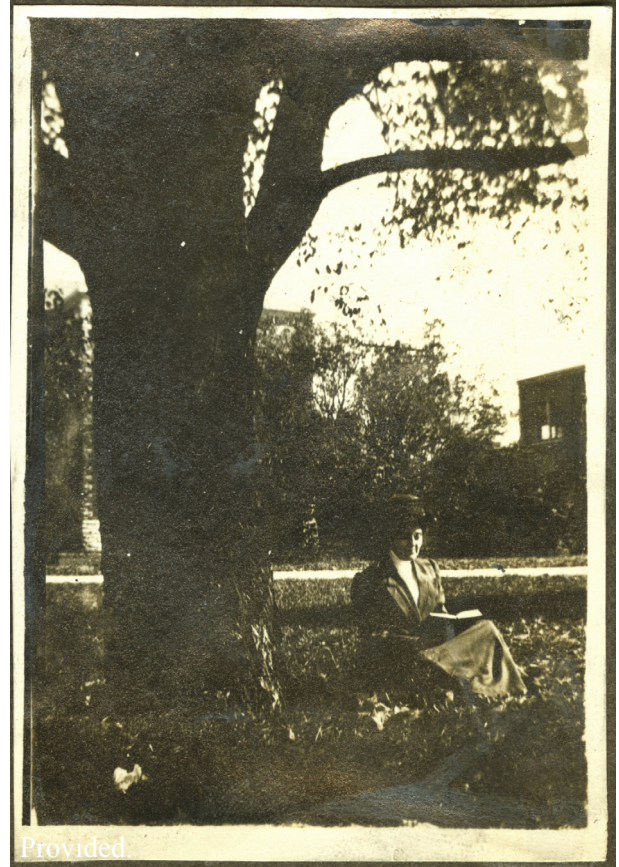
For one of my PhD courses at Lafayette, I hold the mandate to create a digital humanities tool using Python programming language. For myself, I am an entire Luddite and optative anachthon, and as much as I hesitated to do this, I am early in the process of writing a program that will initially work on Roberts' poetry and be able to track and provide outputs that will include: rhyming concordances, phonetic transcription, some stylometry, and analysis of her development of her song, at least for *Under The Tree* through *Song In The Meadow*. I say "initially" because I intend for the ultimate outcome of this attempt to be a digital Roberts archive, as complete as possible, and including some tools we can use to deepen our knowledge and broaden our body of scholarship.

I know that many of us are already in possession of digital copies of her texts. I must now ask you to send me any copies that you can. I will need to feed this poetry machine as much as I can in the end if the project is to come off in the way I mean for it to. I hesitated because digital humanists have some words that I don't like, such as "distant reading". However, it is a young field with many possibilities and I believe that I and my collaborators in the society can add a considerable amount of value by carefully and responsibly using the tool that I am developing. I also think it may drum up interest in some quarters that we may actually wish to Robertselytize. I should have enough of it programmed by conference time to give a couple demonstrations, so, in a way, consider this my abstract.

Please send any works to:
studentinpaper@gmail.com.
 Maison Joyeuse, Lafayette, LA.



Provided.



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Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Place and Distance

Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Panel at
 SAMLA 93
 November 4-6, 2021

Atlanta Marriott Buckhead Hotel and
 Conference Center
 Atlanta, GA

Having long established the importance of place and the *deus loci* in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, this panel urges participants to think beyond this metric and consider the ways that Roberts' work is shaped by not only place but by distance. In conversation with this year's conference theme "Social Networks, Social Distances," this panel seeks papers that interrogate the effects of physical and temporal distance in Roberts' work and how distance both complicates and reinforces the importance of specific places in her novels.

Papers should be no more than 15 minutes in oral presentation. Please email titles and abstracts of 250 words and professional bios of 50-100 words to **Eleanor Hough** (dept. of English University of Kentucky, hough.eleanor@gmail.com) no later than July 10, 2021.

The Time of Man & the Time of Grace: A Gospel Album

H. R. STONEBACK

EMR will be getting a nod in at least one of the new Gospel Songs to be recorded this summer with the participation of some singing-songwriting members of our Society. In fact, the title of one song—*The Time of Man & the Time of Grace*—is currently the working title of the entire album, to be recorded live at the old Malaga Camp Meeting grounds in the piney-woods of South Jersey. The album will feature both new sacred songs composed for the occasion as well as traditional hymns and Gospel songs.

Many performers will be included, from old-time Camp Meeting preachers to younger singer-songwriters, from a spontaneous choir of summer church camp teenagers to a duet by H. R. Stoneback and his elder sister Carolyn (Dr. Carolyn Davidheiser) singing together for the first time since their last duet performed on the radio about 70 years ago on *Morning Cheer*, one of the nation's first and most popular syndicated Christian broadcast programs. Actually, that radio performance was a *trio*, including their brother Dave, to whom this album will be dedicated. (All profit will go to the Camp Meeting.)

The old (founded 1869) Camp Meeting Grounds where the album will be live-recorded is, of course, a Methodist establishment, as most traditional Camp Meetings were and still are. Camp Meeting, a cultural and religious phenomenon little-known and less understood these days, is somewhere very close to the heart of the oldest American Dream. Though the fact is generally ignored by historians, biographers and makers of documentary films, many of America's greatest writers grew up participating in Methodist Camp Meetings and were much influenced by childhood and teen-aged experience at Camp Meeting. That list of names would start with William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. (And you can add the writer of this note to the bottom of that list.) Yes, Paris is a Moveable Feast and the birthplace of High Modernism. But Camp Meeting is an older Moveable Feast and the geo-moral benchmark in the *paysage moralisé* of something much deeper and higher than any *-ism*.

We are currently looking for firm evidence that EMR knew and attended any of the many traditional Camp Meetings in Kentucky. Camp Meeting is synonymous with great singing and songwriting, and Roberts knew those songs, that singing. (See e.g. *Song in the Meadow*). If you're interested in knowing more about the album contact the producer/director H. R. Stoneback.

SAMLA 92: A Brief Report

ELEANOR HOUGH

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society hosted a successful roundtable via “accelevents” for SAMLA 92 in November of 2020, with members signing in from Kentucky, Long Island, and Georgia. Panelists Philip Westcott, Amanda Capelli, and Eleanor Hough and audience member James Stamant discussed Roberts and time, Roberts and presentations of poverty, and musings on the place of Roberts' work in light of the events of 2020. The panel, in true Roberts society fashion, closed with the performance of a song composed by Phil following his first reading of *The Time of Man*.



05-05 Elizabeth Madox Roberts:
Impacts and Reflections

• LIVE



Nicole Stamant

How many roundtables have live music?



Eleanor Hough

not enough!



Amanda Capelli

!!!



Amanda Capelli

Next time only songs and poems?

EMRS 2020: A Brief Report

In July of 2020, members of the EMRS met for a short meeting in Highland, NY at Durendale. In attendance were Brad McDuffie, Amanda Capelli, Alex Pennisi, Greg Bruno, Kristin Bruno, Eleanor Hough, Phil Westcott, Joe Curra, and H.R. Stoneback.

Members discussed a number of different things, of most importance the upcoming 25th anniversary of the society in 2023 (for further details see elsewhere in this newsletter). H.R. Stoneback reported that in February of 2020 he met with Nell Haydon (Springfield Main Street Renaissance) and Mayor Debbie Wakefield to discuss many ideas for a special conference in 2023. Stoneback and others involved in the planning committee would like to stress that all ideas for the conference are welcome from all members, current and former. We look forward to a very special and grand 25th Anniversary Society Conference.

Following discussions of business, the society enjoyed spending time in community and communion, physically distanced in the garden, playing boules (a game seemingly designed for just this situation) and guitar.





Via Web.

In Memoriam: David N. Stoneback

H. R. STONEBACK

David Stoneback (August 14, 1937—March 24, 2021) was a sometime member, long-time friend and supporter of the EMRS (and a donor to our scholarship fund). Born in Philadelphia and raised in South Jersey and Kentucky, his higher education began at Asbury University (1955-1957). His studies were interrupted by two years of service as a seaman in the Merchant Marines, after which he resumed his undergraduate studies at the University of Kentucky and received his BA in Physics and Chemistry in 1961. He then studied at the University of Cincinnati where he completed his PhD in Physical Chemistry in 1964 (“with highest distinction”). Awarded a prestigious fellowship at the University of Göttingen, he did his Post-Doctoral research in Germany (1965-66). From 1967 to 1972 he was a full-time Research Scientist at the New Jersey research center of Esso/ExxonMobil.

He then taught at Westfield High, where he was Chair of Science for decades at one of the leading high schools in the Northeast. Many of his students went on to distinguished careers in the sciences. He also continued for decades his research activities as a Research Associate (part-time) at Bell Labs. He served as consultant and Statewide Coordinator of Science Education in New Jersey. After

his retirement in 2016 he divided his time between his primary residence in Edgewood, Kentucky and his winter home in Florida. After a prolonged illness, he passed away peacefully at his Palm Coast home on March 24, 2021.

During his final weeks, early in 2021, he said to me: “I hope you’ll be able to hold your Roberts Conference this year and I wish, as always, I could be there. I don’t think I’ll make it this time but please give my best to all my Roberts Society friends.” He always enjoyed his drop-in visits to our Roberts Conferences, especially the times he sang with me for the Penn’s Store Kentucky Writers Day programs, the Sunday Suppers at Mordecai’s, and the annual visit to the EMR House hosted by Joan Hamilton. For a career scientist, his love of literature was remarkable. He was the only science teacher I’ve ever known who put quotes from Hemingway to be identified on his midterm exams in Physics. Every year since our 1999 Conference, when I was putting together the conference program, I harangued my brother, urging him to do a conference paper on “Science and Roberts.” He always said: “I will one of these days if I ever retire.” But “Science and Roberts” is a tougher topic than most and I reckon he couldn’t find enough “science” to talk about.



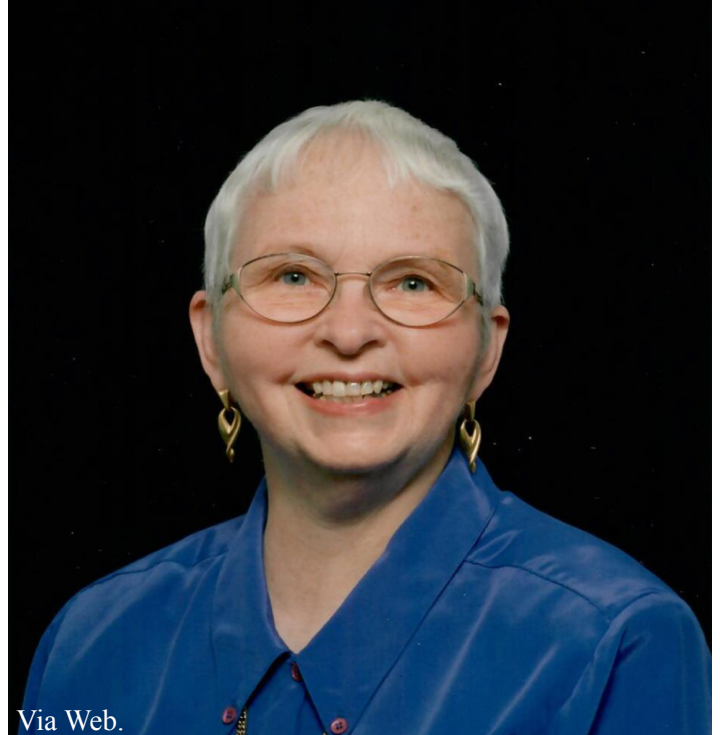
Via Web.

In Memoriam: Donald Junkins

H. R. STONEBACK

Donald Junkins (December 19, 1931—April 15, 2021) was a long-time friend and colleague of many members of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society. He was Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Massachusetts where he taught for decades and served as director of the MFA program in creative writing. Before he earned his PhD in English at Boston University, he finished his S.T.M. (Master of Sacred Theology) and S.T.B. degrees also at Boston University. Once slated to be a Methodist Minister, he was finally *Called* to be a poet. (We had many good late-night discussions about those *Calls* we both knew so well.) He was an important American poet who published more than 20 books, mostly volumes of poetry.

He always “threatened” to come to one of our EMR Conferences. Not long after we met, as fellow founders of the Hemingway Society, I told him I was thinking about creating an Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society. Both Don and I had studied with the leading poet and critic Allen Tate, and when I told Don that Tate was EMR’s biggest fan and promoter, he read some EMR. He loved her poetry. Shortly after my wife Sparrow and I sang at his wedding to Kaimei Zheng in 1993, they stayed at our house a few days and he read aloud some poems from EMR’s *Under the Tree*. He allowed as how they were the most sophisticated *adult children’s poems* he’d ever read. From that day in the early 1990s, I knew then that if my dream of creating an EMR Society ever came to fruition, I would have to get Junkins to come to our conference to do a paper on EMR’s poetry—or even just to give a reading of her poems. I tried to make this happen for many years and he always threatened to come to Kentucky with us for EMR. He was a great performer of poems and EMR’s poems demand the best readers. For decades, Don and I worked together in planning many conferences and events and we did many poetry readings together. Almost to the end, we talked now and then about his finally coming to read at an EMR Conference. His last public reading was in Paris in 2018, when, as conference director, I rented the Eiffel Tower (the *Salon Gustave Eiffel*) for a gala event of the *International Hemingway in Paris Conference*. Any of the (nearly 600!) Paris conferees who signed up before the event was closed-out and who heard Don Junkins read that day up on the Eiffel Tower will never forget it and I will always regret I couldn’t quite twist his arm hard enough to get him to come read for us at EMR in Kentucky.



Via Web.

In Memoriam: Sister Elaine — (or, Collecting Bottle-caps with Cassius Clay)

H. R. STONEBACK

Sister Elaine Virginia DesRosiers (July 4, 1930~December 16, 2020) was for many years a faithful friend of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society and a beloved presence at our conferences. Dominican Sister of Peace Elaine, OP, was a native of Worcester, Massachusetts. A Dominican for 70 years, Sr. Elaine earned a Doctorate in Education in Educational Media from Boston College; Master of Science in Biology from the University of Notre Dame; and Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Nazareth College (Spalding University) in Louisville. She ministered as a teacher at St. Stephen Martyr and as Principal and teacher at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Louisville. She was Director of Educational Media at the University of Notre Dame for 21 years. She retired to St. Catharine Motherhouse in 2007 where she was an “Artist in Residence” while a consultant/teacher for the former St. Catharine College. Sister Elaine created many celebrated pieces of artwork and she was a member of the Dominican Institute of the Arts and a proud recipient of the Fra Angelico Award.

She was an unforgettable presence at our conferences. One of my favorite conversations with her was when she told me about her experience in Louisville with the teen-aged Cassius Clay (later the Heavyweight Boxing Champion Muhammad Ali). The young Clay was a very pleasant and enthusiastic participant in Sister Elaine’s project to collect bottle-caps for a charity campaign. The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will miss her delightful presence at our conferences and we celebrate her life and work.

Society Members Report

Given the pandemic hiatus in our gatherings, we introduce here a new feature of the newsletter under the heading of “Society Members Report,” for which we have asked members to submit reports of their activities since our last conference in April 2019. Such member reports of teaching and work activities, degrees earned and in progress, conference presentations, publications, research, travel, and other significant news are often a feature of society newsletters and we believe, especially in times like these, this is a good way of catching up on what we’ve been doing and enhancing our sense of community.

GREGORY BRUNO REPORTS: Since presenting on the SAMLA Roberts Panel in November 2019--the most well-attended panel in the history of SAMLA--Gregory has experienced several life-changing events. First, he is excited to announce that on August 20th, 2020, he and his wife Kristin Jean celebrated the birth of their daughter Etta Louise Bruno. Despite the pandemic, she was born healthy and happy!

Second, and coincidentally, on that same day, he also started law school at Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University in their evening program where he received a merit scholarship. During the fall semester, he was ranked first in his program. While attending night law school, he continues to share his love of literature with the 9th and 10th graders at Salesian High School in that strange hybrid remote pandemic modality. In the future, Gregory intends to publish articles blending legal and literary scholarship. Professionally, he hopes one day to structure smart contracts in extraterrestrial jurisdictions that help creatives to secure and disseminate their art in the ether. He still writes poems.

AMANDA CAPELLI REPORTS: Following our last conference in April 2019, Amanda was able to attend one more in-person conference before the quarantimes. In May 2019, Amanda presented a paper on Negative Transfer in First Year Writing at the 3rd Mid-Atlantic CCCC Summer Conference in Norfolk, VA. More recently, in November 2020, Amanda presented remotely on the EMR panel at SAMLA. Beyond the academic conference circuit, Amanda took advantage of remote teaching, and the extra time she gained by not commuting, by responding to the CFP for the *Routledge Companion to Literature of the U.S. South*. Her essay on “Creolization” was accepted and is currently under final review by the editors. Publication dates have been pushed back due to COVID, but the publishers hope to have the manuscript to Routledge by December. At NYU, Amanda continues to work with First-Generation College Students, volunteering as a “Proud to be First” faculty mentor and participating

in the College of Arts and Sciences taskforce on mentorship. Last summer, Amanda worked with a small group of NYU colleagues to develop a series of multi-modal lesson plans that responded to the needs of pandemic teaching. And, finally, this semester, Amanda piloted a digital version of the course anthology for the Expository Writing Program as well as the new Learning Management System, Brightspace for the university. All of this with the goal of making access to course materials more equitable. In November 2019, Amanda was asked to join the EMR Society Board as 2nd Vice President. She accepted and is excited to move forward on the 25th Anniversary plans for the 2023 EMR Conference.

JOSEPH CURRA REPORTS: In fall of 2019, Joe was a recipient of the Cote Scholarship, presented by the Michigan Hemingway Society for their conference that October. Joe travelled with fellow Cote recipients, Nathan Lee and Abigail Shand, as well as New Paltz alum Alex Pennisi, in Doctor H.R. Stoneback’s Chrysler-Classroom on wheels toward Bay View, Michigan to discuss, learn and sing about Hemingway’s “Indian Camp.” In the Spring of 2020, his poem “Pont Saint-Louis,” was published in the *Shawangunk Review*. That same Spring, Joe graduated with his MA in English Literature from SUNY New Paltz.

MICKEY D’ADDARIO REPORTS: Over the past two years, Mickey’s work has brought him to some interesting (intellectual) places. In 2019, he presented a paper about Robert Burns, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and British metal band Iron Maiden at the Popular Culture Association National Conference. During the 2020/2021 academic year, he taught a course about literature and the dark side of the American dream and served as a TA for a course about the history of hip-hop music and scholarship. Presently, he is co-authoring a paper about writing pedagogy and the use of images in student writing. Additionally, he has been working on his dissertation in hopes of graduating next spring. His first dissertation chapter focuses on the wartime writings of Walt Whitman, contemporary studies about PTSD in veterans, and short fictions by Ernest Hemingway, George Saunders, and Toni Morrison. A condensed version of this chapter was presented at Duke University’s Works in Progress series this past February. He hopes to complete his second chapter—focusing on polio and AIDS—by summer 2021. Mickey is getting married in July and will be on his honeymoon during the 2021 EMR Conference. He looks forward to returning to Kentucky in 2022.

STEVE FLORCZYK REPORTS: Steve continues to advise students and teach in the Rhetoric Program at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia. His recent courses include a study of Hemingway and rhetorical style, another

called “Writing about War,” and a freshman seminar on liberal arts education as a “Call to Adventure,” in which, among other works, he introduces students to Roberts’ “On the Mountainside.” After the April 2021 premier of *Hemingway*, a film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, he participated with documentary writer Geoff Ward and Paul Hendrickson, author of *Hemingway’s Boat*, in the Hemingway Society “Post-Watch Discussion and Party.” In 2020, he organized a panel on “Hemingway’s Short Story Cycles” for the virtual meeting of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. In 2019, he presented on “Hemingway’s Good Places” at the American Literature Association Symposium in New Orleans and on “Love and Loss in the Nick Adams Stories” at SAMLA in Atlanta. He published reviews of *The Ambulance Drivers: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and a Friendship Made and Lost in War*, by James McGrath Morris, and *Hemingway’s Wars: Public and Private Battles*, by Linda Wagner-Martin. At the next SAMLA meeting in Atlanta in November of 2021, he will chair the Hemingway Society panel of presenters, including H.R. Stoneback. At the meeting of the Hemingway Society in Wyoming/Montana in 2022, he will present on “The Short Happy Life of Frederic Henry.” With support from summer research grants from H-SC, he continues to explore Hemingway’s development of “the good place.” Also forthcoming is a son, whose August arrival is eagerly anticipated by Steve and his wife, Mary Ashby.

AUTUMN HOLLADAY REPORTS: She got new gums, a new ride, and a new home. In March 2020, Autumn packed up her ‘03 Ford Taurus, *Dirty Gerty*, and left New Orleans for New York. The trip became *Dirty Gerty*’s last ride. RIP *Gerty*. Autumn then adopted a Subaru named *Trudy*. In February 2021, Autumn underwent gum graft surgery and had pig gums sewn in. While still living in New Orleans, she chipped a tooth and scraped off some gums in a bicycle accident. The mask mandate came at a perfect time. When Autumn was a kid, she wished to become a “mean pig.” She now knows dreams do come true.

In the past two years, Autumn worked on various film projects as an editor and a set decorator. These projects include commercials, short films, music videos, and two features: *The Sixth Reel* and *The Hating Game*. More importantly, she made more time for reading and writing. She would like everyone to read Elena Ferrante. During this time, Autumn wrote a lot and received many rejection letters and a free subscription to *The New Yorker*. She thought about taking up scrapbooking. Currently, despite all of the craziness, Autumn is happy. Due to a prior obligation, she cannot make it to Kaintuck this year, but she wishes everyone the best and hopes to catch them next year.

ELEANOR HOUGH AND PHIL WESTCOTT REPORT: Since the 2019 EMR Conference, Eleanor completed her Masters Degree in English Literature at Binghamton University in May of 2020 with the thesis topic, “The Good Old Days, When Times Were Bad: Trauma, Poverty, and The Ethic of Care in Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Toni Morrison, and Barbara Kingsolver” and began a PhD in English at the University of Kentucky in August (as well as marrying Phil)! She also took over administration of the society’s social media presence in August of 2020, and Phil began helping with newsletter layout. In November she coordinated and chaired the first ever virtual EMRS at SAMLA panel from the desk in her living room in central Kentucky. She and Phil are living in Lexington with their cat Baudelaire and working and studying remotely. Phil is enjoying each new EMR book he can get his hands on, and they occasionally leave the apartment, mostly for snacks but every once in a while for books.

EVAN HULICK REPORTS: Since serving on the Logistics Committee for the International Ernest Hemingway Society Conference in Paris and joint-EMR and Imagism Conference in Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, both held in France, Evan had attended the most recent EMR Conference in Spring 2019 in Kentucky, the last held on the grounds of Shaker Village and the luminous- numinous country of the Kaintuck River Gorge. In Fall 2019, Evan also attended the annual Conference of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers (ALSCW) at Holy Cross College, Worcester, MA, where his Dissertation Director, Dr. Ernest Suarez, currently serves as Executive Director, and presented his paper there on Tolkien and *Le Chanson du Roland / The Song of Roland*, building from his knowledge of the great Chanson ever sung and written from his continuing studies on Roberts and Hemingway.

In early March 2020, Evan also attended the College English Association Middle Atlantic Group Conference (CEA-MAG) at Prince George’s County Community College in Maryland, where he received the Christopher Bell Prize for Best Graduate Student Essay for his work on reviving the Jesuit Tradition of *Eloquentia Perfecta* in the Writing Classroom. Right before the Pandemic hit, Evan had just taught his students *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot; he has remained haunted ever since. Evan received the tidings in April 2021 that he passed all three days of his Comprehensive Exams on the first and only attempt at performing them.

Evan is currently preparing for a heavily-Dissertation-focused Summer as he proceeds in his Program toward earning his Ph.D. in English with a concentration in Twentieth-Century American and British Modernism as he further grounds and grows his understanding of literary Modernism as a multi-continental movement in Literature.

NATHAN LEE REPORTS: *Memoir the first—escape from New York, to: Northern Michigan. Seven months in the noumena, then thru Ohio, Penn's Woods, back to NY; a dash from Wurts Avenue, New Paltz thru: New Jersey, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, East Tennessee, Nashville, and on down to the heart of Acadiana.*

When the pandemic first made its epicenter New York City I was still living in the attic apartment at 13 Wurts Avenue I rented with Mr. Paolini for the duration of our studies. Then, for two more years after he skipped the light fantastic to New Orleans, I stayed on in a pauper's attempt to live the Hudson Valley life (the *real* one, to get to know the place and be a steward of its *deus*, and **not** whatever these deracinated citiots who flocked there in droves are doing now). After much begging by my saint of a mother, I agreed that Kate and I would load up her Camry with whatever life we could fit into it and flee New York for my grandparents' cottage at West Londo Lake outside of Hale, Michigan, some sixteen or so miles from the Au Sable River, where Stoneback would have won that canoe race had it not been for Tiny standing up to wave to those spectators on the bridge and dumping himself, his photography equipment, Stoney, and all out the canoe and into the deep black water.

We were thirty-eight miles from Huron at Oscoda and some twenty-seven to East Tawas, north of Saginaw Bay, in one country of my heart. Hemingway can have Petoskey. Give me the Huron-Manistee, and blue Huron. I cut back much brush with a mattock and lawnmower, mowed out as much of the strip in the back lot that my grandfather used to mow as I could, we attempted to grow morningglories for my grandmother on the side of the outhouse, painted the old cast iron bell's pole with white and green lighthouse stripes and gave the old thing a new rope, after we had built us a woodpile. I taught myself to be an oarsman; put in more hours in Clarence Wysocki's late-sixties model Sears and Roebuck aluminum 11 with a red-gripped seven-foot Caviness in each hand than anyone else on the lake, going out into the chop so I could call myself a waterman at last.

We took a trip up to Mackinaw City and the island, on to Sault-Ste Marie, and finally to Seney where we picked up some redundant railroad spikes to have some pieces of Nick Adams to be dispensed at need. Chris Paolini took the City Of New Orleans to Memphis, we picked him up, graveled my parents driveway, then shot right back up to the Land of Sixty Lakes to re-join the seven month lake life and woodsmanship seminar that Doug Lange, our retired Saginaw beer truck teamster neighbor and friend, taught. We went tromping into the fens and up the tower of Rifle River Reserve in Ogemaw County when we weren't out anchored by the West Londo Island watching out for mussels, pike, bluegill, and friend Loon or wading Huron. We kept the fire burning.

Perhaps I've gone too deep into Hemingway and too far north for a Roberts newsletter so far. I hold no brief as a memoirist and this piece is just to update you, dear reader, on what one of your fellow conferees and Roberts scholars has been making of his life. The roads we travelled to get where we are now were arduous, long, and tiring. The rest of those travels are in the by-line and I will say a little more on them below. Due to this execrable plague, we could not even shave the forty-five minutes off the trip to Michigan by taking the much prettier drive through Canada to Huron or visit the Canada side of the Sault. I am more than glad to watch this coronavirus draw down to a memory, to Finally End, to see all of you again and re-learn Communion. I have joined the ranks of our colleagues, Amanda Capelli, Matthew Nickel, and Elizabeth Oxler, in holding an instructor's position as a PhD candidate in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, *l'université des Acadiens*, as they style themselves. We had to make a thirteen-state dash across the Midwest, down the East, and throughout the South. We stayed at the Friendly City Inn bed and breakfast at Harrisonburg, Virginia and the Faulkner Nook of the Historic Fairview Inn in Jackson, Mississippi (the nook was dangerously close to misprision of our Bill, but at least they had his paperbacks on the table, so I gave a private reading from Quentin Compson, to honor Yoknapatawpha) to rest from travel. Finally, we crossed the Mississippi at Baton Rouge. It is the first time I have crossed that divide and lived west since I was a three-year-old boy when we lived for a month in Colorado where my father was flea-tramping with his IBEW brothers. If I am not killed by the Cajun manner of driving, then I plan to make a damn good show of it.

If I have said nearly nothing of Roberts scholarship in this piece, it is because I am also including an exciting announcement of the development in Roberts scholarship that I am attempting to proctor. (See Page 5)

GREGG NEIKIRK REPORTS: Following the 2019 Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference, when most of us last saw one another, I have continued to teach literature and writing courses at Westfield State University in Massachusetts. It has been a challenging period, since like at most universities in this nation and beyond, the pandemic forced stark pedagogical and modality changes that required a lot of extra (and unplanned) time and effort. As I was already an experienced teacher of online writing courses for the Westfield English department, I served as a consultant and advisor to other faculty who had never taught online and were required to do so beginning in SPR 2020. While I had years of experience teaching an online Business Writing course required of students in the Business/Economic department at Westfield State University, I had not taught a literature course online. However, the move from in-person to fully remote teaching at WSU in the middle of the Spring

2020 semester required me to convert my American literature courses to a remote synchronized platform. This meant that conversion work had to be done (and completed within) the week of Spring Break and when classes started up again (middle of March 2020), all students were in remote classes. As many readers of this newsletter who are teachers realize, Zoom is perhaps better than nothing at all—but some students did not thrive well in the new environment. Further, the university converted all classes to a Pass/Fail basis for grading, and many students (not just in my classes, but throughout the university) gave less than stellar efforts. After all, using the Pass/Fail option, a D was the same as an A. Perhaps Zoom is better than nothing then, but I truly cannot think of anything better to say about it. I still have a job—that’s about as far as I am willing to go. Damn this damned pandemic, and the bat it rode in on...

Despite the negative tone of my opening here, I am by nature an optimistic fellow, so I have every reason to expect the world of university teaching will be more like “normal” when the Fall 2021 semester begins and my university plans to go back to fully in-person activities. Some of the activities I have been involved with since 2019 include that I have begun drafting my new 3-act play based on *The Great Meadow*, a project scheduled for completion at the Kentucky farmhouse at Roncevaux when I take my next sabbatical from Westfield State University. Since seeing everyone last, Nancy and I have continued to make improvements at the farmhouse—the 200-year-old chimney became unsafe and had to come down—we put new metal roofs on 4 porches, and best of all, built a bridge (finally) which is a “dry-weather” bridge. As long as there is no 100-year flood, crossing to the farmhouse is now streamlined and you don’t even need a 4-wheel drive. There are some planned inaugural activities for the bridge when we hold the reception on Sunday during the upcoming conference. I certainly look forward to seeing everyone soon.

ALEX PENNISI REPORTS: There are many things to report since the Society’s last conference in 2019, although in truth I haven’t attended a conference in Kentucky since 2017. Because the annual gathering in 2018 was held internationally in Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, and having already confirmed attendance at a wedding the same week as the conference in 2019, it has been 4 years now since I last stepped foot in Kentucky. There are those of you who I’ve seen or see quite regularly, but there are also those of you who I have not had the joy in seeing in these last four years, and the idea of not spending any time for nearly half a decade singing songs in Springfield is reason enough to look forward to the upcoming conference in 2021.

Of course, there are many things that have happened over the last 4 years, but here are the highlights: I completed

an MA at SUNY New Paltz, a degree which included a Master’s Thesis on Hemingway and the evolution of his use of metaphors (a project which could not have been completed without the guidance, wisdom, *patience*, and sometimes even hospitality of thesis advisor H.R. Stoneback), and was awarded the Hinkle travel grant for the portion of that thesis presented at the International Hemingway Conference in Paris in 2018. None of that, however, would stop a future employer from deeming me “illiterate” during my brief stint as an executive personal assistant to a poet/publisher/art-dealer. Not that I disagree with the sentiment, but the basis from which it was formed (something to do with ordering fuel for the house). So I bid farewell to publishing (again) and somewhat reluctantly returned to restaurant work, eventually finding a new home behind the bar, a position which I continue to pursue with what could be called an academic interest—in January of 2020, I completed Pernod Ricard USA’s BarSmarts spirits and mixology course. This line of work, though, hasn’t been all-consuming, and I still find time to pursue actual academic interests.

In 2019, I traveled to Northern Michigan and was honored to be a part of the round table discussion on Hemingway’s short story, “Indian Camp,” with fellow New Paltz graduates and Professor Emeritus H.R. Stoneback. Had it not been for the surprise plague that consumed the majority of 2020, I would have traveled to Wyoming for the Biennial International Hemingway Conference to present on the paintings of Renaissance Old Masters and how their art had influenced Hemingway’s later work, but that event is currently postponed until the summer of 2022. In the summer of 2021, I accepted with excitement my new role as co-editor of this newsletter and look forward to working with fellow co-editors Eleanor Hough and Philip Westcott in continuing the excellence that has come to be associated with our newsletter. In less professional or scholarly fields, I meet weekly with fellow EMRS member and friend Joseph Curra who is kind enough to lend what spare time he has, not to mention his musical expertise, to help enrich my novice songwriter ideas. When I’m not traveling for literary conferences or trying to make music with friends, my most treasured time is spent tending to the garden by day and enjoying long conversations and cold beers on the porch by night.

JAMES STAMANT REPORTS: Since the 2019 EMR Conference in Kentucky, Jamie has been involved in various pursuits. In June of 2019, Jamie co-taught at the Book History Workshop at Texas A&M University. In November of 2019, he coordinated and chaired a panel on Roberts at the South Atlantic MLA Conference. Also in November of 2019, Jamie published a monograph with Lexington Books: *Competing Stories: Modernist Authors, Newspapers, and the Movies*. Over the summer of 2020,

Jamie received a Holder Teacher Innovation Grant, and he also won one of the President's Mini Grants for Social Justice. In the fall, he secured two grants for invited speakers to a first-year seminar style class about media and leadership; he brought a book historian and Facebook's Director of Public Policy (both virtually) to talk to his first-year students. Also, this past fall, Jamie taught a class entitled "Southern Women Writers" which included discussion of Roberts' short story "The Scarecrow." This was the second time he has taught this class; the first time he taught *The Time of Man*. Both times, the students have really responded to Roberts' work.

More recently, in February of 2021, Jamie gave a book talk as part of Agnes Scott College's Writers and Scholars series. In March of 2021, Jamie gave a talk on Roberts at Revival: Lost Southern Voices—A Festival for Readers. Jamie continues to serve as the faculty advisor to the Agnes Scott College newspaper, *The Profile*, a role he has maintained for many years. Jamie also participated in Agnes Scott College's 50th Anniversary of the Writers' Festival. Jamie hosted and introduced a streaming event of a former Q&A session with the writers Cristina Garcia, Gish Jen, and Anjail Rashida Ahmad. He also participated in the kick-off event, a conversation among the English faculty about their favorite moments and memories from past years of the Writers' Festival.

H. R. Stoneback Reports: Since the Society's last conference in April 2019, I have ascended to the exalted title of Distinguished Professor Emeritus; that is to say, I *retired* effective September 2019 and thus started working even harder, writing full-time (working on half a dozen books-in-progress) and traveling (on the speakers' circuit for visiting lectures, poetry readings, and concert performances) much of the time. In the Fall of 2019 one particularly pleasurable post-retirement trip was my journey to Up North Michigan to deliver the annual keynote Address at the Michigan Hemingway Society Conference (and to read from my Michigan novel-in-progress, *Runaway Summer*). But the greatest pleasure of that trip was traveling with four fellow EMRS members and presenting with them a session on Hemingway's "Indian Camp" during which we all sang and led the audience of hundreds in singing one of the old Camp Meeting hymns deployed by Hemingway in his fiction, all of us singing it at the very Camp Meeting where Hemingway learned the hymn as a kid. An even greater point of pleasurable pride was to witness the presentation of Fellowship Awards to all three of my former students who applied.

Not long after that event, it was time to depart on my Winter 2020 Southern (warm-weather) Speaking Tour. I had a busy schedule of visiting lectures and poetry and song performances at universities and other venues from

Florida to New Orleans and at sea in the Caribbean. So 2020 was off to a great start and I had dozens of scheduled performances scheduled for the rest of a very busy and fully booked year. I could not foresee that my last public events in 2020 would be in February with the rest of the year's engagements canceled.

Retirement is a strange word, a stranger concept. Maybe the French word for it is better—*Retraite*—but not if it is taken to mean "retreat" in the military sense. (Marines always advance, never retreat, we used to say in the *semper fi Corps*.) *Retraite* allowed me to increase my long-time membership activities in many organizations, such as the *Fulbright Alumni Association*, the statewide *Distinguished Academy of the State University of New York*, and the *Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels*; and to participate more fully in the civilized affairs of the historic private clubs devoted to Arts & Letters where I am a member, such as *The Players* and *The Lotos Club* in Manhattan and *The Franklin Inn Club* in Philadelphia. But then suddenly, by government order, they were closed down for a year, even threatened with extinction in the Year of the Plague, after distinguished existence that spanned three centuries.

When I did my last pandemic-eve programs for the voyagers on board our grand *Celebrity Equinox* ship—leading my walking tour of Hemingway's Key West when we docked there; and then speaking at sea somewhere off the coast of Quintana Roo and Cancún as the ship's guest lecturer on "Hemingway & Travel"—I could not have guessed those events would be my last professional performing gigs of the year. I offered the ship's Guest Lecturer-Program Director the choice of a lecture on either Hemingway or EMR. Of course, everyone who signed up for my program selected Hemingway. Yet still, I was up to my old travel tricks and I deposited some EMR books in the ship's library as I have done on so many ships for so many years. (See my 2019 book *Travels with Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Argentina & The Seven Seas*.) Since my Hemingway lecture was given in the ship's library I mentioned EMR and called attention to her books I had deposited on the shelves. I'm happy to say that the EMR books disappeared from the library stacks for the duration of the voyage. But how could I guess that would be my last "missionary" work for over a year? My ship had barely made it home to port when the banishment of ships from all ports began and the titanic Plague-Year was in full sway. Many ships were denied all ports and dockage worldwide, stranded at sea for as long as *ten months*.

All my travels, all my speaking engagements for the next 15 months were canceled. There was nothing to do but stay home and write and, on the best days, work in the garden. Up until the moment when the great pandemic wave broke, I had questioned my wisdom in choosing to retire. I missed teaching, missed my classes, missed my

students. I even talked to several universities about one-semester-per-year visiting professorships. But all such discussion ceased with the virus tsunami, and universities retreated in defeat. I realized I had decided to retire just in time when I heard from many friends and colleagues all over the world, lamenting the horrors of online teaching; and I sent condolences to all who complained about being harnessed to the oxymoronic beast called *remote learning*. I got out just in time because I would have absolutely refused to teach *remotely*—I would have offered my classes in the wilderness under a tree, or under 16 trees 6 feet apart, but I would not teach in any fashion that denied and disallowed the physical presence of the circle of community. And my heart broke for all the students and teachers who lamented the strange new world.

The rest of 2020, then, was mostly writing. I finished a novella, two volumes of poetry, some travel writing, and all these books are now in final revision. And it was nice to have the time to say yes to invitations to write Prefaces and Introductions to books by others. And, in late summer, it was nice to survive a near-fatal car wreck and come back from my momentary passage to the other side. And by Christmas my broken bones and painful contusions healed, and a brand new van was parked in my driveway that needed only one tank of gas to get from November to March.

So 2021 looked like more of the same—writing, and gardening when the season allowed, then more writing. But the Jab—as all my friends in France and Europe call the vaccination—brought the light at the end of the tunnel. The world started to grow brighter again, illuminated by the prospects of permissible and safe travel. Just as those old lost 1920s roared, right after the far darker plague of the “Spanish Flu” receded, our 2020s world will see a great renaissance. My first big trip of 2021 was my early June long overland pilgrimage all the way to Texas to sing and read poetry at the Jerry Jeff Walker Memorial Events in Texas. It was somehow right and symbolically apt that the first journey after more than a year of forbidden travel should be to honor and memorialize an old friend and it was good to be on stage with Jerry Jeff’s other old and famous friends in Luckenbach to bear witness to love and honor and memory. (Live on Sirius Radio and live-streamed on TV June 5, 2021 @ 7 PM.) But it was also sad to make the long train and road journey and thus to see close-up all the pandemic signs of decline and abandonment, all the closed-down and defunct stores and shops and restaurants in small towns and big cities, to hear all the tales of rising rampant crime, to know that my old favorite poetry venues where I might have stopped on my way to sing in Texas—including the oldest poetry venue in the South where I have been a regular performer over the last four decades—are now gone for good, swept away by the Plague. On the long all-day and overnight 30-hour train

ride, roaring through some villages, observing from the train-window the passing roads, I felt in fleeting moments like a member of the old cursed tribe of *Poètes maudits*, or some weary *fin-de-siècle* poet of the Decadence, or some post-Apocalyptic seer locked in vatic divination, lamenting the passing of *The Days of Wine and Roses* and the arrival of The Days of Whine and Wokeness.

But a certain singular brightness lingers on the landscape of tomorrow. We can still pray for the grace of precision and the redemption of vision. We can still live together in things great and small. From 2021’s EMR Conference in July to the Michigan Hemingway Conference in October and SAMLA in Georgia in November and, next year, all the postponed events that will finally happen in 2022. There are still poems to chant, visions to incarnate, all across the country and the wide wild world, songs to sing far beyond the evil genius of any Plague. And we can look forward to renewal of communion with colleagues and friends and extended family and get on with the business of literature and teaching the secrets of the values and vision, enduring and prevailing, love and community, and the Rebirth of Joy.

*This autographed edition is limited to
two hundred ninety-five numbered copies,
of which this is number*

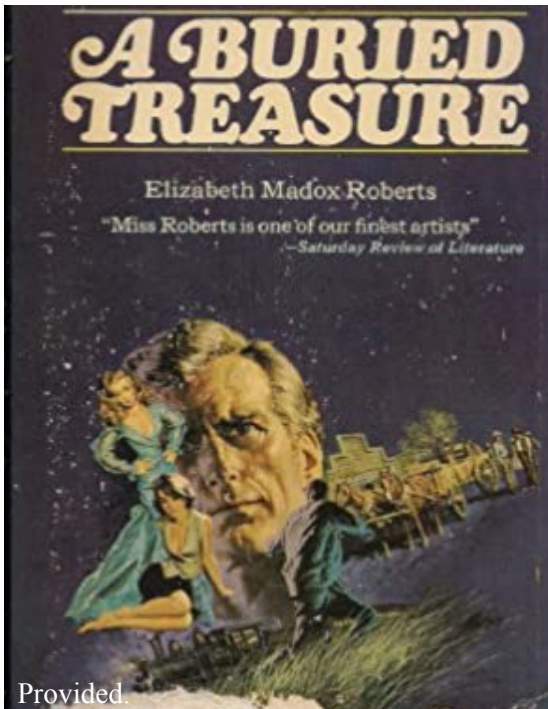
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Elizabeth Madox Roberts

Autograph from *The Great Meadow*

See You in July

Just a reminder: it is not too late to make your plans to attend our 23rd Annual Conference this summer. We will be meeting in Springfield, July 17-19. For all information—Call for Papers, Registration and Lodging details, etc.—please see the society website <emrsociety.com> We look forward to a safe and sane, salubrious and sensational conference and hope to see you there. And if you absolutely cannot make it, please consider sending in your annual membership dues—a mere \$15!—to support your society and ensure that you receive our Newsletter and information regarding future events.



Reading Elizabeth Madox Roberts for the First Time Ever in 2021

GREG SCOTT RYAN

Greg Scott Ryan is the author of two collections of short stories, Errol Flynn's Bathtub (2014) and 13 Hats on a Bed (2021). He is an avid reader and lover of fiction who, up until the writing of this piece, had never heard of Elizabeth Madox Roberts before.

Johnnie Roundtree isn't a very good salesman. Everybody knows this except Johnnie Roundtree. When he fails with one product he'll move on to another: Tombstones, fruit-trees, beehives, etc. But the fruit-trees bear no fruit, they fall over, and when Giles Wilson's tombstone comes spelled wrong Johnnie Roundtree reimburses him with beehives full of inedible corn-tassel honey. Giles Wilson, mind you, fastens horse-shoes to the soles of his boots, the iron clicking on stone as he stands there complimenting a hired hand on a paint job, then leaving strange, bipedal horse tracks in the dirt as he wanders off. This is all funny. Elizabeth Madox Roberts is a riot in the same way that Hemingway is when he has a rail-riding hobo with cauliflower-ear get blackjacked by his best friend whenever the former gets too riled up. Or when the smuggler, Harry Morgan, refers to his rummie first mate as "Some Eddie".

And when Roberts made me laugh, she won my heart. Because she doesn't have to try to be funny. The weirdness of the world she's known does it all on its own. She's, from what I can guess (I know nothing about her other than having just recently read two of her books, and, from what I've heard, two of the more obscure),

an effortless, but not over-the-top, Modern with an unapologetic love of Victorian. Her phrasing is full of both. There're times when she's hard-boiled but lyrical like Hem and Chandler, or easily conveying her profound understanding of the human condition the way F. Scott does, and at other times one can imagine her writing by candlelight with a peacock quill while whispering aloud the sentences, as they scratch away, in a room with whale-oil-lamp and chamber pot.

The laughs, however, are far and few between. That's fine. Roberts is a killer, too. The aforementioned characters are throwaways in a larger story. A story about bugs, beasts, people and land. What's a haw-tree? I have no idea, but she does. What's a scrooch-owl? Only Roberts knows. She knows the crooked, hairy legs of wood ants. The cuckoo birds in the dense foliage of sugar trees. Polecats under floorboards. The calf that gets over a fence and fills its belly too full of clover. A mockingbird "flinging sadness away" to "fly up into the moonlight with a sudden chick-cherry, chee-o-wee". All of this as three-dimensional scenery for the main event: Paranoia, Greed, Ghosts (a bit of Mary Butts, sure), and Good Old Southern Love.

If you're confused because the EMR books you've read sound nothing like this at all, try *Buried Treasure*. It's beautiful and horrifying. A teenaged boy tracks down the graveyard of his pioneering ancestors and leaves with a jawbone in his pocket, or at least tries to when the briars, thorns and crows attack him screaming "MINE!" A father holds his twenty-four-year-old daughter prisoner in his home because she looks like his dead wife, tearing her dresses from their hangers and burning them in effigy as he can't stand the idea of another man knowing his daughter/dead wife in the biblical sense, even promising to fill the boy that she fancies full of buckshot. Yikes, right? But Elizabeth Madox Roberts can do anything. And when you read her, you're impressed. It's a dirty business, the universe, but somebody has to tell it in a way that doesn't make everybody sick. I love Louis Ferdinand Celine, but there's a point with him where you start to feel like you're going to actually throw up. One doesn't have to have a pail next to the bed while reading Roberts, but one might have bad dreams. Good bad dreams. The ones you remember and think of all day, trying to figure them out while feeling anxious and defensive for no real reason other than you'd gone to bed reading EMR.

Buried Treasure is copyrighted 1931 by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The paperback in my possession is a 1951 pulp-covered copy from a spinning drugstore rack. The cover looks like a poster for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. It's falling apart. I left it for a minute on the rooftop of my building the other day to go downstairs and grab a sweater and when I came back there were yellowed 8x5 pages blowing around like late November leaves. She would've

appreciated that, I think.

Reading her for the first time, even just some of her, is a very welcomed bonk on the head with a fine length of split stump wood. And trying to rush through her proves difficult. You find yourself compelled to stop and smell the freshly drawn milk, bright wheat, smoking lamps, the “whisky [sic] from the little jug in the gun cabinet”, and the odor of barn beast on a tramp preacher come to convince Stoner Drake to stop his “strange ways” and to lay foot on God’s given earth once more (Stoner, in *He Sent Forth A Raven*, refuses to step outside ever again after the women he loved all died).

And, quickly, let me just say that an author can be found guilty of actually loving what they do when you catch them alliterating. Roberts is so good, though, that her alliteration is hidden like the pearls that Andy hides from Philadelphia Blair in *Buried Treasure*: “The senseless sunshine slanted under the trees...” I caught that one and swooned (I suspect when she read it back to herself she couldn’t help but leave it in, and her editor too). Yes, please, leave the pearls. And she does. She has no fear.

A woman’s fear, in the words of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, is sometimes “pretty and petty” and sometimes “liquid”. As to the meaning of that, I have no idea. She’s more to the point with men: They’re “strange as horses”. This I understand. Giles Wilson, to remind you, fastens horse-shoes to the soles of his boots. Making him what, a Centaur? It wouldn’t surprise me. EMR covers it all. She goes deep and symbolic, but deceptively casual, in her characters’ battle with one another’s sex. And the battles in her books are timeless (except, of course, for the arguments that thieving hired hands have over whether or not lead-based paint is best).

The first time I’d ever heard of her was the first time I’d ever held one of her books in my hands. It was an orange hardback, 1935 first edition of *He Sent Forth A Raven*. Alex Pennisi gave it to me (You ever met this guy? He’s real and walks into your life and is a constant pleasant breeze). And now I have EMR in my life. She’s an unearthed kettle full of gold (*Buried Treasure*), except that thieves can’t conspire to take her from me. Her books are all over and I’ll find them. And read them. It’s the perfect time for that, as the world boils down to what’s important again. So now...

Elizabeth Madox Roberts, please, show us to the egress:

“In the hen-yard the fowls had gone to roost in the great tulip tree, the perch they habitually used in summer. Philly pointed here and there, making clear the needs of the hens, and she climbed to the top of the pig-house, calling Andy to come after her... They stood on the top of the pig-house almost a half-hour and the twilight gathered, the fading sunlight yielding slowly to the rising moon.”

“EMR in a Michigan Literary Garden”

JENNIFER TIANEN & H. R. STONEBACK

Jennifer Tianen, an English teacher at West Bloomfield High School in West Bloomfield, Michigan, created and has maintained for six years a Literary Garden (literary garden.org) on the grounds of her school. Used as a valuable teaching resource for her students, the contents of the garden include Ernest Hemingway’s Horton Bay mint (“Summer People”), Kurt Vonnegut’s hydrangeas from his Cape Cod home, a pear tree in honor of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, lilacs, peonies, and false indigo from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Old Manse in Concord, MA, a French lilac in honor of Kate Chopin (as chosen by her family), rosemary per Nikki Giovanni’s request, and so many more! These plants are either used symbolically in each author’s fiction or are important to the author’s life and inspiration and help to contextualize a swath of the author’s world for the students. Interdisciplinary in scope and rooted in environmental education, the Garden has also evolved as a place for social emotional wellness, poetry performances, a haunted outdoor literary attraction, and a community space for yoga and planned art and writing events.

Jennifer hopes to come to our next EMR Conference. When she does, she will, of course, visit the EMR House and garden. We are now working on the project of getting some seeds or cuttings or bulbs from the EMR House for Jennifer to plant in her Michigan literary garden. Plant the seed—and they will read! We are also working on getting some garden planting from the contemporary Michigan writer, Bonnie Jo Campbell, who was slated to be the keynote speaker at our canceled EMR 2020 conference—and we may yet get to host Bonnie Jo at EMR. Since Jennifer already has Emerson and Chopin lilacs, and Stoney recently did a poetry reading in the garden of the Walt Whitman House in Camden, N.J., he reports that he will try to get some lilacs from Whitman’s last dooryard to bloom in Michigan. And if any reader of this Newsletter knows of possible sources—for any of Kentucky’s many splendid writers (e.g. from the Robert Penn Warren House in Guthrie)—for literary garden transplanting in Michigan, please let us know.

About our Grand 25th Anniversary Conference in 2023

H. R. STONEBACK

Plans are in motion for a spectacular 25th Anniversary EMR Conference, now scheduled for April 28— May 2, 2023. Aside from the usual conference events, we anticipate a Reunion of many EMR veterans from conferences past, celebrations of new EMR publications, perhaps a new EMR play, a book/CD of EMR songs and poems, and many other special events—think maybe a Parade, an EMR Street Fair with, e.g., a book stall where the EMR Society will give away EMR books to all comers, music in the streets by strolling troubadours performing songs that appear in EMR books, maybe even a Food Stall with EMR culinary delights. (Someone might start now to organize an EMR Foodways panel and maybe even, in coordination with our Washington County friends, prepare an EMR Cookbook?) Think big, dream big and let me (or any other member of the EMRS Board) know your ideas. If you cannot make this year's conference—Stay in Touch! Pay Your Dues (and get your Newsletter)! Come to our Grand 25th Anniversary Conference & EMR FAMILY REUNION in 2023.

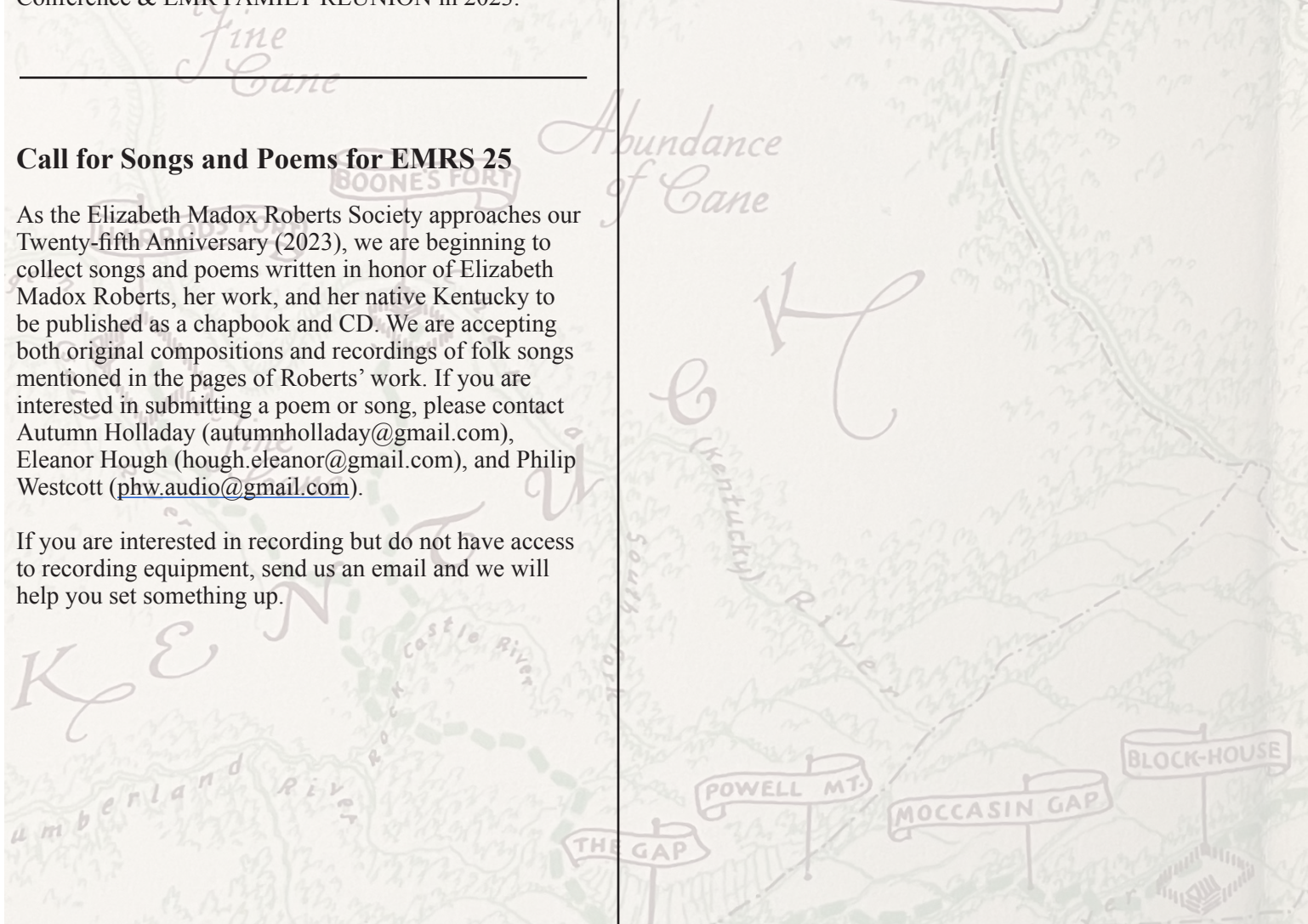
Call for Songs and Poems for EMRS 25

As the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society approaches our Twenty-fifth Anniversary (2023), we are beginning to collect songs and poems written in honor of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, her work, and her native Kentucky to be published as a chapbook and CD. We are accepting both original compositions and recordings of folk songs mentioned in the pages of Roberts' work. If you are interested in submitting a poem or song, please contact Autumn Holladay (autumnholladay@gmail.com), Eleanor Hough (hough.eleanor@gmail.com), and Philip Westcott (phw.audio@gmail.com).

If you are interested in recording but do not have access to recording equipment, send us an email and we will help you set something up.

Members of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society to Speak at 2021 SSAWW

In November, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will host a panel at the 2021 Society for the Study of American Women Writers Conference, which will be held in Baltimore, Maryland. SSAWW holds a triennial conference, and next year's conference theme is "Ecologies, Survival, Change." James Stamant, Amanda Capelli, and Michael Beilfuss will be speaking at the conference; the title of their panel is "Charting Survival in the Works of Elizabeth Madox Roberts." This will be the second time that the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference is represented at SSAWW.



The Jerry Jeff Walker Memorial Songwriting Contest

A reminder: Don't forget to submit your songs in the manner and by the deadline described in the Conference Schedule (see emrsociety.com).

The rationale for this event, featuring original songs about a country store, is mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter and is also described in detail in the conference announcement. In brief, Stoney tried for years to get Jerry Jeff to come to an EMR Conference and sing at our "famous" Penn's Store. And Jerry Jeff tried for years to get Stoney to come sing at his famous Luckenbach, Texas Store. And Dawn, the proprietor of Penn's Store (where the Jerry Jeff Contest songs will be performed), reports her excitement over our EMRS program at the store on Sunday afternoon July 18. (And don't forget to bring your selected brief passages from EMR's work to read in our traditional Penn's Store program segment of readings from Roberts.)

Roberts and Imagism in France 2022

The Imagism/Aldington Conference in Sancerre, France, originally scheduled for the summer of 2020 and then 2021, both sets of dates perforce postponed due to the pandemic, is tentatively scheduled to take place at an early summer date yet to be determined in 2022. (On the day this item was written, the French government announced it will welcome American tourists for the first time in a year—already *now*, in the *summer of 2021!*) Papers on Roberts and Imagism, Roberts and Modernism, etc., will be particularly welcome. Stay tuned and if you want to know more about the conference contact the director, H. R. Stoneback, after September 2021, when the conference schedule will be announced.



*The odor of life was about him,
the strength of people
of places, of people
talking
together.*

-My Heart and My Flesh

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society seeks to promote scholarship in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and to encourage the teaching of her literature. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but we are always interested in encouraging Kentucky membership and establishing a liaison with members in the Springfield area in particular. Anyone interested in membership can contact President James Stamant.