

WORD'S WORTH

NEWSLETTER OF THE
GRADUATE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY

VIRGINIA WOOLF – UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL BY CHRISTINE FRANCAVILLA

A Note from the Editor:

Thank you, authors. To send story ideas, news or announcements – or to find out how you can write for **Word's Worth**, contact **Elspeth Macdonald**, editor, at elspeth.macdonald@my.liu.edu

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After spending a semester reading the novels and journals of Virginia Woolf in Professor Patrick Horrigan's class, imagine the thrill of being ushered into a dark, book-lined room with long tables and shaded lamps -- atop the tables, resting on cloth-draped stands are the handwritten journals and manuscripts of Woolf herself. What could be more exciting to any emerging writer than seeing how a master honed her craft?

In December, Professor Horrigan arranged for Dr. Isaac Gewirtz, curator of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library, to give his students a private showing of some of Woolf's journals, manuscripts and related artifacts.

In his introduction, Dr. Gewirtz explained that the Berg Collection contains the largest collection of Woolf's writing and memorabilia in the world, purchased from her husband, Leonard, who stipulated that the Library could neither mention its acquisition nor show the collection until after his death. In addition to

Woolf, the Berg Collection contains the manuscripts of other writers such as Walt Whitman, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Jack Kerouac. Fascinating as this was, we were eager to get as close to the manuscripts and journals as we possibly could. Since we came as a group and given the delicate nature of the physical material, Gewirtz stipulated he would turn the pages for us. For the next forty minutes, we did our best to make him regret that decision.

Among the items was a photo album of Woolf's family, a handwritten draft of an essay E.M. Forster wrote about Woolf shortly after her death, and some first editions of her books. Nothing, however, compared to the home-bound books with decorative covers that Woolf made herself for her manuscripts and journals. We were able to read the original opening to *Jacob's Room* and see how Woolf wrote on unlined paper -- drawing a vertical line down the left side of each page creating a margin for revisions and notes to herself. It was especially thrilling for me to decipher a line from her journal and realize it was the same quote I used in one of my papers that term.

Dr. Gewirtz was a gracious host and allowed us to hold the walking cane abandoned by Woolf shortly before she drowned herself. He also showed us nude photographs that members of the Bloomsbury group took of themselves in classical poses to aid painters and sculptors such as Vanessa Bell, Woolf's sister. (Can any of us ever look at Roger Fry the same way again?)

Gewirtz also showed us the portable writing desks of Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens, as well as Dickens' own desk and lamp which sits quietly in the corner overseeing this vault of literary history. As a parting gift, Dr. Gewirtz handed out something near and dear to every English graduate student: free books.

The visit was over all too soon but the Berg Collection is accessible to anyone wishing to use this extraordinary material for research. Information about "the Berg" is available online or students can call (212) 930-0802 to be sure it is open -- it's not necessary to make an appointment. This visit will linger in our minds for years to come.

A WARM WELCOME TO PROFESSOR MICHAEL BOKOR

Dr. Michael Bokor, Professor of Professional Writing, here with his family from Ghana, is an important addition to our Department. We were pleased to have had some time with him while formulating these questions.



Dr. Michael Bokor

You have brought your interest in African Proverbs to this country -- would you describe this work? I am a keen adherent of tradition—and “old” traditions die hard! African proverbs are an integral part of the culture that informs my discursive activities.

And what is a proverb but a short sentence based on long experience? One of my projects discusses the significance of African proverbs to African oral literature. The proverbs

encapsulate the worldviews of the people, which their oral literature conveys. Here are three of them for you:

- i.** *An old man who by himself carries one load on the head and another in his hand, must have played away his youth.*
- ii.** *He who looks for honey must have the courage to face the bees.*
- iii.** *God gives every bird its worm, but he does not throw it into the nest.*

(Continued on page 4...)

IDA B. WELLS'
GREAT-GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER
SPEAKS AT CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY'S 100TH
BY MARY WALKER

In February, **Zahra Patterson, Carolyn Smith** and I attended the NAACP Education Conference/Centennial Celebration at Cheyney University in Philadelphia. Zahra visited her son, Taj, a freshman there, and Carolyn gathered footage for her documentary. The keynote speaker was the great-great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, Michelle Duster, who emphasized the importance of education and parental involvement as key to any means of social progress. She spoke about the need for African-Americans to take responsibility in seeking their education, regardless of obstacles set before them. Ms. Duster spoke candidly about her great-great-grandmother, and praised her for her unwavering commitment to women's suffrage; her involvement in helping springboard the NAACP into existence in 1908; and her writ-

ings including *The Lynch Law*, written during an era of heightened segregation. However, she placed more emphasis on acknowledging all those who participated in the struggle, but whose names never made the history books. She said that only collectively will we combat the awful disease of racism. Ms. Duster noted how impressed she was by the persistence of senior Khalid Long, who sent an eloquent letter asking her to participate in the program. I was reminded of the power of the pen and questioned if I were romancing my pen to make a difference in terms of social and political change. I thought about our newly elected President, Barack Obama, and Abraham Lincoln, Ida B. Wells, Chaney, Goodman and



Ms. Michelle Duster

Schwerner to name a few and their significance to this event, and was overwhelmed with emotion at the realization that it is not one face, one color, one gender, one group, but all faces, colors, genders, and groups that can remove the barricades of social and political injustice.

HARRIET MALINOWITZ
NEW HEAD OF THE WRITING CENTER

"Patricia Stephens really built up the Writing Center over many years to be the wonderful place it is today," says Dr. Harriet Malinowitz. Now another writing professor rotates into the director's position, and Dr. Malinowitz will put her own stamp on the Center starting in September, 2009.



Dr. Harriet Malinowitz

The first thing one notices upon entering Dr. Malinowitz's current office is a full-sized Palestinian flag on the wall. She comments, "A student walked in one day and gasped, 'What's that doing here? I'm Palestinian... But aren't you Jewish?!'" Yes, she is, and it's that background that led to her current research for a book-in-progress on the writing of Jews who have critiqued Zionism (and/or Israel's more than 40-year-long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza). She does research and teaching on

propaganda, and will be giving a Faculty Forum on the subject in April. While she's always been interested in applying the study of writing and rhetoric to issues of social justice, this focus became much more pronounced after September 11, 2001 and the ensuing "War on Terror."

Much of her writing, research, and teaching since then has analyzed the formation of mass public discourse related to U.S. foreign policy and Israel/Palestine.

Dr. Malinowitz did her doctoral work at NYU, and has taught full-time at LIU since 1992. Her main area is Writing and Rhetoric, although she teaches literature sometimes, too, and has taught several courses in the Honors program. She was a co-founder and first director of LIU/Brooklyn's Women's Studies program (now called "Gender Studies") in 1995.

On her wall are also photographs of seven former graduate students who are going to inherit her thousands of books. She is very happy that there will be a loving home for them ... later. *Elsbeth Macdonald, Interviewer*

MFA ORIENTATION MEETING - A FIRST

An MFA orientation meeting with edibles was held on January 23rd. We introduced ourselves -- visiting **Professor Jaime Manrique** was given a special welcome. The results of the MFA student survey were noted by **Nell del Guidice**. Most of the suggestions had been addressed, and all were taken very seriously. This proved so successful that another one for all MA students is being

planned for the spring. **Zahra Patterson** announced that **Professor John High's** Theory Course had produced an anthology of work for President Obama called "*Write On ...*" with a grant from the MFA Program. It was mailed to the President. A good meeting -- always good to get together.

Elsbeth Macdonald

STUDENT, ALUMNI & PROFESSOR NEWS

Congratulations on so many successes — **Stephanie Gray** has read at the Poetry Project, Bowery Poetry Club & LGBT Center. **Jamey Jones** just got a gig as intern at Ugly Duckling Presse. **Gary Parrish** had a poem, “The Meek,” published in an Italian Journal. He has a review in *Big Bridge*, and recently read at the BPC. **Jon Peacock** appeared in Moliere’s *George Dandin* at the Kumble Theater in April. **Karen Pitt** is in the PhD program at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her concentration is in composition and rhetoric. She also recently started a tenure track position at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. **Jessica Rogers** has been an excellent research assistant to Professors Mutnick and Stephens with their work. As a research assistant to Professor Louis Parascandola, **Mary Walker** continues to assist ably with his manuscript on writer Eric Waldron.

Ashley Carter-Sinclair has been teaching 10th grade non-Western literature in a

New York HS, and he has created a leadership program for academically challenged male students. He recently received a Masters degree in Adolescent Ed. from Pace University and has been nominated for a NYC Teaching Fellows award for Classroom Excellence. **Valerie Deus** is living in Minneapolis and loves teaching at the local community college. **Anestine Hector-Mason** is a senior research scientist at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, DC, and she directs the transitioning English language learners project (TELL). She received her PhD in Rhetoric and Linguistics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2004. **Sara Kolbasowski** has a poem, “Sinking,” in the new *Writer’s Bloc* Magazine. **Margot Nast** was recently accepted into the PhD program in Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Penn. **Carolyn Smith** will be teaching poetry and fiction at Hofstra University on Saturdays to 7-12th graders during the summer. **Carol Telpha** has been accepted

as a student in the Doctor of Ed. program in English at Teachers College, Columbia University, with a focus on College Teaching (EdDCT).

Professor Jessica Hagedorn is scheduled to read at the Asian-American Writers’ Workshop in April. **Professor Lewis Warsh** is reading April 2 & 4 at the San Francisco Poetry Center, and on April 16 at The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. **Professor John High** has two books coming out later this year and numerous poems in *New American Writing*, *Stella Arts* (Moscow), *Kadar Has U.* (Istanbul), as well as translations in *Pen America*, and *The Nation*. And Professor High is the recipient of the 2009 David Newton Award for Teaching Excellence.

Bravo, Bravo, Bravo, all.



MOMA SUBWAY STATION BY TAMARA LEBRON

Writers and artists have long been interested in each other’s work. Perhaps that is why I was so intrigued by the Museum of Modern Art’s display of 58 reproductions of works from their collection placed throughout Brooklyn’s Atlantic/Pacific subway station this spring. For me, art has always been an integral part of everyday life. How could we not be influenced by having artwork literally in our path at rush hour? So many writers have been inspired by the current artists of their time; what is it about art, in general, that draws the attention of

writers? The Museum of Modern Art used Brooklyn’s Atlantic/Pacific subway station as a new showroom. This exhibit was vast -- most of the pieces were hidden quite well. If you were not looking closely, you could have missed Pablo Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, strategically placed right above eye level as you went downstairs from the number 2 and 3 line Manhattan-bound platform -- but not Matisse’s *The Swimming Pool*, or Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*. The collection extends itself to other art forms as well, such as film, sculpture, and photography; Charlie Chaplin, a Giacometti, and a Cindy Sherman picture are repre-

sented, too. How do these images reflect life? Can a character be portrayed with words in the same way that an artist draws him with an F pencil? Can you tell a story with the stroke of a brush? The works of art I have mentioned are selected solely based on my own interests. I urge you to go see the artwork and examine what appeals to you, and if the exhibition has left, not to worry, you can visit it online at atlanticpacific.moma.org/video. Or, you can catch the originals at MoMA.



Professor Jaime Manrique

“I love cemeteries,” said Mr. Manrique, soon off to Esquivias, in la Mancha, Spain, to visit the village where Cervantes lived with his wife during the first three years of their marriage. “When I visit a new place, the first thing I want to see is the local cemetery: it tells you a lot about the people who live there,” he confesses. “I have plans to see Cervantes’ grave in Madrid.”

Mr. Manrique comes to LIU via Columbia University, where he was an Assoc. Prof. and taught in the MFA program for

nine years. The Professor finds that the students at LIU “write powerful stories. I have the feeling that they have been waiting all their lives to write about issues of identity, class and the search for a language. As a teacher of writing,” he continues, “my most fervent desire is to help the students develop a love for the craft. I hope they will continue to write for the rest of their lives. I write because I love writing. I would love to write every day. When I write I am full of joy. I am always eager to deface the blank page.”

Mr. Manrique has lived in the USA for 40 years. He arrived in Florida as a teenager with his mother and sister. “When I go back to Co-

lombia people say, ‘You’re a gringo.’ I say, ‘Yes, I’m a gringo, but I’m a Colombian, too.’ I’m touched by the people there: 40% of them don’t know where their next meal is coming from. I would love to go back to my place of birth some day; I think I can be more useful there. Of all the literature courses I’ve taught, my favorite is the one on *Don Quixote*. At first, the students struggle with it. Then something magical happens. They fall in love with the book; some students even turn into Quixotic figures themselves. That’s exactly what happened to me after I read the novel for the first time 40 years ago.” *J.M./e.m.*

A WARM WELCOME TO
COLOMBIAN/AMERICAN WRITER,
PROFESSOR JAIME MANRIQUE
NOTES FROM A CONVERSATION

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DR. BOKOR CONT'D.

With this project, I seek to make the case for serious work on African proverbs because they are at the center of oral literature in Africa. Take them out, and African oral literature loses its appeal and uniqueness.

As you are in the midst of several projects, would you describe some of them?

I'm putting together some technical papers, as well as writing novels. I've completed one manuscript (PublishAmerica, later this year) which traces the role of traditional practices (the matrilineal system of inheritance) and raises crucial socio-cultural issues that give us glimpses into the causes of some perennial social unrest in African societies. The second novel satirizes the political situation within the African context: political rivalry in a fictionalized African country. It portrays how the politicians bend the rules for personal gain at the expense of the electorate, and exposes a larger issue concerning the influence of colonialism on contemporary African politics and why African countries cannot stand on their feet despite having attained independence long ago.

A journalist for 16 years—how did you begin writing?

In many Ghanaian communities, writing is considered a good skill to have, especially if it helps the individual to capture happenings in the community to share with others. I began writing short stories and keeping records of everyday happenings in elementary school. A fourth grade teacher had a huge influence. In High School, I took a keen interest in English language, literature, drama and debating. I also write in the many Ghanaian languages that I speak. I entered the Ghana Institute of Journalism in 1982.

Is it possible to note the essence of your message to your emerging professional writers?

I expect that students who take my courses will view issues beyond their personal perspectives and know that their writing has a high potential to make or mar social relationships. I want them to know that their writing has implications for society and must suit the needs of users, and that they should

strive to know who their audiences are so that they can write **for** them (audience-based to help the users make informed decisions) and not write **to** them (fail to serve the audience's interests because it is writer-based).

My emphasis is to make students' writing a reflection of both the individual and the culture of his or her society. I implore students to consider the impact of such factors as language and culture on their discursive maneuvers so as not to be detached from reality. Their writing must not be done in a vacuum if it is to benefit society. And society needs their input too!

Elsbeth Macdonald, interviewer

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E.M.