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Fiction Writer Aryn Kyle Visits Campus

Article by Molly Gutschow and Will Walawender

Aryn Kyle, author of the novel *The God of Animals* and the short story collection *Boys and Girls Like You and Me* visited Fredonia's campus on March 10th for a public craft talk and reading in McEwen 202. Many students and faculty members came with their own copy of her collection of short fiction in hand, already having studied it in many of the department's classes.

In her craft talk, Kyle decided to focus on the subject of setting—an element of fiction she admits she doesn't always pay conscious attention to—and much of the discussion led to examples from her novel. She discussed how when she began her novel, she wasn't sure about how the setting would play into the plot, but by the end the setting developed into its own character that deeply affected her story's characters and outcome. She gave the example from her novel of a canal that began as a simple prop of the setting within the story, but soon became a crucial component of the novel when a flood and then a drought changed the way the story played out completely.

Kyle also discussed the importance of writing to personal strengths. She used a metaphor to compare writing to sculpting; in sculpting, the artist begins with a slab of marble, but in writing an artist must create their own slab of marble before they can begin to build and create. This metaphor supported both of her discussion topics—

setting and writing what you know—to show the importance of a foundation to start with within a story. Kyle admitted that many of her characters and plotlines are derived from suppressed and darker sides of herself which she only lets out on the page.

At the reading Kyle shared her short story "Take Care," about two sisters named Claire and Kate who get jobs working together at a family dentist's office. Though the language within the story was simple and easy to follow, the details given about the characters left a lasting impression on the audience. Kyle read with a quick pace and her deadpan sarcasm when reading dialogue brought her characters to life and prompted laughter from her audience.



Photo by Brittany Neddo
Aryn Kyle signing students' books

In *Boys and Girls Like You and Me* Kyle wrote many coming-of-age pieces highlighting the heart-break of becoming an adult in the real world. Her stories leave a lot of room for reader speculation, and recurring imagery throughout the work create an extra level of insight into the bonds her characters share. Kyle's craft talk discussions seemed appropriate and helpful for college-level writers, and at the end of the night she graciously signed books and spoke individually with students, all of whom seemed delighted to spend time with such an admirable writer.

Mark Twain Here and Now

Article by Jessica Bens

Did you know Mark Twain spent time in Fredonia?

Or that he was editor of the Buffalo Courier Express?

What comes to mind when you hear the name Mark Twain? Perhaps you think of a favorite book you read by Twain or perhaps you think of him sitting in his white suit puffing a cigar. Maybe some of you don't think so much about Mark Twain himself but more about the period of the Civil War in which he wrote some of his most noteworthy works. Whatever you think of, I think it's safe to say that most all of us have some general conception of whom or what we think Mark Twain was. With the recent release of Mark Twain's autobiography, which he withheld from the public eye for over a century, we see Twain's legacy living on far after his death. In addition to the autobiography, we've recently witnessed controversy regarding the removal of the "n" word from Mark Twain's most popular novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. These noteworthy news events should show you just how timely Mark Twain's legacy is within our modern day culture.

As an English major in Dr. Emily VanDette's senior seminar class I, along with my peers, have been studying Mark Twain's critical reception—in other words, what people think about Mark Twain and his works. At the beginning of the semester Dr. VanDette gave us the opportunity to participate in a service-learning activity to complement the course. I decided that a service-learning activity would be an excellent way to end my Senior year so I took her up on her offer. We began by coordinating a meeting between myself, Dr. VanDette, and Dawn Eckenrode, a reference and instruction librarian at Reed Library. Together we came up with an idea that would highlight Mark Twain's presence in Western New York.

Did you know that Mark Twain spent time in Fredonia? Or that he was editor of the Buffalo Courier Express? I decided to

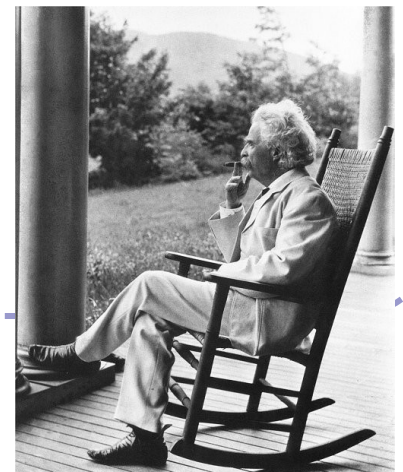
design an exhibit that would make students, faculty, and the community aware of these interesting local findings. The exhibit is set to be on display in the atrium of Reed Library the week of April 11th. The exhibit will feature pictures of the houses that Twain stayed in while visiting Fredonia. It will also feature correspondences written during his time here, among other interesting documents.

To compliment the exhibit we decided to organize a reading in which everyone is invited and encouraged to share their love of Mark Twain's works. The reading will be held in the Japanese Garden Area of Reed Library on April 14, 2011 at 3pm. Readings should be anywhere from 5-10 minutes in length and can comprise any of Mark Twain's works. Perhaps you're not crazy about the idea of reading in front of others but listeners are encouraged to come as well!

If you're interested in participating as a reader please visit Reed Library's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ReedLibrary.

Or if you'd prefer you may contact me via e-mail at bens0672@fredonia.edu. I hope to see you there!

*The Mark Twain reading and exhibits are sponsored by the Carnahan-Jackson Humanites fund



Israeli Scholar Talks Zweig

Article by Louis Frankel

On March 3, 2011, Dr. Mark Gelber of Ben-Gurion University in Israel came to SUNY Fredonia to deliver the first bi-annual Stefan Zweig lecture. The lecture is part of what is intended to be an ongoing series of lectures about the life and work of Stefan Zweig to be delivered every two years. SUNY Fredonia was chosen as the site of this lecture as Reed Library holds the largest collection of Zweig's correspondences in America.

Born in 1881 in Vienna, Zweig was one of the foremost literary voices of the 1920's and 30's. As a Jew of substantial fame in Europe, Zweig was placed in great danger during World War II and fled Europe for the United States in 1940. In 1941 he reached Brazil where he would eventually take his own life later that year.

As reflected by the materials in the Zweig archive (and Gelber's lecture), Zweig did not limit himself to the writing of literature. Zweig published essays about a variety of topics and had correspondence with figures such as Salvador Dali and Sigmund Freud. After remarks by English professor Birger Vanwesenbeeck—who first contacted Gelber about speaking at Fredonia and University

Librarian—and Reed Library Director Randy Gadikian, Gelber spoke about the life of Zweig and the significance of his work. Gelber's lecture sought to explore and explain the reasons that despite the popularity and authority that Zweig enjoyed during his life, his popularity has not endured to the present day.

The next day, Dr. Gelber had a chance to sit down and have breakfast with members of the Jewish Student Union and Professor Vanwesenbeeck. JSU Historian Gina Abraham said, "It was really great getting to meet with Dr. Gelber. There are so few Jews here so it was really nice being able to meet and speak to someone who is not only a major authority on literature but also on Judaism." They discussed the differences between Jewish life in Israel, Jewish life in America and Jewish life in Fredonia. Following the meal, Dr. Gelber was transported back to Buffalo in time to catch a flight to Israel.

To learn more about the Zweig archives, contact Gerda Morrisey at (716) 673-4837.

"Reed Library holds the largest collection of Zweig's correspondences in America"

Is There Something in the Water in Fenton Hall?

Did you know there have been at least 25 pregnancies/births in the English Department since Fall 1997? This even includes one set of twins! For over a decade, there has been at least one new addition to the department family every year!

Fun Fact provided by Diane Bohn, Department Secretary



Bedtime Stories with Sigma Tau Delta

Article by Katie Goldbach

It was all about the pajamas and stuffed animals at the Sigma Tau Delta Bedtime Stories event on March 24th, co-sponsored this year by Reed Library. In the Japanese Garden area of the library, there were several large and colorful blankets spread out on the floor for the dozens of children and adults that attended. There was even a handful of college students dressed in their own pajamas. There were cookies and milk provided for everyone to enjoy as they listened to the various stories read by different faculty and staff members, many of whom brought their own children.

Professor Dustin Parsons of the English department read the story *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. His enthusiastic attitude shone through in his storytelling, especially as he soon had everyone (even most of the adults!) involved in the storytelling. Dr. Jack Croxton of the Psychology Department read *The Puppy Who Chased the Sun*. The story was clearly enjoyed by the captive audience, many of whom crowded around each reader to get the best view. Another wonderful story was provided by MaryLou Dewolf of Reed Library, who read the adorable tale

Splat the Cat. The story was well-chosen for the young audience, and caused quite a few laughs. The other readers included: Randy Gadikian (Director of Reed Library who read folktale "O-Jizo San, The Grateful Statues"), Dr. Kim-Marie Cole (English Department professor who read *Marta and the Bicycle*), and Dr. Susan Spangler (English Department professor who read *The Perfect Nest*). All of the readers did a wonderful job captivating the young audience with their stories.

The Reed Library co-sponsored the event with Sigma Tau Delta this year, which allowed STD to create beautiful posters for the event, as well as host the event in the lovely and spacious Japanese Garden area. All of the children were also given a Clifford book to take home with them. Overall, the event was a marvelous success that was enjoyed by all who attended.



This event is FREE and open to the public. STD's co-sponsorship with Reed Library allowed the creation of a colorful and whimsical poster advertising Bedtime Stories around the community.



Randy Gadikian, Director of Reed Library, read a folktale called "O-Jizo San, The Grateful Statues"



Dr. Kim-Marie Cole of the English Department read *Marta and the Bicycle*



English Grad Program Takes a New Direction

Article by Molly Gutschow

Last week I had the chance to sit down with Dr. Jeanette McVicker, coordinator of our department's graduate program alongside Dr. Kim Marie Cole, to discuss the programmatic changes taking place next fall that have been in the works for a year. With a new vision that coincides with our current cultural and economic climate, the grad program will be revamped to help students prepare for the ever-changing world after advanced degree work.

The new program will implement a streams model that expands the "Intro to Graduate Studies" course into 3 credit hours and offers multiple methodologies and new ways of conducting research. Students will have the opportunity to choose their own culminating projects from four options. This is moving away from the old idea that each student must compose a "one size fits all" thesis—or walk away without any significant degree project. Now, students may decide to work on a comprehensive exam, a publishable journal essay, a pedagogical thesis, or a traditional thesis—whichever fits best according to a student's personal goals and aspirations. In this way, the graduate students will be able to choose for themselves how their degree will have meaning and relevance in the world.

By broadening the program more faculty will be enabled to contribute and diverse content will be introduced. The program coordinators plan to integrate into the new system courses like Sociolinguistics, Film Theory, and eventually more writing-based classes. This multidisciplinary structure ditches the idea that literature alone covers the entirety of the field of English studies today. Now, the grad program will look critically at the current world to discover the relevance of literature in contemporary times—times when the arts and humanities are often pushed aside and undervalued.

Dr. McVicker hopes that through concrete engagement with the field, future English grad students will develop greater confidence in their skills and expertise. Students will be urged to give presentations and participate in conferences and events both on and off campus, helping them gain the abilities needed to navigate the professional world. As of right now, the program will build on the recent addition of a graduate component of the annual OSCAR (Office of Student Creative Activity and Research) expo by encouraging students to participate locally as well as in national graduate and professional scholarly conferences.

With all of these changes, Dr. McVicker hopes there will also be a new sense of appeal for the program as well. In the past, Fredonia's graduate offerings have been underpublicized and there has been a misconception that our university only offers undergrad options. With fresh coursework that establishes independent thought, rigorous research, and a mastery of language, our program will now be much more engaging for Fredonia students and students coming from other universities as well.

Dr. McVicker's excitement about the upcoming changes was evident, and the two of us discussed how beneficial these changes will be for future grad students. As an English major nearing graduation myself, I often face the ever-present questions "What do you do with an English degree?" and "Why is studying English relevant?" The new English grad program here at Fredonia will surely help students answer these questions, as well as hone and direct the skills already established during a student's undergrad experience toward a meaningful and fulfilling future.

Sigma Tau Delta Column

Article by Joseph Moynihan

Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honors Society, is currently accepting applications for membership. Application forms are available in the English Department office. The induction ceremony will be held on Friday, May 6. We look forward to welcoming new members to our organization.

We are currently gearing up for the last weeks of the semester. We will be hosting several events throughout the next month that include our signature Coffee Talk, English Mixer, and Open Mic Night.

Our second Coffee Talk will take place on April 11th at noon in the English Reading Room. Dr. Gerber and Professor Nezhukumatathil will be our guest speakers for the event. This is an opportunity to speak with professors in the department in a casual, relaxed atmosphere. Food and beverages will be served.

The Al Dunn Day of Poetry and Prose will be held on April 26th from 1 to 5 pm. While Sigma Tau Delta is not associated with this event we encourage interested persons to attend. It is an opportunity to raise money for the Al Dunn scholarship, to support the community, and to read/listen to poetry and prose.

Later in the semester Sigma Tau Delta will be hosting our English Mixer and Open Mic Night. We encourage interested individuals to keep an eye out for postings concerning the time, place, and date of these events.

To everyone who has participated and volunteered thus far this semester, we at Sigma Tau Delta want to thank you. Your tireless efforts have made a significant impact on the academic, as well as local community. Thank you for your selflessness in ensuring the success of our events and continued presence on campus.

Upcoming Dates:

Coffee Talk: April 11th, English Reading Room: Noon

Al Dunn Day of Poetry and Prose, April 26th, 1-5 pm

Open Mic Night, TBA

English Mixer, TBA

Writer's Ring is Back!

Article by Tomi Stratton

As many of you may have heard, Writer's Ring was derecognized as a club by SA this semester. After many meetings, an election, and many hours put forth by members of the club, we have been re-recognized. We are planning two events – one in April and one in May. In April (which is National Poetry Month), we will have an Open Mic Night in the Spot on campus. In early May, we would like to hold another event in the amphitheatre outside of Reed Library. The actual dates for both of these events are pending. Look for signs if you're interested in any of these events! Writer's Ring meets every Monday at 6pm in Fenton 127.

Bring your prose and poetry and join the fun!

President: Tomi Stratton
Treasurer: Damien Delgado
Social Chair: Shelby Converse

Vice-President: Thom Dean
Secretary: A.J. Ryan