

L. Annette Binder Shares Her Style with a Captive Audience

Dmitriy Shakhray



BINDER SPOKE MARCH 6TH, FEATURING HER COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES, *RISE*

On March 6th, an audience filled up a McEwen lecture hall, eager to hear L. Annette Binder talk about her short story collection,

Rise, and gain insight into her perspectives on writing as a craft.

What followed was a true bamboozling of the audience. The crowd was there because they enjoyed Binder's fiction, but the author opened her craft talk with an appeal to poetry. She briefly let Joe Wilkins have the microphone, as well as Cormac McCarthy and Joan Didon, admiring their work as a writer, just as many of the students in the audience had done for *Rise*. Her point was concise: writing good prose follows

the reading of poetry.

Similar juxtapositions followed in her discussion of character. *Rise*, as the audience discovered, is a product of a writer following her own advice: focusing on character instead of structure. The short story collection is unified in its unconformities. Ordinary places find themselves occupied by eccentric (and sometimes surreal) persons - a middle-class family's kitchen, with a baby that utters Greek phrases from thousands of years ago; a white-

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Outlaw/ed Bodies Exhibit Now Open

Kelsey Radomski

The reception for the Outlawed Bodies Exhibit took place on Wednesday, March 26th at 4p.m. in Reed Library. Chief Officer of Diversity Bill Boerner spoke as a keynote speaker while visitors enjoyed live cello music and refreshments.

The exhibit is an interdisciplinary exposition

that gives students the opportunity to display their work and collaborate with one another to better make statements about what society does and does not accept. It is coordinated with Art Forum and sponsored by Reed Library, The Women and Gender Studies program, the English Department, and the Mary Louise

White Fund.

Groups of three or four have worked together over the past few weeks to produce creative, critical and artistic pieces that complement each other and send specific messages about the theme of unacceptable bodies in culture. Some of these themes include religiously marked bodies, the violation and cen-

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Visiting Writer Ira Sukrungruang will host craft talk at 4p.m. Reading will take place at 7p.m. in McEwan 202 on April 4th
- ◆ Writers' Ring meets every Wednesday at 6p.m. in the English Reading Room
- ◆ The next English Works meeting will be April 10th in the English Reading Room at 8p.m.—mock interviews will be held. Students should dress well and bring a recent resume!

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Literacy Volunteers

Katharine Carney

Last semester, I was able to volunteer for the Literacy Volunteers of America for a one-credit service learning class. As a result of my seemingly short time in the bookstore, I feel like I've actually contributed to the community as well as made a place for myself in it. I've learned a lot during my time at the bookstore, including how to organize a massive amount of worn-out and unloved books, as well as some useful customer service tips and how to keep contributing to the bookstore.

During my first day, I learned how to rip apart books. Naturally, I was a bit

hesitant. Being raised by book lovers made me



From the Interns' Perspective

feel an aversion to doing books harm, but some books that people donate are just unmarketable. I've had people bring in books

that smell so strongly of cigarettes that the bookstore almost immediately began to smell of it. All the books in the bookstore are donated, so sorting through donations was especially significant. I had to discern which books were useful and had value, and which should be discarded. Of course, I had the main volunteer Marty check my work because I did not want to lose a book that had potential or keep one that did not. With sorting the donations, I've also had to rework the shelves in order to fit those new donations. That includes taking out books that may not be the best books to sell, an example being the politics shelf. Political books can become outdated and need

to be discarded to make room for the new books.

I quickly became known as the go-to girl for finding books, as I could easily tell you where to find a book, down to the author's name. Most of the books are in alphabetical order by section, but can sometimes be difficult to find because many of them are contained in boxes for sale. I often spent a lot of time just looking at the books and this helped me sell to certain customers. The bookstore has such an array of books that are really quite valuable. It was just an all-around lovable place to be in. Being able to work alongside my peers as well as the other volunteers that were there

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Visiting Writers

Jeff Wilkinson

The Visiting Writers' Series is a great time. I'm in my second semester as an intern for the program. The program is run by Professors Nezhukumatathil and Gerkenmeyer, who specialize in creative writing. They've been a total pleasure to work with, and have been very interested in the input Matt Perloff (my fellow intern) and I have on how to improve the program as a whole.

Taking the internship for the standard 3 credit hours will have you doing things like

putting together itineraries for the writers, keeping in contact with them in the weeks leading up to their visit, and putting together study guides to send out to professors. Interns must have the books read well in advance to make the study guides, the large posters for the Creative Writing Department's board in Fenton, and the raffle tickets which feature quotes from the authors. There is also a book review due a week or so after the events. We occasionally escort the writers

"We occasionally escort the writers around campus.

Last year I even picked Matthew Olzmann up at his hotel."

around campus. Last year I even picked Matthew Olzmann up at his hotel. We also do interviews with the writers for the VW Series page on [Vimeo](#) and promote events on the Facebook page and [Twitter](#).

I love interning at this program, and I hate to stop. I've learned a lot

about professional etiquette and the work that goes into maintaining a program like this. It tends to go from no work to a lot of work pretty fast, but it's never been overwhelming and the instructors are completely willing to work with your schedule. It's an excellent way to earn three credits. I can't recommend it more highly.

Leapfrog Press

Riley Straw

For scholars of the English language, SUNY Fredonia holds many opportunities to gain a wide range of experience and knowledge. At Leapfrog Press, a publishing program that runs out of Fredonia, N.Y., interns get a first-hand look at what it means to be an editor for a widely respected business. I first heard about this position from English Works last year where Dr. Lisa Graziano, managing editor of Leapfrog Press, attended as a

representative from the organization.

We meet with Lisa twice a week. For Leapfrog's fiction contest in the spring, we get the chance to read potential winners' work before it's published. A lot of the time, we spend the day sifting through pages of contest manuscripts, trying to find something eye-catching and learning through practice. Other days, we work on the publishing house's literary journal, *Crossborder*.

I've learned, thus far, how to pay attention to

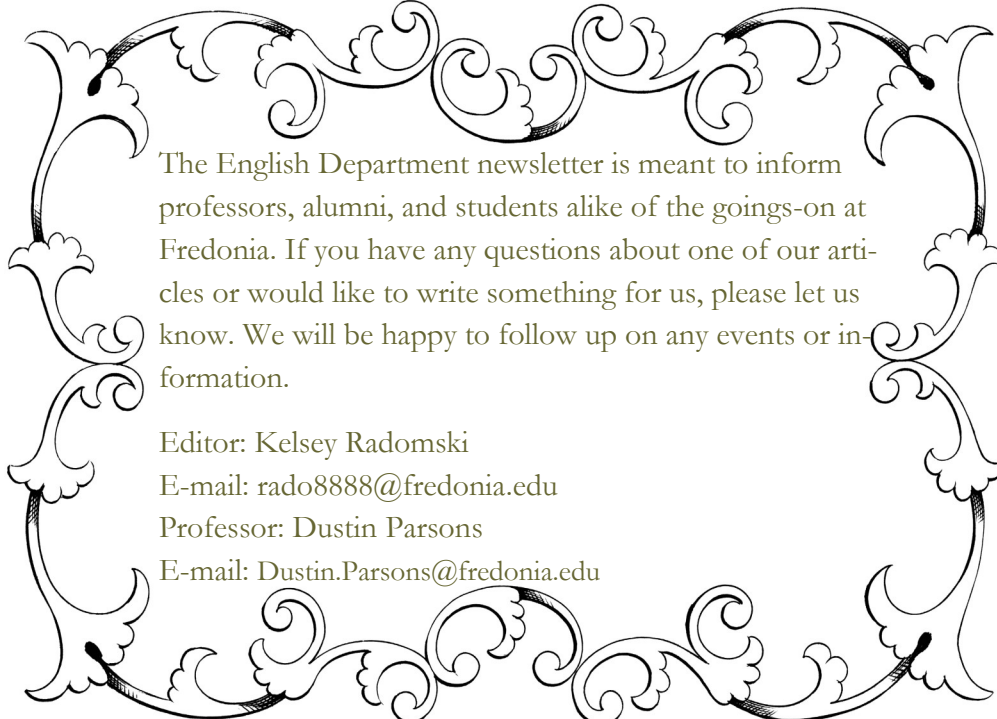
detail a lot more—to pay attention to how someone writes, as well as to what they're writing. Working side-by-side with other SUNY Fredonia students is comforting, and we all work well together. Because we each share such similar skill-sets, we're able to bounce ideas off of each other and figure out which manuscripts are good and which are not.

Working with professionals who understand the ins and the outs of publishing gives me confirmation. Seeing people do what

I want to do for a living makes me feel like college isn't the end-all-be-all; we're here to become great at what we enjoy doing, and the internship as an editor at Leapfrog Press has helped me on my way to that goal.

The ability to distinguish the good from the bad—especially in literature—is important, and the internship at Leapfrog Press has given me a better grasp on how the world of publishing and editing works. I've learned much, and I've learned how to use my knowledge to my advantage.

Contact Us!



The English Department newsletter is meant to inform professors, alumni, and students alike of the goings-on at Fredonia. If you have any questions about one of our articles or would like to write something for us, please let us know. We will be happy to follow up on any events or information.

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Literacy

Volunteers Intern Perspective

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was a great experience because we were able to have lively discussions about books that were unrelated to the class readings that I have. I now have a lot of fond memories that will stick with me.

Outlaw/ed Bodies cont. from front page

sorship of bodies, genitals, acceptable/unacceptable nudity, pregnancy, addiction, the impoverished body, and more.

Creative pieces displayed in the exhibit will include flash or micro fiction, poetry and short fiction. Artistic pieces will include digital paintings, sculptures, and paintings, and the critical pieces will include studies and observations about the society and culture in which we live. These pieces will be the work of students involved

in Women Student Union, Art Forum, Writers' Ring, and more.

Organizers Jeffrey J. Iovannone, Rebecca Schwab, and Sarah Gerkensmeyer collaborated on this idea in hopes of bringing students together across disciplines. When a diverse group of students works together, the learning is more dynamic and fluid, and interpretations are endless. When I asked Professor Gerkensmeyer what she hopes people will take away from this exhibit, she an-

swered that she hopes the solid distinction between art and scholarship be eliminated, and that people will truly value interdisciplinary efforts. Dr. Iovannone explained that the exhibit is meant to spread awareness about the fact that there is immense bodily diversity and variation within our world and that these differences often cause exclusion or rejection from society. By informing the public about these differences, he hopes that people will be more accepting of others once the

realization that variation is a fact of human existence occurs.

The exhibit will be up until May 9th.



Binder Visit cont. from front page

collar father, who can gaze out his window to trace the landscape of Mars.

Bumping character above plot isn't anything new, but that isn't all that Binder does. Her plots are thought out and air-tight. It's the characters that linger after the story is over, and that give *Rise* its surreal flavor. The term "fairy tale" echoed from audience members, as it does in endless reviews of the collection, wondering if that was the source of Binder's inspiration. It is always interesting to see the reaction of authors to readers' interpretations and labels. To Binder, the protagonists were quite real, despite their fantastic traits.

As Binder explained, writers are also actors, and the characters are roles. In a bit of insight into Binder's personality, she explained how her daily life has brief moments of acting: allowing the character to wear her skin, to think about the world around. It is not a mere privileging of character over

plot: closeness to a character is an avenue to a good story.

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reading of
poetry.”*

This idea of closeness – of characters as roles and writers as actors – is abstract, but Binder's reading made it clear to everyone. Her selection for the night was "Galatea." For a time, the visiting author became an avid consumer of plastic surgery, struggling with the loss of her daughter. But, in the text, Binder remained alongside this other woman. For example, in the offices of plastic surgeons, readers found imprints of Binder's recount of a dermatologist visit involving adolescence and lemon juice. Seeing this intimacy between author and character during a live reading was perhaps the iconic moment of L. Annette Binder's

visit to SUNY Fredonia.

Interview with Melissa Mallaber : Student of Chaucer and GA of the Women and Gender Studies program

Kelsey Radomski

How did you begin your work with Chaucer? How long have you been working on it?

As a young girl, I was fascinated by everything medieval. I've always been captivated by the Middle Ages, and the fact that we have such brilliant literature preserved from this time is amazing to me. I get really excited looking at pages from a manuscript that date back to the 14th century. As a freshman in college, I was introduced to Chaucer's work, and I began to find close associations to the work I was doing in my Women's Studies classes. I had a professor that encouraged me to pursue the field, and his passion for the subject made it all the more enjoyable.

At first, I thought that feminism and medieval literature were two very separate spheres, but I have found there to be a growing conversation among contemporary scholars that incorporates feminist theory into medieval texts.

I have only been studying Chaucer for a short amount of time, not nearly the time it takes to call myself a scholar. People

have devoted their entire lives to researching this author, only to find they know nothing about him at all. I have a long road ahead of me.

What specifically are you hoping to uncover with your work in Chaucer studies? Have you found any interesting aspects in craft or style thus far with his works?

Chaucer is an amazing poet, and I am primarily interested in his character, Alison, from *The Canterbury Tales*. She is the star of the article I am currently writing, but Chaucer is only one of the many authors that I am into right now. Lately my focus has been on his contemporary, Christine de Pizan. She is a fascinating study, and I

“I live in two very different worlds that actually have a lot in common.”

believe her work should be included in our curriculum. It saddens me that we rarely acknowledge such a fine example of female identity in our required readings, and I would love to see her work more available to students. I would encourage those who have yet to discover her to read [The](#)

[Book of the City of Ladies](#).

I also intend to study the languages of the texts, in particular Middle English and Latin. My grandfather could read and write in Latin, and I always thought it a shame that such a beautiful language has nearly disappeared from education.

What first spurred your interest in Women and Gender Studies?

I guess being born of the female sex in the seventies to a traditional family had me questioning the way things were and which direction they were heading. I realized that I needed to be educated in order to not only better understand the problem, but to help fix it. The program also allows me to network with others who are equally as passionate about female empowerment, and I have had the pleasure of working with many people whose activism and commitment to the cause is very encouraging to me.

Are you finding it easy to switch back and forth between the two?



I do not think of it as a switch at all. It is a great privilege for me to be able to do two things that I love, and I'm grateful every day for the opportunity.

I get discouraged, because I will be reading a text from the Middle Ages that is addressing many of the same issues that we are currently having, and I ask myself how is that possible? But that is part of the interest for me. I like to imagine what Chaucer's life was like, and what he was thinking when he created the character "The Wife of Bath." She is a necessity for feminist scholars. I pull her into my gender work all the time. So, yes, I live in two very different worlds that actually have a lot in common.

What do you do as the WGST program's GA?

I assist our awesome coordinator, Jeffrey Iovannone in implementing the new program in any way possible. I attend advisory board meet-

Interview with Melissa Mallaber cont. from page 5

ings, maintain office hours, coordinate events, assist in public relations, manage the website and social media, create newsletters, recruit for the program and reach out to alumni. I basically do whatever I can to make Jeff's job easier.

Are there any upcoming events sponsored by the WGST program that you think members of the English major/minor community would be interested in?

This month is particularly full of awesomeness because it is Women's History Month, and that means lots of fun events centered on the theme of Feminism and Pop Culture. I am especially excited about our First Annual Gender and Social Change Lecturer, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, on April 4th, and the 16th Annual Gender Conference on April 9th, where students come to present their research. [The WGST Website](#) has more information about these events, or you

can [check out this newsletter that I made](#). You could also stop in my office, 171A Fenton. We have a great selection of resources that are available.

Melissa Mallaber is a second year graduate student in English with a bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Women's Studies. Her current research focus is on feminism in the Middle Ages. She enjoys camping, music, photography, and volunteering her time at local nursing homes. She lives in the country with her pets and hopes to someday revisit London to begin researching medieval manuscripts.