

# Pen & Pixels

NOTES  
FROM THE  
NDSU  
DEPARTMENT  
OF ENGLISH



Side view of Minard Hall, from  
across Albrecht Boulevard.

## Greetings from the Department Chair

My first semester as chair of the NDSU English Department has been exciting and productive, as we have welcomed (and will soon welcome) several new tenure-track and visiting faculty and full-time lecturers to our ranks. Our two new tenure-track faculty members with joint appointments in other departments are Dr. Alison Graham-Bertolini, contemporary American literature and women's studies (PhD, Louisiana State University; joint appointment in Women & Gender Studies), and Dr. Sean Burt, the Hebrew Bible and genre theory (PhD, Duke University; joint appointment in History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies), officially joining us in January. Dr. Adam Goldwyn, Medieval and Byzantine studies (PhD, City University of New York), will also join us as a tenure-track faculty member in January. Dr. Matthew Duquès, Early American studies (PhD, Vanderbilt), is our Visiting Assistant Professor this year. We have also welcomed several

full-time lecturers to the department this fall, including Natalie Smith Carlson, Ben Melby, and Kristina Caton, as well as several new adjunct instructors.

This semester, we have engaged in a self-study for our upcoming program review. This exercise has allowed us to discuss our commitment to the liberal arts tradition focused on critical reading, writing, and thinking. As a department, we view education as a process that draws students into a fuller version of themselves, inspires them to be lifelong learners, and prepares them to be future educators. We view humanities education as central to students' ability to participate in a global society and develop sensitivity to diversity. The benefits of the study of language and literature are well-documented. Recent studies and articles in both the humanities and sciences emphasize the cognitive and emotional benefits of the study of language and literature, including increased empathy

(*MLA Profession* 2012), improved memory (*Journal of Consciousness* 2013), and increased social perception and emotional intelligence (*Science* 2013). Recent articles also note how the skills that English majors cultivate are sought after by employers (*Inside Higher Ed* October 2013; *Huffington Post* May 2012).

Thank you for your support of and interest in the English Department. I invite you to join us in our efforts to promote the humanities, and particularly the study of language and literature, in our communities. I welcome your feedback and ideas by email or phone: [gary.totten@ndsu.edu](mailto:gary.totten@ndsu.edu); (701) 231-7158.

If you would like to contribute financially to the department's work of teaching and research, I invite you to do so through the donation portal at the end of the newsletter. Many thanks and happy holidays.



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Author Sena Jeter Naslund signing copies of her book at Barry Hall

## Reading Literature, Viewing Art: *Moby-Dick*, *Ahab's Wife*, and the Paintings of TL Solien

This project was designed to help members of the community understand the connection between literature and art. The anchoring event of the project was a new art exhibit by regional artist T. L. Solien, titled, "Toward the Setting Sun." The surrealist exhibit, which was curated by Plains Art Museum CEO Colleen Sheehy, was inspired by Solien's reading of two novels, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and contemporary, best selling author Sena Jeter Naslund's *Ahab's Wife*. The exhibit explores the themes of women's representations and roles, westward expansion, the sublime, and settlement in our region. The various activities surrounding this event were part of a much larger collaborative project in the community called "3-2-1: Three communities, two books, one art exhibit."

## Public Reading by Sena Jeter Naslund

A public reading of her book *Ahab's Wife* by Sena Jeter Naslund was hosted at NDSU Barry Hall. This event was a collaboration between the Plains Art Museum, NDSU, the North Dakota Humanities Council, and the Public Libraries. Everyone who came in contact with Sena was impressed with her generous spirit, depth of expertise in writing, and ability to teach and communicate her work to others.

In addition, The Plains Art Museum hosted a reception prior to the reading, where Sena Jeter Naslund signed books for community members. There was an outstanding turnout for the event! People commented on how gracious and genuine she was and how they enjoyed their few moments talking with her.

## Panel Presentation on *Moby-Dick* at the Plains Art Museum



NDSU English Department faculty Gary Totten, Matthew Duquès, and Kelly Sassi participated in the panel presentation on *Moby-Dick*. The titles of the scholars' talks are below:

"Print and Visual Culture during the American Renaissance," Matthew Duquès, PhD

"Remixing the Nineteenth Century," Gary Totten, PhD

"A Feminist Perspective on *Moby-Dick*, *Ahab's Wife*, and *Toward the Setting Sun*," Kelly Sassi, PhD

## New Faculty Spotlight:



Dr. Alison Graham-Bertolini

### 1. Where are you from originally?

I grew up in Philadelphia, PA, spent 10 years in Baton Rouge, LA, and now find myself in Fargo, ND. I call all of these places home. Neither of my parents are American citizens so I am something of a nomad by nature.

### 2. Where did you receive your degrees and what are they in?

BA in English Literature from Temple University, Master's of Liberal Arts and a Certificate of Women's Studies from University of Pennsylvania, PhD in English Literature from Louisiana State University.

### 3. What are your research interests?

My academic interests include contemporary American and post-colonial literature, with a focus on race and gender.

### 4. What courses are you teaching in the spring?

I'm excited to teach ENGL 331: Contemporary Women's Literature; and WGS 110: Intro to Women's Studies.

### 5. How do you like NDSU so far?

NDSU has been good to me so far. I love that the programs at NDSU include "Soil Science," "Weed Science," and "Meat Science." Where were these majors when I was an undergrad?!

### 6. What is a fun fact about you?

I played bass guitar in a grunge band called Bunny Plasm for a number of years. We played shows mostly in the Philadelphia area, although I had the opportunity to play at CBGBs in Manhattan, on the same stage where The Ramones and Blondie performed. I met my husband when he came to watch one of our shows.



## New Faculty Spotlight:



**Dr. Matthew Duquès**

**1. Where are you from originally?**

I am originally from a northern New Jersey suburb, just a few miles from New York City.

**2. Where did you receive your degrees and what are they in?**

For my undergraduate degree in English I went to Haverford College. I received my MA in Liberal Studies with a focus on Cultural Studies from Dartmouth College and an MA and a PhD in English from Vanderbilt University.

**3. What are your research interests?**

I study the curious ties among the messy and often violent process of North American settlement, the novel form, and "public" formal education in the post-revolutionary U.S. I also have a secondary interest in the early-eighteenth century Red Atlantic: I am currently learning about the conflicts and alliances among Huron, Iroquoian, English, and French in New England and New France at a moment when these different groups of people questioned their role in international politics. I am analyzing understudied speeches, travelogues, and dramas that depict and address early North American colonization, resistance, and cross-cultural exchange.

**4. What courses are you teaching in the spring?**

Introduction to Literary Theory (ENGL 271), Nineteenth Century American Literature (ENGL 340), and a course on theories of Democracy and the Commons in Early America (476/676).

**5. How do you like NDSU so far?**

So far I am enjoying NDSU a great deal. I have had good students this fall and have had, without exception, welcoming and helpful colleagues who have supported me both on campus and off campus. The school spirit is also impressive. Everywhere I go I run into folks who express their appreciation for, and investment in, the university. I think their passion is contagious; it certainly is for me.

**6. What is a fun fact about you?**

The fun fact I often share with new folks is that I am a triplet. The three of us have all taken different career paths. We live in different places, and most importantly, we look nothing alike. But we do share a birthday.

## Cosgrove Seminars

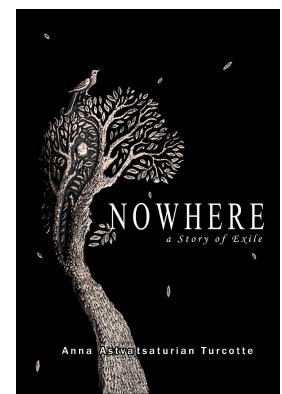


Steven Hammer, Ph.D. Candidate in English, presented a seminar titled "Integrating New Media Avant-Garde Art and Writing Practices." Hammer discussed the ways that two strands of new media art, glitch and dirty new media, can and should inform the ways we think about writing and the ways we teach it.

Hammer noted how Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives and writing intensive courses have done much to import the theories and practices of college composition into a range of disciplines, making our field simultaneously influential and somewhat insulated. He asked the question: What happens when we reverse the direction of influence, and instead look for ways that various disciplinary practices and philosophies can inform writing practices and pedagogy?

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Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte, who attended high school in Wahpeton and law school at UND, visited campus to talk about her book, *Nowhere, A Story of Exile*, which she wrote at the age of 14. The book is based on the childhood diaries she kept as a refugee from Baku, Azerbaijan. After fleeing Baku, she and her family spent three difficult years in Armenia before settling in Wahpeton in 1992.



## McNair Fellow Graduates From NDSU



Kristen Waldock, a McNair Fellow and senior graduating this semester with her B.A. degree in English, recently gave her McNair presentation regarding "The Translator's Responsibility." Below is a copy of her abstract.

*When translating literature, a translator attempts to communicate his or her interpretation of an author's work. In a sense, translation is a creative process, as described by Jeremy Munday, because every translator's interpretation will be slightly different. This is a role that complicates the translation process, as translators are confronted with the following problem: Is a translator responsible for providing a translation that deviates very little from the source text in order to demonstrate certain features of a foreign culture, or is the translator instead obligated to only recreate a similar experience and thus remove any traces of foreignness?*

*To examine this issue, I rely on the arguments made by translators such as Douglas Robinson, who argues that emphasizing foreignness discourages the source language audience from reading translated literature. Conversely, in order to prove that there are moments when a translator should emphasize foreignness, I draw upon the arguments made by Tejaswini Niranjana, who discusses the ways in which some translators have misinterpreted sacred Indian texts and have thus given a false image of a culture to the target language audience. To supplement my discussion and examine how this issue is addressed or ignored throughout the translation process, I also rely on examples from my own translation, an excerpt from Albert Camus's novel L'Etranger, which I shall*

*compare with the translations of Matthew Ward, Stuart Gilbert, and Joseph Laredo.*

*In so doing, I will ultimately argue that a translator should communicate his or her interpretation of the text and the author's intent in using clear language to which the target language audience will be able to relate and understand. I also suggest, however, that the translator should be aware of moments when it is desirable and perhaps preferable to emphasize foreignness in a literary text rather than understate it.*

Kristen hopes to study Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. When asked about the McNair Scholars Program she stated, "McNair is a great program because it gives you the opportunity to start research that you can carry on in to graduate school. It also gives you the chance to work closely with a faculty mentor who not only guides your research, but also helps you through the whole process of applying to graduate school when the time comes. It's been a great experience for me because I feel so supported by the program and by Dr. Theile, my mentor."

## Sena Jeter Naslund Visits NDSU Class



While in town, Naslund graciously volunteered to visit Dr. Kevin Brooks' Introduction to English Studies course, where students have been reading *Moby-Dick*, *Ahab's Wife* and and "re-mixing" the novels for their final project. The quality of student questions during this exchange shows that when students have opportunities to interact with high-caliber writers and scholars like Naslund, they truly do rise to the challenge and make the most of the interchange.

## Incoming Graduate Student Spotlight:



### Ibtissem Belmihoub

1. Where are you from originally?  
Algeria
2. Where did you receive your degrees and what are they in  
I attended the University of M'hamed Bougara Boumerdes, Algeria and received a Bachelors in English language and Foreign Languages
3. What are your research interests?  
Pedagogy and Rhetoric
4. What courses are you teaching in the spring?  
This Spring I am teaching two sections of Composition, English 120
5. How do you like NDSU so far?  
I love Bison pride!
6. What advice would you offer undergraduates interested in pursuing a Bachelor's degree in English? What about students interested in pursuing a Master's or PhD?  
Be passionate about what you do, and go all the way.
7. What is a fun fact about you?  
When I was home, I would not cook (because my sister does all the work) but now that I live with my roommates I find it fun to cook all together even if it means experimenting on food! It usually tastes pretty good.



## Incoming Graduate Student Spotlight:



Rob Neuteboom

1. Where are you from originally?

I'm an army brat, so I'm from everywhere and nowhere. I guess I spent a chunk of my teenage years in Layton, UT. I relocated to Fargo in 2005.

2. Where did you receive your degrees and what are they in

I earned a BA in History from Weber State University, an MA in English from the University of South Dakota, and an MFA in Creative Writing from MSUM.

3. What are your research interests?

My research interests focus on improved methods of online writing instruction.

4. What courses are you teaching in the spring?

I work full-time as the Academic Dean for Rasmussen College in Fargo.

5. How do you like NDSU so far?

I like best my wonderful instructors, the fantastic cohort with whom I interact, and the overall sense of collegiality.

6. What advice would you offer undergraduates interested in pursuing a Bachelor's degree in English? What about students interested in pursuing a Master's or PhD?

Be diligent in your studies, identify a career path, and pace yourself. For graduate work, choose a program that fits your professional goals, seek mentors, and take every relevant opportunity that arises.

7. What is a fun fact about you?

I'm a long distance runner—but I didn't start running until I was 35.

## We're All Moved In To Minard!



Reception Area



Conference Room



Graduate Bay



Graduate Bay



Graduate Bay



# The Buzz

If you missed any of the updates regarding recent happenings, publications, and events that the English faculty and staff participated in this fall, you can catch up here!

This summer **Matthew Duquès**, Visiting Assistant Professor of English, participated in a transatlantic studies conference entitled, "Roots, Routes, and Routs: American and British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century" at Plymouth University, UK. Matt's paper, "John Dennis, Baron de Lahontan and the Red Atlantic," will appear in a forthcoming collection of essays proposed by the conference organizers and published by Palgrave. This fall he is also excited to be participating in "Just Teach One" with his students in the American Literature I survey (English 261). "Just Teach One" is an initiative that has been launched through "Common-Place," an online journal and website sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society. "Just Teach One" provides accessible, electronic versions of unknown or understudied early U.S. fiction to undergrads and graduate students, and it provides a forum for blogging about the teaching of that fiction. Matt's students will be reading, "Humanity in Algiers: Or the Story of Azem," an anonymously published Barbary Coast captivity narrative written in 1801.

**Kelly Sassi** of the English Department and **Enrico Sassi** of the Center for Writers presented, along with Dr. Anne Gere of the University of Michigan, at the biennial conference of the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing in Budapest, June 27 - 29. Their presentation, "Translingual Alternatives to Teaching Writing across Languages and Cultures," explored approaches to writing instruction that don't subscribe to the US English-dominant model that subordinates other languages and cultures. Kelly presented an analysis of professional development discourse in which instructors at a tribal college on a Lakota Indian reservation sought to improve student writing while still honoring a Lakota-centered institutional philosophy. Enrico discussed how graduate students can become effective writers in their disciplines when they forgo emphasizing "correct standard English" in favor of using a language predicated on logic-based clarity and an understanding of reader expectations.

**Karen P. Peirce**, associate director of the Center for Writers, has been named a member of the Fulbright English Language and Literature Discipline Peer Review Committee. Selected by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, committee members are chosen based on their subject matter expertise. They serve three-year terms evaluating Fulbright Scholar Program applications for scholarly merit. Upon recommendation of the disciplinary review committee, subsequent review by regional experts, and review by the proposed host country, selected applications are forwarded to the presidentially appointed J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board for final approval. The Fulbright Scholar Program is "the U.S. government's flagship program in international educational exchange" and aims to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries of the world." More information about the Fulbright Scholar Program can be found at [www.cies.org](http://www.cies.org).

In June, **Bruce Maylath**, professor of English, joined colleagues from universities in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and France, in highlighting the Trans-Atlantic Project, which brings together writing, usability testing, and translation classes in Europe and North America. Their plenary panel presentation, "Applying New Technologies: A Technical Communication Translation Case Study in Multilateral International Collaboration," was delivered at the EU-sponsored Optimale Symposium on Translator Training, held in Rennes, France.

In August, **Gary Totten** delivered the keynote address at the International Symposium, "Edith Wharton and The Custom of the Country: Centennial Reappraisals," in Liverpool, UK. Dr. Totten's address, "Wharton's Wild West: Undine Spragg, Medora de Mores, and the Dakota Divorce," challenges conventional approaches to Wharton's *The Custom of the Country* (1913) and re-configures Wharton studies in relation to western space and culture. The project was funded by an NDSU Gunlogson Award and a grant from the Edith Wharton Society for research in the Wharton

manuscript collection at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

A group from NDSU's English department will present papers at the 2013 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference at Stanford University Sept 25-28. Faculty members: **Emily Wickor**, **Amy Rupiper Taggart**, **Miriam Mara**, and graduates from the English MA program: **Kelly Cameron** (recent Ph.D. Texas Christian University, currently Lecturer NDSU), **Natalie Smith Carlson** (Lecturer NDSU), **Katie Manthey** (PhD student Michigan State U), and **Rebecca Hayes** (PhD student Michigan State U) present on topics ranging from Digital Activism against Street Harassment to Breast Cancer and Body Image.

**Dr. Andrew Mara**, associate professor of English, and Director of Upper-Division Writing was recently nominated and selected to be the Chair for the Digital WPA Committee of the Council for Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) <http://wpacouncil.org/committee-assignments>. An expert in the digital media and pedagogy innovation, Dr. Mara will steer the CWPA's digital initiatives and social media strategies. Dr. Mara also co-directs the the User Experience Lab, located in the Department of English.

**Kevin Brooks** led a book discussion of *Ahab's Wife: Or the Stargazer* by Sena Jeter Naslund at the Plains Art Museum on Thursday, October 10th at 7pm. This event was a community read sponsored by the Fargo Public Library, the Moorhead Public Library, West Fargo Public Library, and the Plains Art Museum. Participants viewed the paintings by T.L. Solien that were inspired by Naslund's novel as well as by *Moby-Dick*.

**Bruce Maylath**, professor of English, together with **Tatjana Schell** and **Massimo Verzella**, both Ph.D. students in English, joined faculty members from universities in Finland, Italy, and Spain in presenting "Enhancing Students' Skills in Technical Writing and LSP Translation through Tele-Collaboration Projects: Teaching Students in Seven Nations to Manage Complexity in Multilateral International Collaboration" at the European Symposium on Languages for Specific Purposes, held in July in Vienna, Austria. Their paper highlighted the Trans-Atlantic Project, which



# The Buzz Continued

brings together writing, usability testing, and translation classes in Europe and North America. Schell and Verzella both spoke of their experiences as members of NDSU's International Technical Writing class when Maylath taught the course last fall. They were able to travel to the symposium after spending part of their summer with their families in their home countries. Schell is a citizen of both Germany and Russia; Verzella, of Italy.

NDSU English Department Professors **Gary Totten**, **Matthew Duquès**, and **Kelly Sassi**—along with Plains Art Museum Director Colleen Sheehy—participated in a panel discussion at the Plains Art Museum on Thursday, Sept. 26th titled, Art, Literature, and History in T. L. Solien: "Toward the Setting Sun." In this panel discussion, several specialists explored the ways in which Solien draws on other art forms as well as American history to create works of compelling visual impact and broad appeal. Panelists presented several viewpoints for further discussion with the audience. The presentations were as follows: "Print and Visual Culture during the American Renaissance," Matthew Duquès, PhD. "Remixing the Nineteenth Century," Gary Totten, PhD. "A Feminist Perspective on *Moby-Dick*, *Ahab's Wife*, and *Toward the Setting Sun*," Kelly Sassi, PhD. The event was supported in part by a grant from the North Dakota Humanities Council.

**Linda Helstern**, Associate Professor of English, presented a paper on the White Earth Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor entitled "Vizenor's Dogs: Realism, Speciesism, and Nonhuman Personhood" at the 48th Annual Western Literature Association Conference held in Berkeley, Calif., October 9-12. The paper examined links in Vizenor's early fiction between trickster liberation, Vizenor's trademark rhetorical strategy, and the arguments posed by bioethicists like Peter Singer at the inception of the Animal Liberation Movement. Helstern also provided the introduction to Vizenor at the opening plenary of the conference, which featured Vizenor, the author of the new Minnesota Chippewa tribal constitution and some three dozen volumes of fiction, poetry, cultural critique, literary theory, autobiography, history, and ethnography, along with African American novelist, poet, and publisher Ishmael Reed. Both are emeritus professors of the University of California, Berkeley.

**Kevin Brooks** participated in a panel presentation, "South Sudan: Building a New Nation through the Courthouse and the Schoolhouse" at the Center for Human Rights and Genocide Studies, University of North Dakota, Monday, October 14th.

**Bruce Maylath**, professor of English, joined colleagues from universities in Belgium, Finland, and Italy, in highlighting the Trans-Atlantic Project, which brings together writing, usability testing, and translation classes in Europe and North America. Their presentation, "Introducing Collaborative Learning to the Translation Event: A Technical Communication/Translation Case Study in Multilateral International Collaboration," was delivered at the 7th Triennial Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies, held in Garmersheim, Germany, in August and September.

**Emily D. Wicktor**, Assistant Professor of English, and **Alison Graham-Bertolini**, Assistant Professor of English and Women and Gender Studies, spoke with INFORUM reporter Meredith Holt about the trend of sexy Halloween costumes for women. Read the story at [https://secure.forumcomm.com/?publisher\\_ID=1&article\\_id=415415](https://secure.forumcomm.com/?publisher_ID=1&article_id=415415).

**Amy Rupiper Taggart**, English, edited and published *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, with colleagues Gary Tate, Kurt Schick, and H. Brooke Hessler. Published by Oxford University Press, the *Guide* provides a set of bibliographic essays on the major pedagogical theories written by top scholars in each of the subfields. The new edition features new chapters on Online and Hybrid, Genre-based, New Media, and Second-Language Writing Pedagogies, among other chapters. The *Guide* is designed to support graduate-level pedagogy instruction as well as introduce wide swaths of scholarship to scholars interested in a particular area. See the link below for more information: <http://global.oup.com/academic/product/a-guide-to-composition-pedagogies-9780199922161?q=guide%20to%20composition%20pedagogies&lang=en&cc=us>

**Bruce Maylath**, professor of English; **Tatjana Schell** and **Steven Hammer**, both doctoral students; and **Erica Rapp** and **Kellam Barta**, recent NDSU graduates, spoke with Tracy Frank of the Forum about a speech trend called glottal fry. Read the story at [www.inforum.com/event/article/id/414664/publisher\\_ID/1](http://www.inforum.com/event/article/id/414664/publisher_ID/1).

**Andrew Mara**, associate professor of English, together with Liza Potts (Michigan State) and Gerianne Bartocci (Researcher, Netflix), published and presented a research paper "The Ethics of Agile Ethnography," at SIGDOC 2013. The paper was presented at the conference in Greenville, North Carolina, on October 1, 2013 and was published in the peer-reviewed conference proceedings. Andrew Mara also traveled to the University of Cincinnati to present in a roundtable discussion "SIGDOC and CPTSC: Planning Pedagogy, Programs, and the Future Profession" with Liza Potts (Michigan State), Michael Salvo (Purdue University), Brian McNely (University of Kentucky), and Guiseppe Getto (East Carolina University) on October 11, 2013.

**Alison Graham-Bertolini**, Assistant Professor of English and Women and Gender Studies, spoke with *Deep South Magazine* about Southern fiction writer Shirley Ann Grau, who was honored at the Louisiana Book Fair. Read the story at <http://deepsouthmag.com/2013/10/the-undramatic-life-of-shirley-ann-grau/>

An essay by **Linda Helstern** entitled "Thriller Survivance: Louis Owens's Subversive Resistance" is included in the newly published University of Oklahoma Press Collection *Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement* with a forward by Kenneth Lincoln, whose 1983 study *Native American Renaissance* gave its name to the burgeoning array of literature produced by tribal writers. Helstern's essay considers the use of such mass market genres as detective fiction, the western, and the war story by the Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish Owens in novels explicitly designed to critique the dominant culture from a Native perspective. A second essay on Owens and Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki), "The Nature of Home," was recently published in Milkweed Editions' online pedagogical collection *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World: Teacher's Guide*. Tailored to an anthology of nature essays by writers of color, the guide is designed to help teachers foster a simultaneous understanding of cultural and biological diversity. Helstern's "Tribute to Gerald Vizenor" appears in the October 2013 issue of *Konch Magazine*, an online literary journal published by MacArthur Fellow Ishmael Reed and Tennessee Reed. Vizenor, winner of the American Book Award and the author of some three dozen books, is the author of the new White Earth Tribal Constitution approved by 79% of voters in the Nov. 19th tribal referendum.

# Special Thanks

To Professor Emeritus William Cosgrove for his generous donation to the Northern Eclecta.

1970 – Asst. Prof.; 1976 – Assoc. Prof.; 1981 – Prof.; 1991-97 – Chair of Department. 2006 – Retired, Prof. Emeritus. In 1981 I began to develop the Mark Twain one-man show that I have been performing ever since – “An Evening with Mark Twain: ‘The Trouble Begins at Eight.’” This combination of humanities and artistic activities represents exactly where my interests lie – teaching literature to undergraduate and graduate students and carrying the arts and humanities into communities statewide. I’ve spent my 47-year teaching career doing so.



## Retirement Limericks

By: William Cosgrove

Enjoyment like this is so new to me,  
It starts every morning at two to me;  
When I give it some thought,  
I ask "What hath God wrought?"  
But so far She hasn't got through to me.

Thanks for the kind wish to enjoy,  
The verb everyone seems to employ,  
If enjoy means to do,  
Well, then I am with you,  
Whoever it may seem to annoy.

A gloomy old Irishman (but not I),  
Said "God, I am done let me die."  
God said, "No, I can't,"  
You're an Irishman not a plant,  
Now get out there and drink – at least try."

Thank you for your support of the NDSU English Department. If you would like to contribute financially to the department, please do so through this link: [www.ndsufoundation.com/give](http://www.ndsufoundation.com/give). Please contact the department chair, Gary Totten, with any questions: [gary.totten@ndsu.edu](mailto:gary.totten@ndsu.edu); (701) 231-7158. Mailing address: NDSU Dept. #2320, P.O. Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.

## "The Value of Creative Expression"

By: William Cosgrove

One value that creative expression has is to encourage and then oblige you to tap into those parts of yourself that are above your reason and below the surface. And sometimes you don't even know you're doing it. Pick a red-letter moment in your life, preferably one that has puzzled you. "What happened?" "Why did that happen?" "What does it mean?" Write about it in good detail (short story, poem, essay, any form that requires detail) in your own natural voice (the way you talk). When you do that your imagination (a misleading term for your creativity DNA gene) will kick in and assist you. And it can be a direct link to the answer(s) you may be looking for. Sometimes without you even knowing. The more you write about these events, people, even ideas that interest you, the more your imagination can see what you're doing (like a computer app learns about you, figures out ahead of time what you want, and gives it to you). It helps you in getting where you want to go. Or have to go. Besides, it's fun.

Put another way, the value of creative expression is that it can be an interpretation of your life, your reality – and we can't really interpret life while living it, can we? It's surprisingly hard to do. Maybe you've heard this one: "You have to live life forwards, but you can only understand it backwards." And how about, "The universe is made of stories, not atoms." We can look at our world and try to portray it the way it is (Hamlet's mirror, Mark Twain, and Ernest Hemingway), or portray it the way we see it, which may be different from the way it is or others see it (van Gogh's "Starry Night," Beethoven's "6<sup>th</sup> Symphony," and Romantic poets). Regardless, doing so is valuable for us in finding ourselves. This fellow said it well: "When power leads men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses."

Speech at Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts (26 October 1963).