

The Newsletter from
the English Department
University of
Massachusetts
Lowell

The

Tattler

2009 Writer in Residence

BY KATHERINE CONLON

Gigi Thibodeau has had many jobs, but none has taken her far from being a writer. She says, "Most writers need a day job."

Prior to teaching at UMass Lowell as an adjunct faculty member, which she started in 2001, Thibodeau was a creative-writing adult-education teacher, an ESL instructor, and even a trained chef. She has lived in most of the New England states, in Virginia, and in the Midwest, providing a rich set of subjects and experiences on which she bases her writing. She has recently completed a poetry manuscript called *Learning to Tell Time*, and has started a new one. Her poem "Ouija-Board Rules" was a finalist for the James Wright Poetry Award, and is forthcoming in the *Mid-American Review*.

Among many other roles both on and off campus, Thibodeau was chosen as this year's Jack Kerouac Writer-in-Residence. Department Chairperson Melissa Pennell said, "A principal function of the writer in residence is to offer one of our creative writing classes and to work closely with students as they develop their own voices and talents."

The position is funded by the Provost's Office and John Sampas, who is both the representative for Jack Kerouac's estate and Kerouac's brother-in-law. The English Department community is appreciative of the continued and generous support of Mr. Sampas in establishing the Writer-in-Residence program at UMass Lowell.

The program was established in 2001 to honor Jack Kerouac by supporting writers in the community. It was founded by Sampas along with Professors Hilary Holladay and William Roberts. Sampas said, "I am delighted to have this relationship with the University and to be able to support writers and artists within the English Department. It has been very successful and I hope to continue contributing as long as I am able."

Professor of English and member of the selection committee Marlowe Miller said of



Adjunct faculty member and 2009 Writer-in-Residence, Gigi Thibodeau

choosing Thibodeau, "In addition to our desire to highlight and support the writing of such a talented poet, Gigi was also selected for her extraordinary and innovative work in helping to build the 'creative economy' of both the University and the city of Lowell through the Urban Village Arts Series (UVAS), which Gigi has helped to shape. In 2007 through 2008, Gigi was the public face of UVAS, and saw every event and project through at every stage, including the six regular annual events, other special events, and the 'Live from the Urban Village' double-CD project."

At that time, UVAS was a centerpiece of the Department's outreach initiatives. It increased the number of students involved in the life of downtown Lowell. Miller said, "Her CD project helped to gather students and faculty across disciplines—English, Art, and Sound Recording Technology—in a productive relationship with each other and between the University and the city, and in a way that materially benefitted both undergraduate and graduate students in all of these disciplines, as well as businesses in Lowell."

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Visiting Scholar in the English Department

Guihua Zhang was the English Department's visiting scholar for the Fall 2008-Spring 2009 academic year. She is a professor at the Inner Mongolia University of Technology, a multidisciplinary institution specializing in science and technology. Ms. Zhang joined us from Huhhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China.

Through a professor in the Physics Department, Zhang got in touch with English Department Professors Melissa Pennell and Todd Avery to arrange for her stay here at UMass Lowell. She is an English as a Foreign Language teacher who was interested in learning more about the Department's teaching methods and studies in English and American Literature. While at UMass Lowell, she researched English teaching methodologies and applied linguistics. She also conducted a project in oral English teaching techniques and observed how technology/multi-media and textbooks are used here in teaching English courses. For her research, she attended such classes as Undergraduate Seminar in Teaching Writing, History of American Literature I and II, Monsters, Apes, and Nightmares, Oral Communication, College Writing I and II ESL. She exchanged her teaching experiences with professors in the English Department, and took part in faculty salons and meetings held by the English Department.

This past fall, her SALON presentation at UMass Lowell, "Inner Mongolia and Mongolian Culture," focused on her knowledge of the Inner Mongolian region, culture, education, history, and nationalities represented. Professor Zhang also took part in some cultural and social activities at Harvard University.

After being here for six months and making many observations, Ms. Zhang recognized many similarities and differences between her institution in Inner Mongolia and UMass Lowell. She said, "The teaching methods are similar and we offer similar courses. But, we have many more students in our classes. And we need to take care of more details. We cannot offer as much discussion. Also, at UMass Lowell, the professors assign homework every week, but at my school, besides homework, we have more tests and we have one major paper due upon graduation. Also, our professors of College English Writing follow the same syllabus as everyone else."

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Chat with the Chair



Hi,

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *The Tatler*, the new English Department newsletter. Much has happened in the English Department over the last few years and we thought this would be a good way to share some of our news with you. We also hope that you will share some of your news with us—in future issues of the newsletter an alumni updates column will appear. If you have something you'd like to include, please send it to me at Melissa_Pennell@uml.edu or to our staff assistant, Katherine Conlon, at Katherine_Conlon@uml.edu (Katherine's position in the department is one of the positive changes we have enjoyed).

So what has been happening in the department? In the last five years, we have hired 6 new faculty members who bring energy, enthusiasm, and new ideas to our program and activities. You'll meet a couple of them in this issue. A number of faculty members have been publishing books, articles, and reviews, delivering conference papers, and working with student groups—some of their activities are described in the "Faculty Highlights" column. This year, for the first time, we hosted an international visiting scholar—I'm sure you'll enjoy reading more about Guihua Zhang and her experiences here at UMass Lowell. In the last five years, we have also seen significant growth in the number of English majors, going from 154 majors in Fall 2003 to 246 this spring. It is exciting to see the enthusiasm our majors have for the study of literature and the craft of writing—we hope to add a concentration in Theatre Arts to the major as well. Students in the Department continue to produce *The Offering* through the Literary Society, and our chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society, holds the Tales for Tots children's book drive each December. The Off-Broadway Players have done three full-scale productions this year, including the challenging play *The Pillowman* by Martin McDonagh. The Department has introduced a Common Text program for first year students and has worked with the Concord Festival of Authors to host literary events here on campus.

Many people contributed material for this newsletter, but I especially want to thank Katherine Conlon and English major Alyssa Carrigan for their hard work in developing articles and pulling this all together. It wouldn't have happened without their dedicated efforts.

I will close with good wishes and a reminder that you are always welcome at department events,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Melissa M. Pennell

P.S. Many of you recognize the name of the newsletter as a nod to the work of Richard Steele. Do you know under what title the collected issues of *The Tatler* appeared in 1710-11?

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Do you have story items, questions, or comments about the newsletter? If so, please contact us!

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Off-Broadway Players

BY ALYSSA CARRIGAN

The Off-Broadway Players is one of the largest student run clubs on campus and their performances can be seen at the Comley-Lane Theater in Mahoney Hall. I sat with the faculty advisor, Nancy Selleck, to get some background on the group. She told me the students put on three performances a year, one of which is always a musical. Officers are elected and the students actually hire professional directors and designers to help with the shows. The current officers are: Annie Drewello (President), Nani Swaminathan (Vice President), Ryan Monaco (Tech Officer), Jessica Tramondozzi (Treasurer), and Allan Sloan (Secretary).

"The players work with great directors from the area who are excited about producing great work," said Professor Selleck. She teaches Shakespeare, Renaissance literature and drama, and theater arts courses here at UMass Lowell and has been the faculty advisor to The Off-Broadway Players since 2004. Many of the members of the club are involved in the theater arts program within the English department. Selleck added, "There are some excellent and serious actors here."

For the spring semester of 2009 the players perform the musical *Once on This Island* and in May they voted for the plays to be performed next year.

In 2008, the students performed Martin McDonagh's *The Pillow Man* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Off-Broadway Players do a lot of work for other groups on campus by helping out with lights and sound at different events. Professor Selleck also told me the club accepts all participants associated with UMass Lowell, including alumni, staff, and faculty, and even some of their children have been in productions. The club is an organization of like interests in one place. The actors are involved and passionate about theatre, making this group one of the more dominant on campus.

For more information on The-Off Broadway Players please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/dx36kn>.



Dress rehearsal of the Off-Broadway Players April production of *Once on This Island*, a one-act musical with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty. It is based on the book *My Love, My Love* by Rosa Guy.

New Journalism Professor Joins the Department

BY ALYSSA CARRIGAN

Jonathan Silverman is the newest addition to the UMass Lowell English Department. He began in August of 2008 and this semester is teaching Feature Writing, Reading and Writing About New Media, and College Writing II. Originally hailing from Norwalk, Conn., he has taught at the University of Texas at Austin, Pace University and Virginia Commonwealth University among others. As a journalist at *The Post-Star* in Glens Falls, N.Y., he wanted to do more. He began teaching in 1989 and spent a summer session in Andover, Mass. After he spent that summer teaching, he found he enjoyed it more than only writing.

"Being a professor you can write and teach," he said. He teaches mainly composition and journalism classes and is currently working on the development of the journalism concentration. He is also the faculty advisor for the student newspaper, *The Connector*. He is enjoying the new job and is excited to be here, he said, "The faculty is engaged and the students are eager to learn."

He is currently working on a book about Johnny Cash. Some of his favorite authors include Ralph Ellison, Louise Erdrich and Joseph Heller. Professor Silverman seems very down to earth and personable. He makes a great addition to this department.



New faculty member Assistant Professor Jonathan Silverman

Talks About Teaching Writing

English faculty engage in talks about teaching writing

To assist faculty in providing the highest level of instruction in the College Writing I and II courses, co-directors of the Common Text Program, Paula Haines and Marlowe Miller, organize the Talks About Teaching Writing twice a semester. The workshops are mainly intended for part- and full-time faculty who are teaching College Writing, but all faculty are welcome to attend.

Haines and Miller wanted to do follow-up on the professional development aspect of their semesterly Common Text workshops, so they decided to institute this informal practice of getting together to talk about teaching a couple of times a semester. Haines said, "This is our fifth year of Common Text, and I think this is our fourth full year of Talks about Teaching Writing."

"We share practices, tips, information, triumphs, and challenges, so there're always lots of great ideas to share. We hope everyone feels supported in his or her teaching for the department, and this is an opportunity to share what's going on in everyone's classes. We want to help our talented and committed teachers find ways to use their expertise and creativity."

This semester, they spent time on creating and using wikis in teaching writing, scaffolding student assignments, discussing course websites, and offering tips for helping students in distress. Haines added, "We always try to talk a bit about the current Common Text and how it's working in classes."

Attendee and adjunct faculty member Tracy Michaels said, "As an adjunct instructor of English, I know the talks keep me connected to the latest developments in our department. They serve to make me feel like a valid member of the faculty community versus an anonymous employee."

"Post talks, I find my colleagues and I not only discussing the ideas proposed in-depth (e.g., the use of wikis in our own classes), but also finding useful ways to employ said topics in our classes, even during the present semester. Ideas proposed from the talks are not simply pedagogical ponderings, but practical implementation tools with which to enhance our instruction to the UML community. I unabashedly encourage others to attend these talks."



Adjunct faculty members Carl Mason and Thomas Hersey attending Talks about Teaching Writing

2009 Writer in Residence

Thibodeau believes that participation in a community arts program is important. In December 2007, she was the co-editor of an anthology of poetry in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, in conjunction with the Cultural Organization of Lowell with funding from a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Thibodeau has also been involved in organizing student panels for the New England Poetry Conference.

She said, "As a person who lives in a democracy, I feel it is my obligation to participate in civic life. Art is a great way to encourage people from all walks of life and all ages to be creative in the community. Great art can change people's lives for the better."

Leading by example, Thibodeau is helping to showcase student work in the community by collaborating with the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Greater Lowell to celebrate its 100th birthday. An exhibition of VNA history at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center in Lowell opened in April. Additionally, on April 14, from 4-6 p.m., there was an elegant opening reception, "The Poetry of Home," featuring a poetry reading by students in this semester's Creative Writing Poetry class. The event was co-sponsored by the Visiting Nurse Association of Greater Lowell, The Lowell Cultural Council, and the UMass Lowell English Department.

In addition to teaching and doing community work, Thibodeau writes poetry, fiction, and essays. She also does freelance work such as writing liner notes for CDs, writing for the web, and is a poetry editor for *The Newport Review*. Thibodeau models what she teaches her students. In order to be a good writer, she stresses, "You must write. You also have to be an avid reader. I am an example of the writer who writes because I love to write and love to read. If you really love to write, you must write every day." Thibodeau also often showcases her work at poetry readings at UMass Lowell and as the featured reader at events in the Lowell and regional community.

Miller added, "In addition to her writing and her work with UVAS, Gigi brings enormous talent, experience, and generosity to her teaching and outreach for the department. Her students have been selected to read and publish their poetry in local venues, and they have been selected to present their work from her classes at the UMass Lowell Student Research Symposium."

An active reader and writer, some of Thibodeau's favorite writers are poet Elizabeth Bishop and M.F.K. Fisher. She enjoys Bishop for her use of imagery and Fisher

for her philosophical musings on food. "Her writing makes me hungry, that is what makes it good." Thibodeau's own writing subjects focus on language, memory, and naming things. She said, "My poetry has a lot of motifs such as windows and houses. I like to describe these things to my readers." She also admits to writing about off-beat and quirky things.

"My writing explores the images, places, people, or questions that fascinate, trouble, or intrigue me. I always hope, of course, that those same obsessions of mine will interest a reader as well. I want a reader to encounter a particular word or phrase that evokes image through many means: sound, denotation, connotation, its relation to the words around it, its placement in the line, and how it resonates within the context of the rest of the poem. This is a lot to ask of a word, and of a poem, and of a reader, and maybe of a poet, too, but to expect less seems to me a wasted opportunity."

Thibodeau remembers distinctly what brought her to the fields of teaching and writing. Her father died when she was in high school, and a teacher gave her a book of poetry by Czeslav Milosz. She read the poetry at a tough time in her life and its meaning connected with her experience at the time. "The author understood what I was feeling. I wanted to write and connect with other people like that." Now an experienced teacher, she is able to reflect on what makes things click between her and her students. She said, "My students would describe me as wacky and energetic. I am encouraging and tough in a good way." As a teacher, she believes that 75% of teaching is performance. "I would describe myself as a stand-up comedian."

She also realizes that not everyone will get her jokes. But, she welcomes the challenge to use her love for writing to help students grow. "As a writer, I find it hard to empathize with others who don't like to write, but I try to encourage students to play and have fun with writing. Some students have never had the chance to write and experiment. I have seen first-hand that writing can give students a sense of pride."

Melissa Pennell commented on Gigi as a poet and teacher: "She is a fine poet whose work reflects her sympathetic insights into human experience as well as her appreciation of language and the power of imagery. Gigi is a wonderful teacher—not only in terms of her knowledge of the genre of poetry and the kinds of practice and discipline that it takes to be a poet, but also in her ability to challenge students to extend their reach while creating a supportive atmosphere for that to happen."

For current students and alums, Thibodeau has some advice for those who really want to pursue a career as a writer. She said, "I have had many jobs, I've traveled a lot, and I write from a place of curiosity. I also didn't go to grad school until my late 20's. I lived a lot before I got there. I would encourage people to take a year or two after their undergraduate career before going to graduate school. But, if I could offer one piece of advice, I would say, writing is a highly competitive business. Don't quit your day job."

Gigi Thibodeau is a poet, an educator, and an active member of the community arts scene in Lowell. Her poetry has appeared in *The Larcom Review*, *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Going Down Swinging*, *Mudfish*, and *The Newport Review*, among others. Her manuscript, *Learning to Tell Time*, is under review with several presses. It earned first prize for the 2009 Permafrost Competition from the University of Alaska. Thibodeau has also published fiction and creative nonfiction, and has received several other awards for her writing.

Keep in touch

If you are an alumnus/a of the English Department, UMass Lowell community member, or friend and would like to keep in touch with what is going on in the Department such as readings by visiting authors, theater productions, or other English related events, please email Staff Assistant Katherine Conlon at Katherine_Conlon@uml.edu to be added to our English Department Alumni List Serv. You will receive emails about upcoming events and other important information.

You may opt out at any time by following the instructions on the bottom of each email. We hope you join us soon!

Also, if you would like to submit updates about yourself to the future alumni section of the newsletter, please email us at Katherine_Conlon@uml.edu. Be sure to include your name, year of graduation, and updated career or school information. We would love to hear from you and share your story with fellow alums in an upcoming newsletter!

For general alumni information, be sure to visit the UML Alumni webpage at www.uml.edu/alumni.

What Are You Reading Now?

Alumna Morgan Hough (*Class of 2008*)

I just finished reading a book by Donna Tartt called *The Little Friend*. I think it's a cross between *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Huck Finn*. It takes place in a southern town during the 1970s, and follows a young girl, Harriet, avenging the murder of her brother. It has some really memorable, eerie, and very southern characters. Every character, even the most minor, was fascinating.

Assistant Professor Susan Kirtley

I suppose I shouldn't admit this, but honestly I'm reading a lot of comic books to try to keep up with my Graphic Novel class. Right now I'm reading a graphic novel called *Superman: Red Son* by Mark Miller. It's a re-imagining of Superman as a Soviet Hero. It's actually quite ingenious in challenging an American icon.

Professor Marlowe Miller

I'm just starting *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer

and Annie Barrows. It is an epistolary novel that tells the story of a literary society surviving through the German occupation during World War II. I am also reading *The Wonder of Boys*—a book about raising boys in this day and age. Helpful and sobering!

Adjunct Faculty Member Gigi Thibodeau

I am reading Kim Addonizio's new book, *Ordinary Genius*, which is a wonderful guide to crafting poems. I'm also reading *Reverence* by Paul Woodruff. Woodruff argues that reverence is a forgotten virtue, but that by cultivating a sense of awe for things greater than ourselves, we can rekindle reverence and thereby strengthen other virtues, such as respect and charity.

Assistant Professor Andre Dubus III

In addition to my students' fiction, I'm currently reading *Bridge of Sighs*, the new novel by Richard Russo. I'm also reading *Not the Religious Type: Confessions of a Turncoat Atheist* by Dave Schmelzer, and

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksander Solzhenitsyn.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Silverman

I'm reading a few things at once—*Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami, *The Thoreau You Don't Know* by Robert Sullivan, and slowly, *Infinte Jest* by David Foster Wallace. I'm also reading rather slowly, *Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen* by Julie Powell. And the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Breanna Leibman (*English/History Major*)

The last book I read for pleasure that I loved was *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* by Lisa See. LOVED it! It was a great historical novel about oppressed women in China. Another book is *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*. I'm only on wife No. 3, but it is a great, but very long read!

Activities of the English Honor Society

BY PETER MASKALUK

Founded in 1924 as a national honor society, Sigma Tau Delta strives to promote the study of all aspects of the English language, including composition, literature and language studies. Ten years ago, Professors Melissa Pennell and Martha McGowan of the English Department started the Alpha Theta Rho chapter of Sigma Tau Delta here at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Today's advisors are Professors Laura Barefield and Jeannie Judge who, together with the current members, sponsor a number of events that support education and the advancement of the English language.

Members have arranged for faculty members to talk about their individual research interests with the student body. Professors Carole Salmon, Susan Kirtley and Mary Kramer have spoken in recent semesters. Sigma Tau Delta has also organized a student book group in which students choose the books to be explored in student-led discussions. This book group meets two to three times a semester and has discussed such highly praised works as *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. During National Poetry Month, members distribute plastic eggs, filled with poems, all over campus in order for students to find and read them.

Sigma Tau Delta's focus also takes its members out of the lecture halls and into

the city. Every year before Christmas, they organize a campus-wide children's book drive called "Tales for Tots." All the books donated go to the Children's Corner of Community Teamwork Inc. and the Family Literacy Center, both in Lowell, where they are desperately needed and greatly appreciated. This year, students from Sigma Tau Delta organized a "reading hour" before the Family Day game of the UMass River Hawks at the Tsongas Arena. Students read the Christmas tales of Clifford, the Big Red Dog and Curious George as the children sat with eyes wide.

In April of each year, Sigma Tau Delta holds an induction ceremony for new members. This year, the induction dinner and ceremony was held Thursday, April 30, at the Wannalancit Mill Complex. Twenty-three students were inducted. Following the dinner, the students were called up, in front of their friends and families, and given a certificate of membership that confirms them as distinguished scholars of the English language. Graduating seniors are also invited to the ceremony and are presented with their honor cords to wear during the graduation ceremony.



A few members of the Sigma Tau Delta Honor Society, From left, back row: Peter Maskaluk, Liz Mucica, Ann Papadopulu, front row: Hillary Pickard, Miranda Fortenberry and Christine Beecher.

The members of Sigma Tau Delta have joined together in order to make a difference both on campus and in the community. Whether it is by sponsoring a lecture series or donating books, the Sigma Tau Delta chapter here at the University is confident that a small group of dedicated individuals can make a difference in the world. Remaining true to Sigma Tau Delta's ideals of sincerity, truth and design, these students do, indeed, make a difference, even if it is one book at a time.

Retiring English Professor Mary Kramer Will Be Missed

BY KATHERINE CONLON

Professor Mary Kramer has been a full-time professor in the English Department for 40 years. Her career began at UMass Lowell in 1969 at what used to be called Lowell State. To her colleagues she is known not only as a dedicated teacher, but also a generous volunteer and a scholar of Shakespeare.

Kramer has given her time to students in high school as a mentor in the Gifted and Talented Program in Chelmsford, coaching teams for Odyssey of the Mind competitions, and as a judge for National History Day.

But, as a student at UMass Lowell, until you get to know Professor Kramer well, you might be a little intimidated. One of her students, April Fournier, said, "Yes, I am quite familiar with the (daunting) style of Mary Kramer's teaching...She is possibly one of the most wonderful teachers I've ever had, although she can be 'scary' to newcomers." Almost all English majors have had her as a professor at least once since she teaches Shakespeare I, History of



Retiring English Professor Mary Kramer

English Literature I, and Human Values in Western Culture classes.

Professor Kramer does admit that her reputation precedes her. "A colleague of mine had a student describe me as funny,

William Hersey Emeritus Professor

Mary Kramer has been my friend and colleague for over 25 years and her wit has been one that you could always count on.

In 1980, Mary and I took swimming lessons at the University swimming pool. My most memorable moment during one swimming class was when Mary tried to help me get over my fear of the deep water. She tried to assure me that everything would be okay and she was swimming by my side toward the deep end of the pool when she said "swim with me, swim with me," and when I looked over to see where she was in the pool, I discovered that she had deserted me as I sank to the bottom of the pool! I certainly have a vivid memory of that swimming lesson.

but dangerous. But, if they see me as fair, I would be happy with that." When speaking about her retirement this year, she said, "I enjoy teaching and enjoy the students. I wanted to stop while I still enjoy teaching. I am definitely going to miss it."

Kramer has always wanted to be a teacher. Her career path was very straightforward. Kramer said, "I think my career path was genetic. My father was a professor and my mother was a teacher. I learned my way around a library early on." She earned bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees all before the age of 25. Prior to graduate school, she won a prestigious National Defense Title IV Scholarship that paid for her education. Upon graduation, she joined UMass Lowell, which has been her home ever since.

She is also a married mother of two, an avid knitter for the Veterans Hospital, and always balanced teaching with freelance writing, such as book reviews and humor articles. The articles were mostly about her children. Kramer remarked, "I stopped writing about them when they were teenagers. I found that I couldn't embarrass them anymore after that." Although balancing work and family was hard, she said, "You learn to organize early and thoroughly."

An active volunteer in the Chelmsford community, Kramer has been a vital part of the annual Friends of the Chelmsford Library book drive. The book drive is a 3-day sale that raises over \$30,000 for the library.

Jeannie Judge Professor

When I was preparing my book manuscript for publication, Mary Kramer graciously volunteered to proofread it. A few days later, on a Friday morning, I mentioned that I had it with me. Mary said, "Great! Just leave it on my desk, and I'll take it home with me." So, when I arrived on Monday morning and found the manuscript on my desk, I thought, "Oh, good grief, I left the manuscript on my desk and never even gave it to Mary." But that was not the case. Mary had read the "book," written precise comments on a separate sheet of paper, and returned it by 7:00 a.m. on Monday. She had also graded her exams, prepared her classes, and painted her house (just kidding about the house).

In the seventies, we were blessed with a winter much like this one: frequent snowstorms had left the parking lots looking like Supply Central for ice and snow sculptures. Along with a number of eager, dedicated students, I was taking a course in Chaucer and longing for the sweetness of April; not that the "drought" of March had pierced anything yet, but the snows of January had challenged my ten-year old auto too many times. This particular morning, however, we were being challenged by Dr. Kramer's test on the General Prologue. Part One offered us the opportunity (well, fifty opportunities, to be precise) to identify the subjects of one-line entries ("Nowher so bisy a man as he ther was").

A few minutes after the examination was in our hands, a passionate scholar, a young man named Chris, rose to his feet. "Dr. Kramer," he exclaimed with a courtly flourish, "I just want you to know that, after looking at this exam, should you ever again (and I emphasize the again) find your noble vehicle buried under two feet of snow in the parking lot behind Coburn and all you have is a feeble snowbrush and no shovel, please do not expect me to take on any more knightly rescues. I am done. I will not be at your service—if this is my reward."

And then he sat down and proceeded to write; so he did not get to see Dr. Kramer's attempts to cover her amusement as her shoulders shook and she buried her head in her text. I, on the other hand, could not imagine that Dr. Kramer would not have a shovel in her automobile. She was, and still is, prepared for everything.

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Visiting Scholar in the English Department

Ms. Zhang headed back to China on February 23rd, taking many ideas with her. “I was inspired by the excellent teaching methods in the English Department and the opportunities given to students to practice writing.



Visiting scholar
Guihua Zhang

I would like to ask our English majors to help grade the writing of non-English majors’ work. It would be similar to the concept of your Writing Center, but it would also help our professors with grading. Also, at my university, I would like to develop a new English course that relates real science and technology similar to Professor Avery’s *Monsters, Apes, and Nightmares*.”

Bill Roberts
Emeritus Professor
Former Department Chair

I learned of Mary Kramer’s retirement while enjoying part of my own retirement in Key West, Florida. Mary was a member of the English Department when I arrived in 1971, and she was still going strong when I left in 2006. I’ll never forget her loyalty and friendship, her wit, and her commitment to English majors.

Mary, first and foremost, is a teacher with rigorous standards and a kind heart. For this she earned the respect of her students and colleagues. When I served as department chairperson, I came to fully appreciate her support, candor, and friendship. She deserves a long and happy retirement, and she will be missed by all of us who had the good fortune of working beside her.

She said, “People travel from all over New England just to come to the fair.” The fair is held every September and offers more than 100,000 books.

It’s apparent that reading and writing are a major part of Kramer’s everyday life. Although Shakespeare is one of her favorite authors, she is often known for joking about the limitations of American Literature. She said, “I just really like English literature before 1642.” But, she likes to encourage students to explore. “Pick something you enjoy and keep reading. Just because you’re graduating, don’t close the book.” She has inspired numerous readers by leading many book discussions at public libraries throughout the state on such authors as Zora Neale Hurston, Sarah Orne Jewett, Marianne Moore, and Toni Morrison.

Since Kramer is retiring this year, future students won’t get the opportunity to have her in class, but she has touched many lives in her work with teenagers, college students, and adults alike. By mentoring, coaching, and encouraging others and in leading by example, she has encouraged many to aspire to professional excellence. She has definitely made an impact on her current student, April Fournier. April said, “The only reason I get up at 6 a.m. to be in her Human Values class is that I knew it was my last semester having her. I don’t even need the GenEd, I just like being there. I’m really going to miss her.”

Graduating President Remarks on Literary Society Activities

BY ERIC HULTGREN, PRESIDENT,
LITERARY SOCIETY

The most exciting experience of studying literature is the recognition that it never happens in isolation but is always part of a community. The Literary Society celebrates this experience. Whether hosting lectures, Halloween parties, poetry readings, more parties, or working on UMass Lowell’s literary journal *The Offering*, the Literary Society is always engaged in bringing students, faculty, and the community together to celebrate literature.

I joined the Literary Society in 2005, my first year at UMass Lowell. I had images of high-brow literati mingling over coffee and cocktails. Since then I have served in various offices within the Society, including president for the past two years. I now often look in the mirror to adjust my brow height, though our faculty advisors, Professors Julie Nash and Bridget Marshall, are quick to clip. The

Literary Society is a chance for students to have fun doing what they love outside of the classroom. Our yearly duties, though largely determined by the students, are divided between organizing literary events, parties, and publishing *The Offering*. Through *The Offering*, students learn to edit and publish the writing and photography of fellow students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

The Society’s current officers are Mike Frye, co-president, Audra Colopy, vice president, and Rebecca Yoakum, secretary. The latest edition of *The Offering* will be released in late April/early May. A release party is planned for that time.

As a student organization, the Literary Society both establishes a community within our University and one between our University and Greater Lowell. We try to host as many events as we can

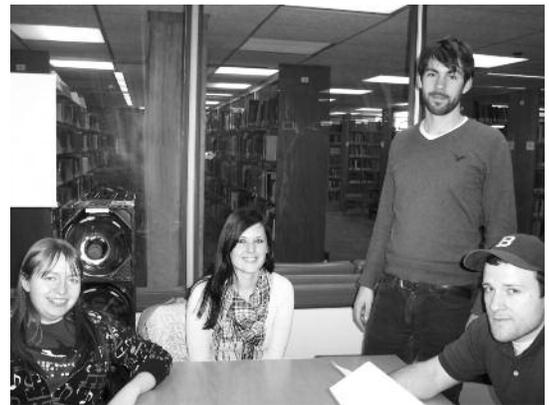


Table of Contents Meeting for *The Offering*, from left, Falcia Wyman, Audra Colopy, Eric Hultgren, and John Dowling

in downtown Lowell to involve students in a growing local arts community. For more information on *The Literary Society* and upcoming events contact Dr. Julie Nash at Julie_Nash@uml.edu or Dr. Bridget Marshall at Bridget_Marshall@uml.edu.

Faculty Research Highlights

Julie Nash

Julie Nash was recently promoted to Associate Professor of English.

Her research focuses on eighteenth and nineteenth-century British literature, women's literature, literature and work. She is currently working on articles on the Lowell Mill Girls and a reference article on seventeenth-century writer Aphra Behn. Recently, she published two collections of essays, one on Anne Bronte and one on Maria Edgeworth. Another book, *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (2006) is a study of the changing role of the servant in nineteenth-century literature. A professor at UMass Lowell since 2002, she is currently teaching a Selected Authors class on Aphra Behn and her World and the Critical Methods class as well as an Honors Seminar for freshmen. Professor Nash is also the co-advisor to the English Department's literary journal, *The Offering*.

Todd Avery

Todd Avery was recently promoted to Associate Professor of English. His teaching focuses on twentieth century British and Irish literature, while his research focuses on relations between science and literature and twentieth century modernist literature and culture. In his book, *Radio modernism*, he discusses the relations between literature and ethics with communications/technology in England in the 1920s and 1930s. Currently, he is researching writer Lytton Strachey and his place in British modernist literature. Avery has a book chapter coming out in 2009 in a volume published by the University of Florida Press. The book is called *Broadcasting Modernism*. Last April, he gave a conference paper at the Northeast Modern Language Association conference on the American nature writer John Burroughs and the "Two Cultures" debate in the late nineteenth century; and another in November at the Modernist Studies Association on feminism and early British radio. He also organized a national interdisciplinary conference in December 2007 at UMass Lowell called "Nanotechnology, Literature, and Society."

Diana Archibald

Associate Professor Diana Archibald came to UMass Lowell in the fall of 1999. She teaches in both the writing and literature concentrations. She taught Essay Writing

for English Majors in the fall and Literature of the Victorian Period this spring. Professor Archibald is editing a collection of essays on Anti-Americanism in 19th-century British literature. She is revising her grandmother's memoir, for which she conducted extensive research during her sabbatical leave last year. Having traced her grandmother's family's migration across the United States (in a car trip with her son), she also visited the "Old Country" and found her ancestors' homes in Sweden and Norway. Her grandmother's book begins in Norway above the Arctic Circle in the early-1800s and traces the family through the 1960s in California. Alums would be interested to know that she serves as the department's internship coordinator.

Hilary Holladay

Professor of English and Director of the Jack and Stella Kerouac Center for American Studies, Professor Holladay has been at UMass Lowell since 1993 and has regularly taught African American literature, a variety of poetry courses, surveys in American Literature, and Literature of the Beat Movement. She has directed UMass Lowell's biennial Jack Kerouac Conference on Beat Literature since its inception in 1995; the next conference is scheduled for October 2009, on the UMass Lowell campus. She has been on research leave at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, in Charlottesville since January '08. During her time in Charlottesville, she has completed *What's Your Road, Man? Critical Essays on Jack Kerouac's On the Road*. The book, which she co-edited with Robert Holton, is now available from Southern Illinois University Press. Holladay also revised a draft of the biography of the Beat Movement icon Herbert Huncke and hopes to see it in print in a year or so.

Bridget Marshall

Assistant Professor Bridget Marshall has been teaching at UMass Lowell for four years. This semester, she is teaching a course in the Gothic Tradition in Literature, which she designed. In Fall 2008, she introduced another new course, Disability in Literature. Her research interests focus on gothic novels, literature & law, disability in literature, early eighteenth & nineteenth-century American literature. Professor Marshall is currently working on a book for Ashgate Publishing titled *Dark*

Justice: The Transatlantic Gothic Novel and the Law, 1790 - 1860. It's about the portrayal of legal systems in gothic novels and slave narratives. She has several publications forthcoming; the following should be out this year: "An Evil Game: Gothic Villains and Gaming Addictions." *Gothic Studies*. Special Issue on Addiction. Ed. Carol Margaret Davison. 2009. "There shall be a wonder in Hadley!": Mary Webster's 'Hideous Witchcraft.'" (co-author with Brian Ogilvie) *Changing Winds: Essays in the History of Hadley, Massachusetts*. Ed. Marla Miller, University of Massachusetts Press, 2009. She attended the Popular Culture/American Culture conference in New Orleans in April to present a paper on teaching comics. She has given numerous presentations on Massachusetts witchcraft trials at academic conferences, and to groups of teachers and historians. She will be doing one in October for the 350th anniversary of the town of Hadley, Mass. Professor Marshall is also the co-advisor to the English Department's literary journal, *The Offering* and she organizes the Faculty SALON series.

Laura Barefield

Associate Professor Laura Barefield joined the English Department in Fall 2001. Professor Barefield teaches Great Books of Antiquity, Arthurian Literature, Literature of the Middle Ages, History of the English Language, Old English, Beowulf Seminar, and History of English Literature I. She is the Advisor for Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society, and Coordinator for Tales for Tots, the English Department's annual children's holiday book drive to benefit children in Lowell,

Chair of the Awards and Scholarships committee and member of the Chelmsford One Town, One Book Committee, she is currently working on a book project on Vergil in the Middle Ages. Her previous publications include: *Gender in Medieval English Romance and Chronicle* (Peter Lang: 2003), articles in *Medieval Perspectives*, *Medieval Feminist Forum*, *Midwest Medieval*, and an essay in the book *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness*. She is also a book reviewer for *Arthuriana* and *Medieval Review*.

The Common Text Program at UMass Lowell

BY ALYSSA CARRIGAN

Nancy Selleck

Associate Professor of English, Faculty Advisor to the Off-Broadway Players, and Director, Theater Arts program, Nancy Selleck has been teaching at UMass Lowell since 1998. Her research interests are in Shakespeare and Renaissance theatre; women in Early Modern culture; modern and contemporary drama; feminist theory; theories of acting, and psychoanalytic theory. Selleck is currently working on a book on Renaissance theories of acting. Her book, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) argues that Shakespeare's culture understood identity in very different terms from ours. She recently presented a paper to the Society for the Study of Women in the Renaissance at CUNY Graduate Center in New York on "Rethinking Objectification: *Twelfth Night*, Feminist Theory, and the Objects of Play." She also presented a paper on "Intimacy and Interiority" at the annual Shakespeare Association of America conference in Washington, D.C. in April.

She directed a Staged Reading of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* on campus in early May. She is Co-P.I. on the NSF grant: "Performamatics: Connecting Computer Science to the Performing, Fine, and Design Arts," which is developing a new interdisciplinary curriculum, including courses linking theatre arts and computer science.

The Common Text Program is a thriving student program that began in the fall of 2005 following the introduction of freshman student theater visits by Professor Nancy Selleck in the spring of 2004. This evolved into a larger discussion of the play for all first year students. Professors Paula Haines and Marlowe Miller have developed this further to involve the freshman classes as a whole in discussing a book or play and analyzing its contents.

It is easy to see Professor Haines' passion and enthusiasm for this program. "I love it. It's a lot of hard work and details, but it's extremely rewarding. You don't get to see the developing picture every day, then once you do, it's like that's why we do this! It rocks my world," she says. The book or play is read in College Writing I and II and initially the program directors believed that it was asking a lot of the faculty. Haines said, "They've actually gotten enthusiastic about it. A new book every year enlivens the course."

The shared reading experience has had a high success rate among students. It helps faculty evaluate the writing styles of the incoming students and teach them how to write at a collegiate level. This helps to prepare them for the rest of their college writing careers. "We see changes in their actual writing, but there is more change in their attitude. They see that they have a choice to be engaged in community and that is something measured more than anything," said

Haines. Professor Haines and Professor Miller have branched out and targeted Lowell High School, developing a workshop for teachers to help them better prepare their students for the challenge of college. Haines said, "This is all to help them have the skills needed when pen hits paper."

The spring 2009 semester brought the play *Tranced* by Bob Clyman to the freshman class. It has political intrigue, professional ethics, and themes that are widely interesting. The books and plays are chosen by taking suggestions from both staff and students. The choices are narrowed through research on the faculty end and then the options are put up for a vote among the English Department. The program takes time and bonds the students to both faculty and UMass Lowell. "You get to see the capability in these young people. It shows there is a result in that what you've done had an effect."

Professor Haines is herself a 1991 English alumna of UMass Lowell. She is proud of this program and happy to get the word out about its significance to the students here. She said, "It is a highly successful and meaningful program that seems an essential stepping stone into the college world."

For more information about the Common Text Program, visit www.uml.edu/english.

Did you know?

The Comley-Lane Theatre was refurbished in 2005 with the help of a major donation to UMass Lowell by Bonnie Comley and her husband, Broadway producer Stewart Lane. In the spring of 2006, the renovated theatre was officially christened at a ceremony hosted by the Off-Broadway Players. The ceremony included a performance of one-act comedies by David Ives and instructor Richard Snee, and it featured special guest artists Paula Plum and Richard Snee performing alongside the OBP. Bonnie Comley graduated in the '80s from UMass Lowell with a

business degree and went on to become a Broadway actress and producer along with her husband. (Their recent credits include the musical *Legally Blonde*.) Their generous donation was the result of her desire to give back to the university in support of the school's Theatre Arts program and drama club.



Faculty Salon, a Faculty Colloquium in the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Assistant Professor Bridget Marshall is the host of the Faculty Salon series, talks that give faculty the chance to share their current research with colleagues and offer the audience a chance to learn about the current research happening at UMass Lowell. Often faculty presenters develop their Salon presentations into more formal presentations for conferences, or the findings presented in the Salons appear in faculty publications.

Who are its sponsors?

The Division of Humanities, Fine Arts, and Social Sciences covers the refreshments we offer at each session. Other than that, the current organizer/host is in charge and does the planning, ordering of food, reserving of rooms, and overall organizing. The most recent three hosts have been English department faculty, but there isn't any rule about who has to be in charge.

What is the format?

A faculty member presents on his/her chosen topic, typically for 45 minutes to an hour, followed by Q&A discussion. The presentations sometime include powerpoint presentations, film or music clips, or other kinds of media. We typically sit around a table to enable discussion. We also have coffee and snacks, to help make it a collegial and social time for faculty to exchange ideas.

Who can attend the Salon?

Anyone is welcome to attend. Our core group is faculty, but we often have staff members join us. For some topics, we'll get a group of students (particularly if they're in a course related to the topic). We've also had residents of the greater Lowell area attend, particularly if the research touches on a local community issue. Alumni sometimes join us, particularly when they recognize a faculty member they remember.

How are the topics chosen?

I put out a call for interested faculty at the end of the spring semester. I ask them to let me know a bit about any new research projects they'd like to talk about. Once I have a list of interested faculty, I review the topics and department affiliations to find a nice mix for the year's Salons. I try to make sure a broad range of departments within our division is included. We've had presentations from faculty in English, Philosophy, Psychology, RESD, Community Health and Sustainability, Political Science, and History since I've been running the Salons. I hope

we can get more departments, particularly new faculty members, involved in next year's Salons.

When/where are the talks usually held?

We have six talks, three each semester. The talks are always the first Wednesday of each month—October, November, December, and then February, March, and April. We always meet from 3:30 to 5 pm. This time was set before I took over, and it seems to work well. We typically meet in a room in McGauvran, but sometimes we end up in various media rooms in O'Leary, or occasionally elsewhere, such as the Lab for Interdisciplinary Design in Coburn.

What were some of the highlights during this academic year?

I love all the Salons. One reason why I enjoy organizing them is that they're the kind of talks that I would want to go hear, but I know that it's easy to forget about a talk, or to be over-scheduled and not have time to attend. Organizing the Salon means that I get to go to all of them, and I get to hear about some amazing research in a wide array of fields. It's exciting.

Last December, Mansoureh Tajik from Community Health and Sustainability presented her research on the community impact of high-volume hog farming. While her research was on farms in the South, several local residents who attended the talk have been affected by a factory farm in Tewksbury. It was a surprise for me to learn that this was such a problem locally.

The residents who came really got a lot out of the presentation, and it was great to see the exchange between faculty and the Lowell-area community.

Sometimes the Salons are particularly notable for their timing. In October, we had a presentation from Bill Lazonick (RESD) on Business Organization and High-Tech Employment in the United States. As we were heading into rough territory in the economy, his talk was particularly enlightening about some of the troubles we had then—troubles that have only gotten worse.

It's also nice to be able to get visiting faculty from other schools to offer their perspectives. Last fall we also had our department's visiting scholar from China — Guihua Zhang — give a talk on Inner Mongolia that was very interesting.

Any other information pertinent to alums or University community members?

Everyone is invited to join us!

The Salon series has a lot to offer to the campus. We're listed on the Events calendar and on the UMass Lowell Today e-mails when there is an event coming up. I also personally send the Salon Announcements to an e-mail list (mostly of previous Salon presenters and faculty I know personally). If anyone would like to be added to the list, he or she can e-mail me directly: Bridget_Marshall@uml.edu



Faculty Salon presenters, Bridget Marshall and Susan Kirtley; Presentation: Zap! Pow! Comics Hit the Classroom: Pedagogical Practice and Graphic Narratives

A Brush with Fame



Professor Jeannie Judge was the table leader for the Poetry Question at the Advanced Placement Reading in English Literature, held in Lexington, Ky., in the summer 2008. With her here is Irish-born poet Paul Muldoon, a professor of English at Princeton University and the Pulitzer Prize winner for Poetry.

Connector Update

BY KRISTA PERRY

This year, the *Connector* has greatly improved its online presence. Its new Web site, UMLConnector.com was very successful attracting readers. Last fall, the *Connector* attended the Associate Collegiate Press Convention in Kansas City, where the staff learned new tricks of the trade. Some of the great story ideas we got were the pizza taste test, which included Chancellor Marty Meehan, in the search for the best pizza within five miles of campus. This year the *Connector* also greatly improved its relationship with the UMass Lowell police chief. We also want to say that we encourage submissions and participation on the paper; we have great hopes for the next year.

Audrey Mangone will be the paper's editor for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Arthur Friedman Scholarship

Contribution Coupon

This scholarship honors the memory of Professor Arthur Friedman. A much-loved professor of Shakespeare and dramatic arts, Professor Friedman was called by one of his colleagues the "Woody Allen of the English Department." Colleagues and students alike appreciated his humor and wit. A theater reviewer for the *Boston Herald*, Professor Friedman was also active in many productions at the Loeb Drama Center and Agassiz Theater. He loved performing, and acted with Stockard Channing, Tommy Lee Jones, John Lithgow, and James Woods. English majors who hold at least sophomore standing and will remain here for at least one semester are eligible to apply. The scholarship is an annual award based on merit. Preference is given to students with an interest in Theater Arts or Shakespeare.

If you would like to contribute to the Friedman Scholarship Fund, please clip the coupon adjacent and mail it with your contribution to the address below. Make checks payable to University of Massachusetts Lowell and include 'English Department Scholarship' in the memo line. Thank you.

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Update on Activities of Famous and Local Author, Andre Dubus III

BY ALYSSA CARRIGAN

Andre Dubus III joined the UMass Lowell family in 2001 as the Jack Kerouac Writer-in-Residence. He returned in 2005 because, he says, "I needed to get out of writing all day and these are my kind of people." Hailing from Haverhill, he has found work at such esteemed universities as Tufts and Harvard. This semester he taught Creative Writing Fiction I and II along with 10 directed studies with writing students.

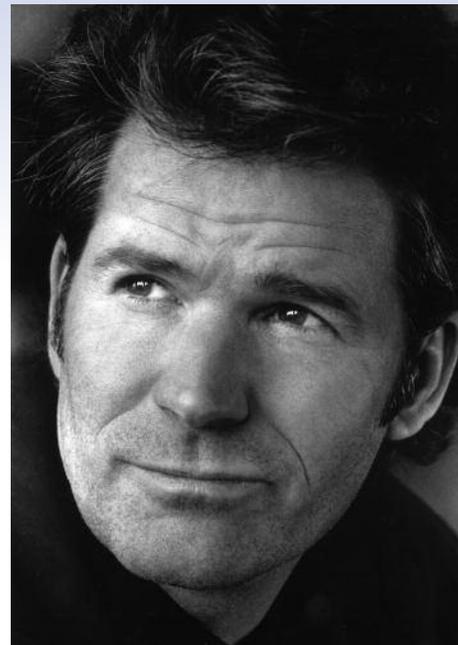
Last year he found himself immersed in a 15-city book tour that turned into a 70-city tour for his latest book, *The Garden of Last Days*, lasting from March 31st to December 7th, an impressive feat. The hard copy came out this June of '08 and the paperback is due to come out in June. Professor Dubus gave me a rare glimpse into a day in the life of a book tour. Dubus said, "The hectic routine of bouncing from a city handler through signings and readings and interviews and dinners to a flight the next morning made my head spin. I'm not complaining. It's hard to get published, but it's a recipe for self loathing. You get sick of your own voice after a while."

After his breakthrough novel, *House of Sand and Fog*, he worked for three years on a piece that went nowhere. "As I've told you before, Alyssa, you learn to stare at the page." Andre Dubus has been an influential professor in my college career and is always there, giving great writing advice to us young writing wannabes.

The idea for *The Garden of Last Days* came from an image. "It was a wad of cash on a bureau, but it wasn't my bureau. I realized it was tips, a stripper's tips." He says it came from stories of 9/11 hijackers that had been seen in Florida strip clubs. "How could they? I began to think, what's it like for a woman in this position, to have a man's blood money?" The story thus began and it is told from eight different points of view. He wrote the entire novel while teaching at UMass Lowell and says there is some talk of film development.

Andre Dubus does a lot of public speaking and has a lecture agent. He is invited to talk at university libraries and does a lot of traveling to do so. He was a key-note speaker at the ALA (American Literature Association) in Savannah, Georgia, this past Fall. He also was on a panel in Los Angeles for the BEA (Book Expo of America) with celebrities such as Magic Johnson, Philippa Gregory and Alec Baldwin. He's involved in organizations such as PEN America, Freedom of America, Theater Arts Committee and the Writing Scholarship Committee here at UMass Lowell.

A celebrity in his own right, Professor Dubus has much going for him. It is a wonder how he has time to sit down, let alone have writing time and time with his wife and three children. But he does it all and is quite the role model for students. He is a key member of the English Department here at UMass Lowell and serves as an inspiring influence for me and many other students here on campus.



Andre Dubus III

The **Tatler**

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