November 2015

RWU LIBRARY WELCOMES MOROCCAN LIBRARIANS

November 24, 2015 4:21 PM

The RWU Library welcomed two Moroccan librarians for the week of October 19-26 as part of a collaborative initiative between RWU’s Spiegel Center for Global and International Programs and Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. The University Library was honored to host the Mohammed VI Library’s Associate Director, Connell Monette, and Multimedia Librarian, Aziz El Hassani, for a week of dialogue and information sharing among librarians.

The purpose of their visit was to continue a partnership with the University that has been cultivated over the last few years. Interim Dean Betsy Peck Learned set up meetings with the Moroccan librarians and RWU librarians based on their areas of interest. Of interest to Dr. Monette was NEASC accreditation, Open Educational Resources (OER), and managing electronic book collections. Mr. El Hassani’s interests included information literacy instruction, managing multimedia collections, and human rights and freedom of expression initiatives, such as Scholars at Risk. The visit provided the librarians from both universities with the opportunity to compare information on providing services to students, work practices, and common challenges such as accreditation and e-books.
In addition to visiting the library, Dr. Monette, Mr. El Hassani, and their colleague, Hassnaa Qara, were hosted by Kate Greene, Director of International Program Development of the Spiegel Center, and Don Mays, Director of the Intercultural Center, who introduced them to the University and the region with visits to Boston, Providence, and Newport. Future collaborations may include sharing curriculum virtually between our two institutions and further collaboration between the libraries.

Book Arts: An Age Old Craft in the Hands of Millennials

By Lindsey Gumb, Instructional Technology Librarian
Flatback case-binding hand-bound by librarian Lindsey Gumb

What do you get when you put a librarian, an archivist, a creative writing professor and a class full of literary-enthusiastic seniors into a room? A colorful, interactive workshop on book arts and bookbinding, of course!

In early November, Instructional Technology Librarian, Lindsey Gumb, and University Archivist, Heidi Benedict, collaborated with Professor Renee Soto and her senior creative writing students on a bookbinding workshop held in the newly renovated Mary Tefft White Cultural Center. Trained in bookbinding at the North Bennett Street School in Boston, and by a friend in book repair, Lindsey and Heidi, respectively, share a passion for the art of hand-binding books, and were eager to collaborate with Professor Soto and her students in an experiential learning workshop.

The session was extremely interactive and included a step-by-step demo of how a book is constructed, starting with textblock (the pages of a book) and cover creation, adding decorative paper to the covers of a book, and the process of attaching (or “casing-in”) the textblock to the book’s cover. After observing the demo, students were each given a hand-sewn textblock and two boards that would become the covers for their very own books. Group tables covered in scrap paper were set up around the room with a variety of bookbinding supplies and tools including PVA glue, brushes, scissors, bone folders, Xacto knives, and the best of all – the students’ very own hand-marbled paper! That’s right, prior to the workshop, Professor Soto and her students studied the historic process of paper marbling and had the opportunity to actually make their own – so cool!

Paper marbling (seen above) can actually be traced back to the 10th century in Asia, however, the marbling we are familiar with today evolved in Europe during the 17th century.
Students used their own marbled paper to not only cover their books as a necessary technical step in the process of bookbinding but also to add a unique and artistic touch. After covering their boards, they cased-in their textblocks and with a little tweaking and finessing, had created their first books! From the chatter and smiles around the room, the workshop appears to have been a wild success, and students left not only with their very own handmade books but also perhaps feeling inspired to hand-bind a volume of their own poetry or prose.

Interested in learning more? There are full-time programs, workshops and open studios all within an hour of Bristol that you can participate in, as well as many books and online resources to get you started on your own. If you have questions, feel free to contact Lindsey Gumb or Heidi Benedict.

Mary Teft White Cultural Center open for student study space

If you're having trouble trying to find study space during the end of the semester, The Library has reserved the Mary Teft White Cultural Center for student use from 4 p.m. on December 9th through 2 a.m. on December 15th.
Dr. Semahagn Gashu Abebe came to speak to a packed Mary Tefft White Cultural Center at Roger Williams University on November 17, 2015. Here are a few photos from his talk.
Upcoming Books: Prodigals: Stories by Greg Jackson

NOVEMBER 5, 2015 11:59 AM

By Kevin Marchand, Connections Intern
Writers like Greg Jackson continue to prove that the short story form is not dead. In his forthcoming debut collection, *Prodigals*, Jackson has strung together eight mind-shattering stories, a number of which formerly appeared in such publications as *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. With sentences that drive on for half a page, and a lyricism you can almost taste, Jackson's characters navigate the deceivingly muddied waters of today's privileged elite. Out of the eight stories, six are told from the first-person perspective, and frankly, these narrators leave nothing unsaid. As readers, we are privy to every moment of their spiritual and philosophical unraveling, and we accompany them as their relationship to reality becomes more and more fragile, their disequilibrium increasingly jarring.

The terms of the ensuing ride are set in the opening sentence of the first story, “Wagner in the Desert” (previously published to much fanfare in *The New Yorker*). “First we did molly,” the narrator explains, “lay on the thick carpet touching the pile, ourselves, one another.” At this point we know to buckle up, and Jackson doesn’t disappoint. He keeps the pedal to the medal in every story, barely leaving enough room for breathing. Indeed, by the end of most these stories, it can feel like one has just run a marathon. So in the event of profuse sweating, don’t be alarmed—you are not alone.

Jackson demonstrates a fondness for picking his characters up by their ears and plopping them down in settings they did not entirely ask for, with people they do not necessarily want to be with. And, predictably, this technique tends to create immediate tension, a tension Jackson sustains line to line, page to page. In perhaps the most obvious case, “Epithalamium,” the protagonist, Hara, a youngish woman in the midst of a semi-mutual divorce, arrives at her beach house to find a stranger—a college-aged, free-spirited young woman, named Lyric—living in her home. Hara wanted time alone, and now, she’s got to deal with the presence of a young woman who could not be more different than her, and in turn serves as a constant reminder of all the aspects of Hara’s own personality that she is hoping to avoid. With his unique characters and his dazzling use of language, Jackson holds us rapt as the situation continues to escalate in the most unexpected ways.

In the final story, “Metanarrative Breakdown,” the narrator describes a feeling that over the summer he has “been on increasingly intimate terms with . . . A vertigo of disconnection.” If I had to pick a prevailing theme that carries through from “Wagner in the Desert” to “Metanarrative Breakdown,” it would have to be this: disconnection. Although almost all the characters in *Prodigals* are financially well-to-do—or at the very least, comfortable—they are all spiritually bankrupt. And this, it seems, is the point Greg Jackson is trying to make about our current predicament. It is becoming increasingly difficult to connect, really connect—to feel fulfilled. In “Tanner’s Sisters,” Jackson’s narrator announces, “I don’t think I’ve ever been present with another person as deeply as I was in that moment.” For him, this is everything; for each of Jackson’s characters, this is what they long for. Yet, in most cases, they fail. Frequently, it is a challenge to pin down precisely why it is that these characters can’t seem to connect, but it’s all too clear that their hold on life—their notion of existence—is dauntingly and increasingly “tenuous.”

These eight stories that make up *Prodigals* are remarkably unsettling and shockingly beautiful. Philosophically uprooting and spiritually crucial. Greg Jackson probes the very depths of our existence, highlighting the ever-lingering sense of discontent that’s always waiting to strike, shall we let our guard down and look past the hidden beauty of a life that so often appears to be anything but.

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**SHORT TAKES: Upcoming Books**

**NOVEMBER 3, 2015 9:54 AM**

Novels
Hotels of North America, by Rick Moody
Little Brown
November 2015

Rick Moody’s latest novel is the story of one Reginald Edward Morse, a top reviewer on RateYourLodging.com. The novel is told through a series of Morse’s online reviews of hotels over several years. Each review offers its own story, while slowly building a larger narrative that gets pieced together through a series of revelations that come out over time in the postings. On the surface, Moody’s book is wildly funny, but once you settle in deeper, you find a very moving and brilliant account of what it means to search for dignity and love and family.

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The Heart, by Maylis de Kerangal
Farrar, Strauss and Giroux
February 2016

Originally published in France in 2014, The Heart (Réparer les vivants) was a widely lauded, including winning the Grand Prix RTL-Lire, and the Student Choice Novel of the Year. The novel, artfully translated by Sam Taylor, takes place over a twenty-four-hour period, from the moment of a fatal accident to the heart that is harvested from the victim and then transplanted. Stylistically, the prose explodes off the page, reflecting the urgency of the situation, where any and every pause is a question of life and death.