

Professional Development Assignment, 2014-2015 Academic Year
Summary Report
by Prof. Cary Holladay, Department of English
October 21, 2015

My year-long PDA was highly productive. I accomplished my main goal—the completion of a 400-page draft of *Blackbeard's Wife*, a historical / literary novel about Blackbeard the pirate. The story makes use of invention as well as documented fact. I am now revising the manuscript, and my agent, Liz Darhansoff of the Darhansoff Literary Agency, is awaiting it.

I wrote several new short stories. “You Are Free, Go and Fight,” is about convicts who were released from the penitentiary in Milledgeville, Ga., in 1864, to fight for the Confederacy. The story was accepted by *The Hudson Review* and is scheduled to appear in the next issue.

Two new contemporary stories, “Tom O’Keefe’s Laundry” and “Teach for America,” are with the Darhansoff Literary Agency.

I accepted invitations to visit these institutions:

- Wichita State University. As Visiting Distinguished Writer, I tutored 13 grads and undergrads, read at least 40 pages of each student’s work and met with each person individually for an hour a week, for four weeks. I gave a public reading. Sept/Oct 2014.
- Miami University of Ohio. As Visiting Writer, I conducted daily 3-hour workshops for advanced MFA students for one week, held individual conferences, and gave a reading. March 2015.
- Susquehanna University. Gave a reading, conducted a workshop, and taught a class. March 2015.
- Salisbury University. Gave a reading, conducted a workshop, taught a class. April 2015.
- Converse College. A craft talk and a reading. May 2015.

For most of the year, I was out of town, but participated in the activities of the Department of English and the Creative Writing program insofar as email and phone calls allowed:

- Helped to judge in-house competitions for the *UM Magazine* fiction selections; helped to edit the final choices.
- Reviewed applications to the MFA program
- Student recruitment

During the spring, I created and administered comprehensive exams to two MFA students, Danian Jerry and Erin Pounders. As Thesis Adviser, I read and edited multiple drafts of their thesis projects and made sure their defenses were scheduled for dates when I was in town. Both students graduated in May.

Other creative activities included

- A reading at the Rapidan Firehall in Rapidan, Va., the community where much of my work is set in the present or in the historical past
- Judging fiction competitions (*Memphis Magazine* and *The Pettigru Review*)
- Writing endorsements for new books by authors Lawrence Coates, Becky Hagenston, and Charlotte Holmes

It was a wonderful year, and I am grateful to the University of Memphis for providing this valuable time and support.

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