

Gary Earl Ross

Buffalo, New York

Buffalo area writers and teaching artists Celia White and Gary Earl Ross, longtime friends, met over lunch in the summer of 2011 and decided to interview each other for the Teaching Artist Snapshot series. Working in a comparatively small but culturally rich and diverse region like Western New York (population just under one million), they are surprisingly similar despite obvious contrasts in gender, race, age, and writing focus.

Celia conducts the first interview.

GARY EARL ROSS is a novelist, playwright, public radio essayist, and University at Buffalo professor. His books and plays include *The Wheel of Desire*, *Shimmerville*, *Sleepwalker*, *Picture Perfect*, *Blackbird Rising*, *Murder Squared*, and *Matter of Intent*, winner of the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and Mystery Writers of America and is a past board member of the Just Buffalo Literary Center, which sponsors adult workshops and readings, places writers in classrooms through *Writing with Light*, and brings international writers to Western New York through its Babel program.



Gary Earl Ross photograph by TK.

Celia White: *How long have you been teaching writing?*

Gary Earl Ross: I started teaching writing as a college freshman. A YMCA program was looking for sophomore to senior English majors to teach writing to kids. I got the job as a freshman because I had just sold my first short story. Adding the two years I had that job to my 38 years in the classroom means I've been teaching forty years. Now I feel old.

CW: *When did you first start writing?*

GER: Like most artists, I began with imitation. Between the ages of five and ten I made my own comic books, dreadful superhero things. At ten I started reading Ray Bradbury and was so caught by the beauty of his writing I abandoned my terrible drawing and began reading books on writing so I could write stories like his.

Continued on p. 26