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Footnotes: Department of English Newsletter  
(2008-2012)

English

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1-2011

## Footnotes, Issue 8, Jan.-Feb. 2011

Department of English

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## **Memories from a Third Coast Writers' Workshop by Jim Nelson**



**Jim Nelson** (B.A. '10) is continuing his English studies at Ohio University, but he was generous in sharing his memories of a summer session at a Third Coast Writers' workshop for middle school students and of his time in our

department.

"I remember having a lot of fun in Third Coast. My fifth grade teacher recommended it to me because I would always want to write stories when we did English. I was 11, so my memories of Third Coast are a bit vague, but I remember that the instructors gave some very interesting writing prompts that I had not experienced in regular school.

One of my favorite memories was visiting a nursing home. We interviewed elderly people and wrote about them (I think I interviewed a woman named Gladys.) We also composed a collection of work from all of the students that I believe I still have somewhere. I remember how exciting it was to see my work published somewhere.

I loved the creative writing program at Western. My first workshop, Writing Fiction and Poetry, was a blast, and reaffirmed my decision to go into creative writing (as opposed to math, which I was going to do until orientation.) At Western I took courses in fiction, poetry, and playwriting.

I participated in the Prague Summer Program, which was probably the greatest experience of my life. I had a breakthrough of sorts while I was there in regards to how I approached writing fiction. Robert Eversz, who taught my workshop, stressed to me the importance of staying in scene. I also heard some fantastic lectures and readings from authors such as Robert Owen Butler, Stu Dybeck, and Arnost Lustig.

I also looked forward to the Gwen Frostic Readings. The first one I went to was my freshman year--Li Young Lee, who has since become my favorite poet. Some of the more memorable readings for me were Li Young Lee, Philip Lopate, Steve Orlen, Eric Ramsey (who happens to be a playwright at Ohio University and good friend of Steve Feffer), Don Lee, Michael Davis (who was my TA in Prague and one of my biggest influences), Stu Dybeck, and many more.

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I had some amazing professors at WMU. Jaimy Gordon taught me an incredible amount in one semester and was very supportive of me as I applied to grad schools. Michael Davis, mentioned above, also taught me a great deal and was very supportive. He was Ph.D. student, and, after Prague, invited me to sit in on his English 3660 fiction class and contribute. I also learned a lot from Steve Feffer (his workshops were always a lot of fun.) I took his English 5660 class twice, the second time my last semester at Western. I wrote the first act of a play and he encouraged me to finish it and participate in the New Play Project, one of my favorite experiences of my undergrad years. The play ended up being three acts and over two hours long.

One of my favorite things about Western’s program was, in fact, that playwriting is in the English department where it belongs and not the Theater department, which is very rare to find. Over the summer I developed a new love and respect for playwriting and the process of putting on a play, and it is something that I hope to come back to.

I enjoyed every creative writing workshop I took at Western.

OU has been a great experience so far. The English department is very well funded. I’m teaching freshman composition, a new and exciting experience for me. We have a very impressive faculty, including the president of Association of Writers & Writing Programs, Dinty Moore.

The campus is beautiful, the people in the program are wonderful. I’m in a MA program and am not sure yet if I’m going to go for the MFA or go straight for the PhD.

## Chair’s Corner

Some time ago, when thinking about the features that made our department stand out from among the wealth of institutions of higher education, I started compiling a list. While we have them on a poster in our department and on the portal page of our web site, I thought I might as well repeat the entries here:

- We are currently in touch with 2,600 of our alumni/ae via our alumni/ae newsletter, *Footnotes*.
- We have 270 students who are members in Sigma Tau Delta, making our chapter of the English honor society one of the fastest growing and active in the country
- 100% of our 40 tenure-line faculty are highly experienced teachers and active scholars
- We recognize 50 undergraduate and graduate students annually with departmental, college, and university awards
- We afford 40 students annually to take English 2000, an experimental class that introduces students to the diverse practices and skills in English Studies
- We maintain an excellent 19:1 student-faculty ratio in our junior/senior seminars
- We had 16 of our faculty and students recognized by major national, regional, and local awards in teaching, scholarship, and creative activity over the last three years
- We offer personalized instruction in our graduate seminars and workshops with a student-faculty ratio of 8:1
- We are proud that the departmental mean in teaching effectiveness according to student evaluations is 4.39 (out of 5.0), considerably higher than College and University means in that category
- And we were gratified that our doctoral program was ranked most highly from among all 17 WMU doctoral programs by the National Research Council.

Onward and forward with WMU’s English Department!

-- Richard Utz



# Student News

**Eileen Wiedbrauk** (MFA student) announces the publication of the following pieces of short fiction: "Apology" in *SWINK* and "Color, Pattern and Fantasy" in *The Northville Review*, and the poem "Fireworks" in the July/August 2009 issue of *North American Review*.



**Diana Stout**  
(Ph.D. student)  
presented a paper,  
"Writing in the  
Middle: Engag-  
ing Disengaged  
Students in the  
Writing Revision

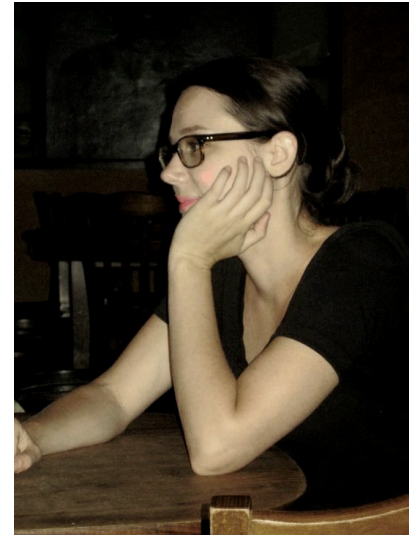
Process" at the Michigan College English Association's (MCEA) 2010 Annual Conference, held at the Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, MI in October. The paper was written during her 2010 summer experience of the Third Coast Writing Project, headed by Dr. Ellen Brinkley.

Then in November 2010, she made a presentation of one of her first-year composition writing assignments, "Investigating Renaissance Individuals," at the annual National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference held in Orlando, Florida in November 2010.

Serving as Davenport University's Plagiarism Task Force chair, where she works full-time overseeing the English Department both in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, new university guidelines and reporting of plagiarism were developed throughout 2010, finally approved in December 2010, and she will continue to chair the committee as the guidelines are delivered and taught to both students and faculty this year.

Diana received her MFA (drama) at Western in 2006 and has returned for her Ph.D. in English Education.

**Mikala Hansen**,  
(MFA student), has won a major national award through the Kennedy Center: The National Association of Partners of the American Theatre awarded for Playwriting Excellence for her full-length play [Viking-American: An Autobiomythography].



She will spend a week at the Kennedy Center attending the American College Theatre Festival, as well as a week at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas at a week-long playwriting workshop: Playwriting and the Transition to the Screen sponsored by UNLV on June 5 – 10, 2011. The workshop consists of a series of one-day seminars conducted by professional playwrights, screen writers and media professionals.

## A reminder about the English Department Awards Ceremony

*The faculty and staff  
of the Western Michigan University  
Department of English  
cordially invite you to our  
Annual Awards Ceremony and  
Reception  
honoring our undergraduate and  
graduate students.  
The ceremony will be held on  
March 18, 2011  
3:00 until 6:00 p.m.  
Bernhard Center, Room 157.  
The keynote speaker will be  
David Dempsey,  
distinguished alumnus 2010-2011.  
Light refreshments will be served at the  
end of the program.*



# Alumni News

**Jared Randall**, (BA '06) writes:

I was fortunate enough to have studied with Herb Scott, Jaimy Gordon, Stu Dybek, and Nancy Eimers (in that order!) during my time at WMU. After graduation, armed with recommendations from several of my WMU undergrad professors, I was able to complete my MFA in Poetry at the University of Notre Dame. Now I am back in the Kalamazoo area and my first book of poetry, *Apocryphal Road Code*, has recently gone to print with Salt Publishing. It is great news and I wanted to share it with my home department, an institution I owe a great deal.



From the publisher's press release:

Jared Randall earned his MFA degree in 2009 from the University of Notre Dame where he also worked for a variety of print publications. He was a nominee for both the 2009 AWP Intro Journals Award and the 2009 *Best New Poets Anthology*, and his writing has appeared in *Controlled Burn*, *Crucible*, and online journals such as *Bull: Men's Fiction* and *Subtle Tea*. Randall resides in Michigan where urban sprawl cramps old farmhouses.

Wayfarers and their songs, hobos and tramps and the codes they either espouse or deny — all figure prominently in this debut book of poetry by Jared Randall. With both ears bent to the Depression-era stories told among his family about America's hard-working, migrant past, the poet nevertheless walks the tumultuous road of the here and now. Ranging from blank verse to sonnets to rambling free-verse stanzas, Randall takes a fresh look at the space between memory and recollection — between childhood and adulthood, and between generations separated by a century of social change and forgetfulness. Out of these tensions a voice emerges: the voice of the migrant worker, the vagrant and hobo who speak through 'the dust of years.' The hobo carries more than his bedroll across his shoulders, and when he breaks his silence a disjointed vision of an American past spills out in lines both extravagant and clipped, just as the life of the road offers both freedom and hardship.

**Beatrice M. Young** (BA '98) sends an update:

During the past 12 years I've freelanced for various local publications and organizations, but my greatest accomplishment has been the creation of my book, *Scribble Scrabble Writing Journal for Kids*. It's a journal that uses simple creative writing exercises and illustrations to teach children storytelling, and can strengthen literacy skills and build self-esteem. The book is available through my website, [www.etoshapublications.com](http://www.etoshapublications.com), on Amazon.com and as an e-book on Clickbank.com.

One of my greatest desires is to get *The Scribble Scrabble Writing Journal for Kids* into the hands of one million children by the end of 2013. I know this is a lofty goal, but when my mom (a grown-up) made such a big deal over the first poem I (a first-grader) had ever written, it transformed my life forever. I believe if a million kids discovered that their hopes, dreams, thoughts and feelings were important to others, their lives would be changed as well, and the world would be a better place to live in for us all.



And **Kristopher Peterson** (MFA '10) just texted that he's a semi-finalist and still in consideration for the O'Neill for his play *Whangdoodle*.

# Scholarly Speakers Series

Thursday, March 17, 2011  
7 pm, Brown Hall 3025

**Dorothy Noyes**, Departments of English, Comparative Studies, and Anthropology, Ohio State University

“Fairytale Economics: Scarcity, Risk, Choice”

Co-sponsors: the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Haenicke Institute for Global Education; Africana Studies Program; Honors College; Department of Anthropology

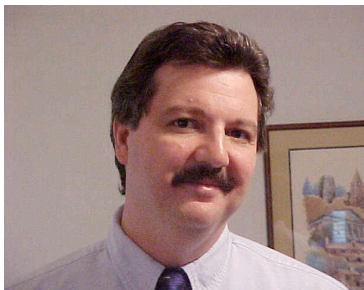


Thursday, April 14, 2011  
7 pm, Bernhard Center 242

**Stephen Orgel**, Department of English, Stanford University

“Open Secrets: Everyday Magic in Early Modern England”

Co-sponsors: Comparative Drama; the Visiting Scholars and Artists Program



Thursday, March 24, 2011  
7 pm, Brown Hall 3025

**Robert Donahoo**, Department of English, Sam Houston State  
**Avis Hewitt**, Department of English, Grand Valley State University

“The Habit of Perception: Flannery O’Connor’s Works and Worlds”



## New Issues Press at the AWP Conference in Washington DC

Like many of our brethren from the Midwest, we barely made it to Washington DC. Who knew that the storm of the century would dump over a foot of snow on us right before we were supposed to fly out of Kalama-zoo? But we made it, if a little later than anticipated.

AWP was a crazy whirlwind as usual, but we are always excited to see so many of our authors face-to-face. We hosted book signings at the New Issues bookfair table for Lisa Lewis, Keith Ekiss, Beckian Fritz Goldberg, Judy Halebsky, and Kevin Fenton.

On Friday Kevin Fenton read from his novel *Merit Badges* as part of the AWP Award Series reading. Managing Editor Marianne Swierenga introduced him and Kevin read from his chapter titled “Climbing.” Bradley Paul also read. His second book was selected by Jean Valentine in the poetry category and published by Pitt, but we still claim him as a New Issues poet since *The Obvious* won our first book prize. So New Issues was well represented at the Award Series reading.

The New Issues table was always busy and we received so many compliments on our books. Situated right next to the Prague Summer Program in the bookfair, we got to see Margaret von Steinen in action, speaking to hundreds of perspective students.

On Saturday there was a tribute to the beloved poet Jack Myers, led by Mark Cox, who edited a forthcoming collection by Jack that we are publishing in the spring.

With thousands of poets, writers, publishers, students and faculty attending, we were in great company. Next year, AWP is in Chicago.

- Bill Olsen



Editor Bill Olsen, Nancy Eimers, and poet Lisa Lewis

## Faculty News

**Nancy Eimers's** fourth poetry collection *Oz* has been published by Carnegie-Mellon University Press (Jan. 2011).

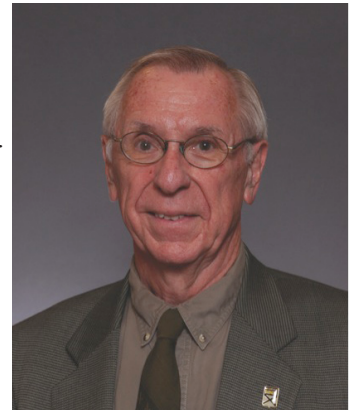
**Richard Katrovas's** essays have appeared recently in *Ekleksographia*, *Connotations*, and *Mid-American Review*. His *Scorpio Rising: Selected Poems* will appear from Carnegie Mellon University Press in February. He will give readings from this book in February at Stetson University, University of California-Riverside, San Diego State University, University of Southern California, and Loyola-Marymount University.

**Arnie Johnston** sends news:

As you know, Debby's new book, *Cool Front: Stories From Lake Michigan*--is just out from March Street Press. Now our full-length play *Beyond Sex* is coming out in February in both English and Romanian editions, the Romanian version entitled *Dincolo de Sex* and translated by Dona Roșu and her daughter Luciana Costea. Also coming out is our translation (with Dona) of Romanian playwright Hristache Popescu's long one-act, *Epilogue*; all are being published by Editura HP, Bucharest.

Arnie's singable translation of Schubert's Winterreise song-cycle had wonderful performances in Kalamazoo at the end of October and the beginning of January. And we've finished a draft of the script for a musical, *Summers on the Seine*, to be produced in Chicago with Arnie's translated lyrics to jazz arrangements of songs by Gabriel Fauré. We're also co-producing a CD of the Fauré songs to stimulate interest in the show, being recorded by a cadre of Chicago cabaret luminaries. We're also still writing our quarterly A & E column for *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*. On the Jacques Brel front, Arnie's negotiating with the Brel family so that Wings Press--which published his *Witching Voice* novel--can bring out a collection of his translated lyrics.

Now in sunny Florida, we hope to make inroads on our latest PKP column and a new half-hour version of "The Three Little Pigs" for All Ears Theatre.



## Sigma Tau Delta

The WMU chapter of Sigma Tau Delta is once again among the very small number of chapters invited to participate in the Outstanding Chapter exhibition at the 2011 Sigma Tau Delta International convention. This is our chapter's third such invitation in only five years of existence, and this recognition is a reflection not only of the amazing work of our students but also the very strong support they have been able since day one to count on receiving from all of you, faculty and staff alike.



According to the invitation letter, "The Alpha Nu Pi Chapter at Western Michigan University has been identified as one of the most active, vital chapters in the country," and a contingent of WMU students will head to the convention in Pittsburgh in late March to show 'em how it's done.

Our spring 2011 induction of new members is scheduled for Sunday, March 20, in 3025 Brown. Time is yet to be determined, but these usually happen at 2 or 3 p.m.

The spring 2011 English Studies Conference, in which our students present their original scholarly and creative work, will be held on Saturday, April 9, 12-5 p.m. We'll start at noon in 3025 Brown and move to breakout sessions in various classrooms on the third floor of Brown. This is always a fantastic event, and I invite all of you to attend.



## Joslin's Book Named ALA Outstanding Academic Title



Association.

*Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion* by Dr. Katherine Joslin, director of the Western Michigan University Center for the Humanities and professor of English, has been selected as an Outstanding Academic Title by *Choice* magazine of the American Library

Of the nearly 23,000 academic books published annually, 7,000 were reviewed by the editorial staff of *Choice* last year and fewer than 700 are selected to the Outstanding Academic Title list. *Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion* is among 688 books and electronic resources selected to the 2010 list, which was published in the January issue of *Choice*.

The University Press of New England published the book in 2009 and has announced it will reprint Joslin's book in paperback.

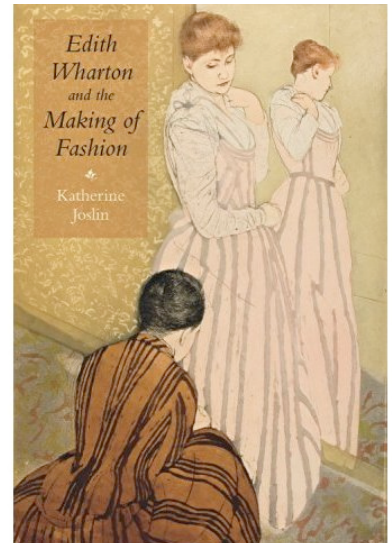
"That a book on Wharton and fashion should be as gorgeous as this one is only fitting," the *Choice* reviewer noted. "Offering intriguing details about turn-of-the-century apparel as well as an entirely new way to understand Wharton--one turning on the symbolic resonance of dress--this book offers up a fascinating approach to Wharton's astute chronicle of culture."

*Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion* describes the origins of the modern fashion industry as seen through the works of Edith Wharton. The book places the iconic New York figure and her writing in the context of fashion history and shows how dress lies at the very center of her thinking about art and culture.

The study traces American patronage of the Paris couture houses from Worth and Doucet through Poiret

and Chanel and places Wharton's characters in these establishments and garments to offer fresh readings of her well-known novels. Less known are Wharton's knowledge of and involvement in the craft of garment making in her tales of seamstresses, milliners, and textile workers, as well as in her creation of workshops in Paris during the World War I to employ Belgian and French seamstresses and promote the value of handmade garments in a world given to machine-driven uniformity of design and labor.

Joslin joined the WMU faculty in 1986 as an assistant professor and became a full professor in 1997. She teaches courses in American fiction and non-fiction at the turn into the 20th century with cross-disciplinary interests in material culture and social and political history. Joslin is also the author of *Jane Addams, A Writer's Life* (Illinois, 2004; paperback 2009) and *Edith Wharton in the Women Writers Series* (Macmillan and St. Martin's, 1991; paperback 1994). She is working on a literary biography of Theodore Roosevelt.



At WMU, she has received the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Achievement Award in Research and Creative Activities in 2009 and the Excellence in Teaching Award in 1997. Under her direction, a WMU team won Fulbright grants in 1999, 2000 and 2001 to conduct Summer Institutes in the Study of the U.S. for International Faculty. In 2008, Joslin was named a Fulbright Senior Specialist and traveled to Cairo as a lecturer and consultant at Menoufiya University in the Delta Region of Egypt.

She received her doctoral and master's degrees from Northwestern University and her bachelor's degree from Oakland University.



# Third Coast Writing Project Summer Schedule

Times and Locations TBA

Contact: Dr. Ellen Brinkley  
ellen.brinkley@wmich.edu  
269-387-2581



Fulfills: PhD specialization requirement and PhD and MAET elective

## 1. TCWP Invitational Summer Institute

*June 20-July 15, 2011*

Now in our 18th summer, participants work with guest writers and with teachers who write professional articles, poems, editorials, personal narratives, digital stories, and more. Summer fellows read the work of strong writing mentors and learn from each other. They create curricular writing workshops that help them use writing to teach and learn in all content areas. This program includes a significant tuition grant. Interviews begin in March. (4-6 graduate credits)

## 2. TCWP Teachers as Writers Workshop

*June 20 – July 1, 2011*

Participants in this open program welcome the time and response provided in support of their own writing. They work with outstanding guest writers, focusing on narrative, poetry, or the genre of their choice. In the fall they take their summer writing experiences into their classes and their work with student writers. (2 optional grad. credits)

## 3. TCWP Writing in a Digital World Workshop

*June 20-24, 2011*

Participants explore ways to use today's tools for tomorrow's world—blogs, digital stories, wikis, podcasts, photo-editing, and more. Teachers at all levels of writing and technological experience are welcome. (2 optional graduate credits)

## 4. TCWP Teaching Writing, Reading, and Comprehension

*July 5-8, 2011*

Teachers at all levels and content areas learn practical, research-based strategies that help students become stronger writers, readers, and thinkers. Participants leave with new classroom strategies that can strengthen and revitalize students' reading and writing for understanding. (2 optional grad. credits)

## 5. Writing with English Language Learners

*July 5-8, 2011*

Participants learn from TCWP teacher consultants who work with English language learners in middle and high school classrooms. Teachers learn from each other as well, trying out a wide range of writing and teaching strategies that support student learning for all our students. (2 optional grad. credits)

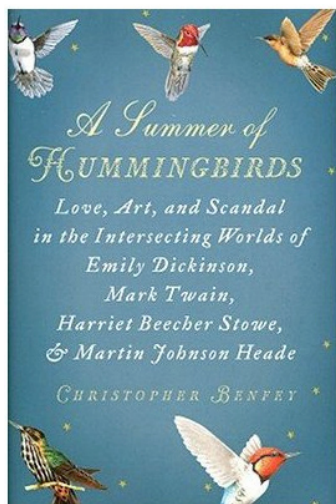
## 6. TCWP Camps for Young Writers

*June 20 – July 1, 2011*

Summer camp programs for young writers feature time for writing and sharing among fellow campers. Camp programs are designed and led by TCWP Teacher Consultants and WMU preservice teachers.



## Book Review: A Summer of Hummingbirds by Christopher Benfey



This is the second book I have read recently that deals with a circle of friends and the relationships that evolved among these friends. The first book was Patricia O'Toole's *The Five of Hearts* which chronicled the intersecting lives of John and Clara Hay, Henry and Clover Adams as well as that of Clar-

ence King.

The circle here was a more expansive one, comprising the worlds of literature, humor, social reform, and art, these being represented by, respectively, Emily Dickinson; Mark Twain; Harriet Beecher Stowe and her brother, the charismatic Reverend Henry Ward Beecher; and Martin Johnson Heade.

(At this point, I must note that the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was a period redolent with what I call "the three-name culture." For examples, note the above names, along with more recent examples: Richard Harding Davis [journalism], Erle Stanley Gardner [detective fiction], Nicholas Murray Butler and James Bryan Conant [higher education], Franklin Delano Roosevelt [politics], Sarah Orne Jewett, Clarence Budington Kelland and Henry Hazlitt Upson [popular literature]. The contrast with the current scene is marked to say the least: 'I'm Kevin, and I'm going to be your server this evening' and 'Acme Widget Company, Karen speaking.')

But I digress.

What is a real stroke of defining a theme is the use of the hummingbird by the author. The hummingbird becomes a metaphor for the fragile strands that connect some larger-than-life personalities. Crossfire abounds: Stowe's article about Lord Byron, that avatar of the Romantic spirit, results in the near-demise of that magazine; Heade, the painter, the mentor of Mabel Loomis Todd who in turn con-

fessed her love for Austin Dickinson, the brother of Emily Dickinson to whom Judge Otis Lord proposed marriage just before his sudden death from natural causes, an event that simply reinforces Emily's estrangement from the world.

A rich tapestry, this, with many strands. Author Benfey plays with these strands in a book which I also learned much about Heade and his paintings of hummingbirds. I also enjoyed, to the point of risibility, the quotes from Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, a tome which I shall read very soon. Benfey has presented a treatment of Emily Dickinson's poetry that is both controlled and insightful. And he evidences a dry sense of humor in his portrayal of Henry Ward Beecher.

The hummingbird motif persists throughout the book. Heade, Dickinson, Beecher and Stowe were fanatical about hummingbirds: hummingbirds painted, hummingbirds tamed, hummingbirds stuffed, hummingbirds imagined as freedom in a world of captivity -- verily, a cult of hummingbirds.

The motif is the structure of the book as it progresses from just before the Civil War to the turn of the twentieth century. The progression is thus one from conflict to confinement to release. But in yet another way, it presents the successive images of war, prison, then flight. Put in theological terms, God is first seen as a vengeful deity trampling on the grapes of wrath who becomes a God of love with its entanglements of desire who then become a Darwinian force of "anarchic energy permeating the vegetable, mineral, and animal realms... It was a route of evanescence, a place in the sky where a cloud has been. In this final phase... the best picture of God is the hummingbird."

This book is a keeper for me.



- Robert Bradley, Distinguished Alumnus

## *Become a friend of the Department of English!*

Alumni gifts make possible the extra margin of excellence. Your donations help us attract and keep top faculty, recruit the best graduate students, support undergraduates with scholarships and prizes, and play a leading role on the national scene with conferences, lectures and symposia. You can be a special part of the Department of English's 500 friends.

For a contribution of \$100, you can be among the special groups of supporters of the programs that make our department special. Your name will be inscribed on a plaque displayed in the department's central office on the 6th floor of Sprau Tower.

If you would like to make a donation, please make your check out to Western Michigan University Foundation, Department of English and send it to WMU Gift Processing, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5403, or visit [www.wmich.edu/foundation/gift/index.html](http://www.wmich.edu/foundation/gift/index.html) and select "English"

### **What's New With You?**

Please tell us where you are and what you're doing. We would love to include you in our next alumni update section.

Email us at [engl\\_news@wmich.edu](mailto:engl_news@wmich.edu) and include the year and degree with which you graduated, any fond memories of the English department, as well as something you've done since your times as a Bronco.

*I support the Department of English with the following gift:*

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25

☐ I would like to become a special donor to the Department of English with a gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_

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Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Footnotes Staff**

Elizabeth Amidon,

Department Development Coordinator

Kelly Phillips, Intern

