

The Tattler

"When a Man has no Design but to speak plain Truth, he may say a great deal in a very narrow Compass."
—Richard Steele,
Preface to *The Tatler*,
vol. IV, 1710.

Newsletter of the Department of English • Michigan State University • January 2007

FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The fall semester began with a welcome to five new tenure-system faculty members and a fellow in Chicano/Latino Studies. Lynn Makau (African American Studies), Karl Schoonover (Film Studies), Jennifer Williams (African American Studies), Stephen Deng (Early Modern Studies), and Lloyd Pratt (Nineteenth Century American Literature, African American Studies) all hit the ground running in August; also joining us were Jeff Jaeckle (Visiting Assistant Professor) and Kathy Jurado (Chicano/Latino Studies Fellowship). The new energies and perspectives these faculty have already brought to the department make it an exciting place to be these days.

Also in the fall, we transferred the department DVD collection of approximately 3,000 titles from Morrill Hall to the MSU Library, where the collection will be safely housed and circulated. The collection was begun many years ago by Ken Harrow and Bill Vincent and has specific strengths in African and British film titles; we are pleased to be able to make this significant archival resource available to the university community.

Last (but certainly not least), I am pleased to announce that Stephen Arch has accepted the position of English Department chairperson beginning this July. I look forward to joining the department as a faculty member after ten years in the position and to placing this responsibility in such good hands.

As always, the newsletter is full of information about the English department's students, faculty, projects, and events. We wish you pleasant reading, and invite former and current students and faculty to stay in touch and to let us know what information about you we may place in a future newsletter.

Best wishes,
Patrick O'Donnell
Chairperson

Red Cedar Review Boasts Colorful History

The *Red Cedar Review* (RCR), founded in 1963, is the oldest undergraduate literary journal in the United States. Despite its longevity, editors and advisers regularly describe it as on the brink of fading away. Endurance in the midst of precarious conditions, however, has been a theme throughout the long history of the journal. There has never been a year without the *Red Cedar Review* since its founding.

Former faculty adviser Marcia Aldrich recounts the time in 2000 when former editor Carrie Preston came to her office as a senior, worried that the literary journal would disappear after she graduated.

"Carrie kept it afloat for years," Aldrich says. "I helped her create a network of people to keep it going." Together Aldrich and Preston recruited a staff for the following year.

Since then, current editor Teal Amthor-Shaffer has put a system in place to communicate the publication process to subsequent editors, which has prevented lapses and enhanced the continuity of the journal's institutional memory.

The *Red Cedar Review* has persisted because individual, driven students have motivated themselves to keep it going each year, a tradition that Jennifer Popa, current editor/staff member, recognizes.

"Dedication is not unique to this latest group of individuals; it's a quality inherent in RCR staff members," she states. "I believe that RCR's longevity is assured because there's a certain vitality inherent in the journal."

Although the Department of English funds the publishing costs of the journal and a faculty adviser provides oversight, the *Red Cedar Review* is truly student-run. The editorial staff appreciates the freedom.

"Dr. Penn has been very trusting and not overbearing," says Amthor-Shaffer. "He gives us space and understands that the journal is run by students."

Gavin Craig believes the current absence of a graduate program in creativewriting provides a space for undergraduate students to have full control over the creative production.

Beginning with Volume 38 in 2003, the Department of English arranged to have the journal printed by the MSU Press.

"Moving to the MSU Press meant that we could free students from the technical preparation and business end of production," Aldrich says. "The editorial staff can now devote themselves solely to the evaluation of manuscripts."

"*Red Cedar Review's* place at MSU Press provides it with the stability and security it deserves," says Meg Sparling, who was editor during the move. "It is a testament to the vitality of undergraduate literary interests that RCR is on track to celebrate its anniversary."

Involvement on the *Red Cedar Review* editorial staff has been instrumental in guiding many editors toward subsequent careers in the publishing industry.

Laura Tisdell, editor in 2004, is currently a fiction editor for Penguin.

"Through my work at the *Red Cedar Review* I found my ability to write creatively," Tisdell



Teal Amthor-Shaffer
Editor, Red Cedar Review

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor • Stephen Carl Arch

Managing Editor • Kelly Battles

In Memoriam: William Whallon, 1928–2006

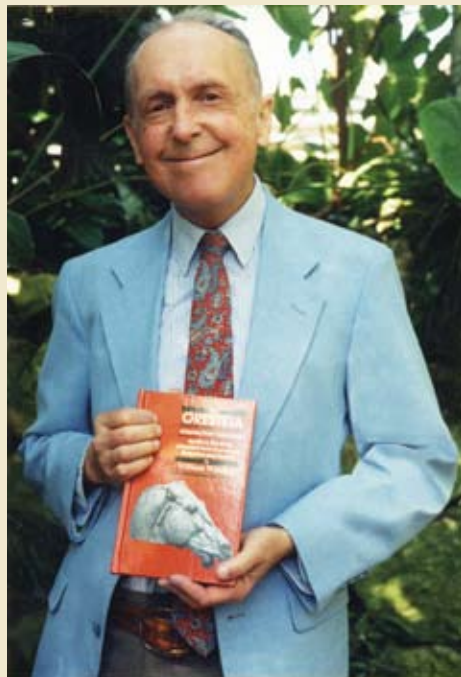
Appreciations by Tess Tavormina and Bill Vincent, professors of English

My first memory of William is from the winter quarter of 1972, when I signed up for his comparative epic course on *Beowulf and Roland*. I was a mathematics major then, taking English courses out of what I thought was avocational interest. Jack Yunck had introduced me to the delightfulness of medieval culture in his Chaucer course the previous summer; what I discovered in William's class was the mystery and power of ancient story and its languages. He drew a picture of wandering northern bards who could be understood across the different Germanic languages – languages not as distinct from each other then as they are now – and who shared a common pool of tales, be it the saga of Sigurd the Volsung, the feud-ridden epics of the Danes and their neighbors, or mythic accounts of trolls and dragons.

Language was central to all of William's scholarly work and teaching. Not just that he knew many languages, both ancient and modern, but that the precise meanings of words mattered absolutely for him. Whether it was asking us in class to consider the multiple contexts of the many European words for dragon and to see that they could carry very different literal and symbolic weights in different cultural settings (such as Germanic mythology vs. the book of Revelation) or writing about the fine nuances of biblical words and their implications for the history of religion and culture, he cared passionately about getting those meanings right. Semantic and other textual "inconsistencies" – to use the title of one of his books – fascinated him, and he disentangled those inconsistencies with a poet's concentration and perspicacity.

Perhaps the best place for me to end is with one of the key intellectual and moral lessons that William taught by quiet but firm example, an example relevant for colleagues and students alike. That lesson is captured best in the title of his article "Auerbach Was a Friend, But a Greater Friend Is Truth," which reflects his commitment to semantic and interpretive precision, his willingness to challenge even the most justly respected authorities (such as his own teacher at Yale, Erich Auerbach) when the evidence warranted, and his witty use of the late medieval commonplace "Socrates is a friend, but a greater friend is truth." The integrity embodied in that commonplace was a value that governed William's entire intellectual life, and it was recognized by both his professional peers and his students, like the English 210 class member who said, "Not only do I appreciate this man for what he has given me, I appreciate him for who he is. Thank you very much, Mr. Whallon. Don't ever change."

– Tess Tavormina



He was "William," not "Bill"; he liked to refer to himself as "your Walloon." It was a heritage of which he was very proud, as attested to by the rooster, emblem of Wallonia, which, hanging in his office window, loomed over the southeast entrance to Morrill Hall.

An old-fashioned "gentleman scholar," he was a believer in the Canon and his own personal canon was very small – Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, *Beowulf*, Dante, Shakespeare, Proust (all read in the original). He had committed to memory long passages; one of the pleasures of arriving early for department meetings was to hear William and Jim Hill try to stump each other with quotations from Shakespeare.

I have many happy personal memories of William. He had a wonderfully dry sense of humor. That is a quality students comment upon repeatedly in his SIRS forms – that, and his encyclopedic knowledge. He, Surjit Dulai, and I used to have lunch once a month. First we would drink sherry and talk. I retain an ineradicable image of William smiling his sweet, sympathetic smile, his eyes sparkling with interest. He never interrupted, but he always had his share of the conversation, his voice rich with the pleasure of telling, whether it be comments about politics, colleagues, linguistic practices of the ancient Greeks, the glories of Samarkand, or his favorite film, *The Blues Brothers*.

Films enchanted him. Despairing, I think, of getting his works produced on stage, he asked me to film two of them – *Odu*, a short piece about Odysseus and the women in his life, and his reworking of *The Oresteia*. William was an eager participant in the entire process, from rehearsing the actors to editing. Neither film was exactly a box-office sensation, but I think William would have been pleased to know that *The Oresteia* resides in the Library of Congress.

I last saw William at his home. He was in pajamas, his feet and hands dreadfully distorted by the disease that struck him so unexpectedly and with such cruel and ultimately lethal effect. He must have been in considerable pain, but, as always, he relished our conversation, that sweet smile of his unfaded. He showed not a trace of self-pity. That, I am sure, he would have considered unbecoming.

– Bill Vincent

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says. "I learned how to talk about reading in an intelligent and specific way, and I gained the confidence to make literature the major part of my life. I felt really invested in the quality of the magazine; every time I sat in that ramshackle office with cartoons doodled by decades worth of editors taped to the walls I could feel the magazine's history."

Tisdell is proud of the role she played at the journal and believes that her participation in the magazine made her take on the test of school more earnestly.

"It gave me a way to get to know my professors and ultimately helped me to get a job as a fiction editor at Penguin, which is amazingly lucky," she says.

The *Red Cedar Review* prepares students for a career in the publishing world by turning their attitude toward literature from passive consumption to active engagement.

"They get to see another side of English literature, not an already constructed canon,

but the chance to evaluate and form what is being written now," Marcia Aldrich says.

Participation on the journal was also instrumental in helping Meg Sparling formulate her career ambitions. Before working on the *Red Cedar Review*, she planned to become an English teacher.

"I quickly realized that *RCR* was showing me a new option, better suited to my skills and interests: publishing. The journal taught me leadership, business acumen, and, most importantly, how to create a product from a passion. *RCR* also provided me with a wonderful opportunity to work inside the Department of English as something more than an undergraduate, allowing me to learn from professors I may never have met otherwise, and to feel part of a community. Working on the *Red Cedar Review* was inspiring and, in the best sense of the word, educational."

Tisdell echoes these sentiments. "Nothing will top the time spent with the other members

of the staff eating barbeque at Marcia Aldrich's house or talking about story submissions while throwing around a football in front of Morrill Hall. *RCR* is what made MSU feel like home to me."

There are many ways that Department of English alumni can support the *Red Cedar Review*. It can be accessed online at www.exitseventyfive.com/rcr. Volumes published by MSU Press beginning with Vol. 38 (2003) can be purchased online. Contact the journals division of the MSU Press at (517) 355-9543, ext. 130, e-mail journals@msu.edu, or inquire online via the MSU Press website at msupress.msu.edu/journals/rcr/. Subscriptions, issues, and individual articles can be purchased. Individuals may also become patrons of the journal; complete information is available at the *Red Cedar Review* website. ■

Fulbright Fellows Describe Their Travels

The Fulbright program is a cultural exchange project funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State. American scholars and students travel to countries around the world, while U.S. institutions host foreign scholars to enhance cross-cultural understanding. Last October, professors Patrick O'Donnell and Ken Harrow gave an informal talk to a group of graduate students and faculty about their experiences as Fulbright fellows.

O'Donnell held the Walt Whitman Chair in American Literature at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands in fall 2005. Harrow researched and taught at Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, for the 2005–2006 academic year.

O'Donnell noted that the length of his visit to the Netherlands allowed him to observe the culture in depth. He said that while Holland is famous for being a very tolerant country, an influx of new immigration from the Middle East has created some social problems. The country is having difficulty with the transition to a culturally diverse society because, according to O'Donnell, it has no deep historical experience with coming to terms with multiculturalism.

While at the University of Nijmegen, O'Donnell served on a Fulbright selection committee for Dutch students wishing to study in the U.S.



The marketplace and "wagehouse" in Nijmegen, where department chairperson Patrick O'Donnell taught in the fall of 2005.

"The students' primary reason for wanting to come to America was the perception of the U.S. as more tolerant and sensitive to cultural issues," he says. "The Netherlands is modeling some of its policies on U.S. practices while it continues to transition into a culturally diverse and open society."

During Harrow's stay in Dakar, Senegal, he noticed that the city's Muslim inhabitants have a mixed perception of the U.S. "The Senegal Muslims look at America as a dangerous and ungodly wealthy country, but also as a place they all want to get to, even though it is difficult," he said. Harrow told stories of people fleeing Senegal illegally, trying to get

to the Spanish Canary Islands in large canoes that would become lost at sea. In Senegal itself, Harrow saw beggar children everywhere. His wife, Liz, volunteered at a nongovernmental charity organization that assisted these children.

Harrow's experience at the university was affected by a chronic lack of funding and facilities. The university, originally built for 8,000 students, currently has more than 50,000. The auditorium in which Harrow held his lectures was often appropriated for other purposes with no warning, and he would have to cancel class. Students at the university went on strike for six weeks to protest the lack of funding.

"They blocked streets, threw rocks at cars, and demanded meetings," Harrow says. "They managed to get agreements for better conditions eventually. The students threw a party to celebrate, but then the deans backed out of the agreement."

Despite the suffering he witnessed, Harrow says he was struck by the ability of the Senegalese to cope successfully with their situation. This insight caused him to reevaluate his perception of Africa. Before he left for his trip, Harrow said that "poverty" was the first word that came to his mind when he thought of Africa. After his experience in Senegal, he has replaced "poverty" with "paucity." "The word 'poverty' carries a connotation of helplessness," he notes. "These people are indeed very poor, but they are far from helpless." ■

New Faculty Welcomed to Morrill Hall

Lynn Makau holds a joint appointment in the Department of English and the African American and African Studies Program. She received a PhD in English from the University of Texas, Austin, in 2005. At MSU, she has taught on twentieth-century black women's literature and black feminist criticism; she has also taught the research and methodology capstone course for undergraduate concentrators in Black American and Diasporic Studies. She has published on the topics of maternal discourse and property, national allegories, and representations of breast-feeding. Her current research investigates acts of transgression and cross-racial intimacy in neo-slave narratives as well as transnational feminist interpretations of property and domestic economies.

Karl Schoonover teaches film studies and visual culture and is completing a book on the representation of physical violence in realist films made after World War II. He has published on the Italian cinema, classical film theory, photography, and performance art. His most recent essays appear in *Art Journal* and *Senses of Cinema*. He has also curated several museum exhibitions of contemporary art, including a survey of major video art from the 1970s and 1980s for the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design. He received a PhD in Modern Culture and Media from Brown University.

Before joining the Department of English, **Stephen Deng** completed his doctorate at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research and teaching interests include early modern drama and prose, the cultural impacts of money and early modern business technologies, object criticism/the new materialism, new economic criticism, the history of the book, and material culture. He has recently co-edited a collection of essays titled *Global Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture, 1550-1720*. His current book project is *Rough Economies: Money and State Formation in Early Modern English Literature*.

Jennifer Williams joins the Department of English after completing her doctorate in 2006 at the University of Texas, Austin. Her research and teaching interests include twentieth-century African-American and Black diasporic literature and culture; women, gender, and sexuality studies; trauma studies; and postcolonial theory. She has recently published reviews in *Modern Fiction Studies* and *American Literature*. Her latest article, "Mad at Jane: Bertha, Creole Ambiguity, and Caribbean Women's Literature," is under review. Her current book project is *Unspeakable Things: Trauma, Sexuality, and Black Cultural Memory*.

Lloyd Pratt comes to MSU from Yale University, where he was an assistant professor from 2002 to 2006. He received his PhD from Brown University in 2001. His research and teaching interests include nineteenth-century U.S. literature, history of the book, African-American literature, literary and cultural theory, race and ethnic studies, and literature of the American south. His current book project is *Archives of American Time: The Modernity of Antebellum U.S. Culture*. He will be guest editing a special issue of *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* titled "The Event and After." ■



Lynn Makau



Stephen Deng



Karl Schoonover



Jennifer Williams



Lloyd Pratt

Faculty News

Lister Matheson has been named an International Fellow at Queen's University Belfast. This is a three-year visiting appointment.

Two poems by **Anita Skeen** — "But Not Forgiving Myself" and "Remembering My Father, Struggling" from her recently completed manuscript of poetry, *Never the Whole Story* — were selected as semifinalists for the 2006 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry sponsored by the *Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry*.

James Seaton's essay, "William Dean Howells and Humanistic Criticism," was awarded the Jill Barnum Midwestern Heritage Prize for Literary Criticism by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.

Marcia Aldrich's "The Bed of Metamorphosis," originally appeared in *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, Fall 2005. It was then selected as a Notable Essay in *The Best American Essay Series*, edited by Lauren Slater.

M. Teresa Tavormina has received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship at the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library, located at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she will spend five weeks this year studying medical manuscripts from the Vatican Library. The Vatican Film Library is a micro-film collection of more than 37,000 manuscripts housed in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Her project, "Middle English Practical Uroscopies: A Study of the Genre," looks both at the development of medical writing in English and the history of medical practice in late medieval England. In St. Louis, Tavormina will study Latin manuscripts on the doctor-patient encounter and medical diagnosis, seeking to find Latin sources of late medieval English treatises on uroscopy, that is, the diagnosis of illness through the examination of patients' urine.

Recent Publications

Jennifer Fay's "Germany is a Boy in Trouble" appeared in the Fall 2006 issue of *Cultural Critique*.

Stephen Rachman's edition of Fitz-Hugh Ludlow's *The Hasheesh Eater* was published last fall by Rutgers University Press.

Scott Juengel published "Mungo Park's Artificial Skin; Or, The Year the White Man Passed" in the Spring 2006 issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*.

Dennis Preston was the section editor for "Language" in R. Sisson, C. Zacher, and A. Cayton (eds.), *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*, published by Indiana University Press.

Robin Silbergleid's chapbook, *Pas de Deux: Prose and Other Poems*, was published by Basilisk Press.

Patrick O'Donnell published "James's Birdcage/Hitchcock's Birds" in a special issue of *Arizona Quarterly* called "Seeing James Seeing"; **Sheila Teahan** published "The Literal Turn of the Figurative Screw" in the same issue.

Gordon Henry published "The Silver Saxophone, Masks of Pain and the People in the Hills" in *Pembroke Magazine*.

Jyotsna Singh's "'Th'expense of spirit is a waste of shame': Mapping the 'Emotional Regime' of Shakespeare's Sonnets" appeared in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets* published by Blackwell in 2006.

Scott Michaelsen (with co-author Scott Shershow) published "Does Torture Have a Future?" in the most recent issue of *boundary 2*, an international journal of literature and culture.

Sheng-mei Ma published "Kim Ki-duk's Non-Person Films" in the fall 2006 issue of *Asian Cinema Studies*.

Bill Vincent's films *Terror at Baxter U.* and *Dead-End Road* are distributed nationally through such venues as Netflix and Blockbuster.

Aime Ellis published "Boys in the Hood: Black Male Community in Richard Wright's *Native Son*" in the Winter 2006 issue of *Calaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*.

Reade Dornan published "Screen to Stage: Positioning the Subject Spatially in Haruki Murakami's *The Elephant Vanishes*" in *Contemporary Drama in English*.

**Jeff Wray, codirector
Film Studies Program
*The Beach Umbrella and Other
Stories* by Cyrus Colter**

When I discovered *The Beach Umbrella and Other Stories* by Cyrus Colter, it felt as if I had discovered a writer and stories that I had long been looking for. Colter took up writing in midlife after a career as a lawyer and public servant. Most of his stories are set in his native Chicago and feature a broad cross section of black folks — factory workers to evangelists to junkies to the elite upper crust. Colter’s 18 stories stand out as sensitive and solid works of fiction.

In the title story, “The Beach Umbrella,” 41-year-old Elijah is a struggling working class family man. He finds peace and a kind of psychic joy and relief among the many shapes, sizes, and shades of black folks who congregate beneath the colorful beach umbrellas at Chicago’s Lake Michigan shore. On a whim, Elijah borrows money from his hardworking teenage son and splurges on a bright, expensive beach umbrella of his own. Under his new umbrella, a newly confident Elijah attracts a crowd and serves as a conductor for an energetic all-day party. As the day comes to an end and the beach empties, Elijah’s thoughts return to the struggles of his shaky home life and existence. One thought in particular unnerves Elijah as he sits alone under his shiny

new beach umbrella as dusk nears: how will he ever be able to repay the money borrowed from his son for the beach umbrella?

The Beach Umbrella and Other Stories is a collection that focuses on the small, everyday dilemmas and joys of life. In his stories, Colter allows his characters to feel the complete devastation, complete relief, or complete happiness of a given moment. These collective moments serve as heartfelt reminders of just how significant even small moments in our lives can be.

**Lindsay Tigue
Senior English major
Waterland by Graham Swift**

Graham Swift’s *Waterland* spans generations, weaving characters and history together while demonstrating the power of stories and storytelling as a link between past and present. It is all introduced through Henry Crick, a history teacher at the end of his career, reflecting on his accumulation of stories in order to interpret, or reinterpret, his life. He focuses primarily on two families and how they shaped and changed both the Fens and his own experiences. Interconnectedness becomes key as Crick explores a mystery that can only be solved through history and storytelling. “But man—let me offer you a definition—is the story-telling animal,” Crick says. “Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind

not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and trail signs of stories. He has to go on telling stories, he has to keep making them up.” Stories of family, heritage, and public history become inextricably tied as a force behind life. *Waterland* has a fairy-tale quality as it jumps from the Fens and throughout time to unravel a past that isn’t past.

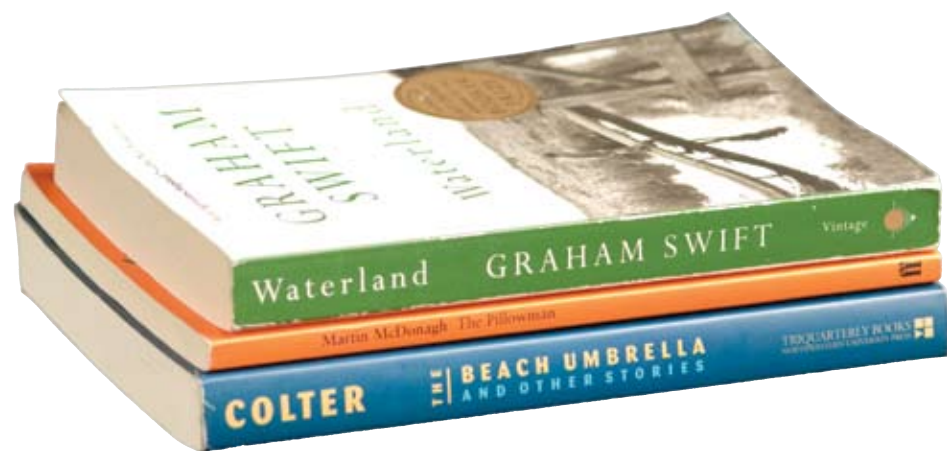
**Lance Norman
PhD candidate
The Pillowman by Martin
McDonagh**

In *The Pillowman*, contemporary Irish playwright Martin McDonagh turns away from the overt mediations on nationhood and identity that have dominated his career to this point.

Taking place entirely in a police station, *The Pillowman* focuses on the police interrogation of Katurian. Katurian, an aspiring writer, has been brought in for questioning due to the uncanny similarity between child murders in the stories he writes and child murders occurring in the community in which he lives. Katurian claims that the stories he writes and the children featured in those stories are fictional — they do not mean anything. Despite his protestations, the police interrogators have visual evidence to the contrary.

McDonagh uses the extreme images of children being murdered and the acts of violence done to these children to examine the nature and limits of artistic expression. The play questions whether art can be moral or whether morality is a real-world construct that is inappropriate when placed on an aesthetic object.

I do not want to leave you with the false impression that this is a grim read from cover to cover. Actually, like much McDonagh has written in the past, *The Pillowman* is a very funny play. While the play’s moments of violence can be graphic and grisly, it is difficult to read without laughing aloud. ■



Stormzands Establish Marion Kurtz Croak Endowed Scholarship in English



Ann and Don Stormzand

The Department of English is pleased to announce a newly endowed scholarship to assist students pursuing a career in English secondary education. **Ann and Don Stormzand of Okemos, Michigan**, have established the Marion Kurtz Croak Endowed Scholarship in English to memorialize Ann’s mother, who overcame numerous hardships to achieve the necessary training to earn a teaching certificate. Ann, herself a retired school teacher from the Flint Public Schools, received a master’s degree in English secondary education in 1981.

Born in June 1906, Marion Kurtz Croak spent her childhood and adolescence in Reed City, Michigan. In addition to running the family farm, her mother made butter to sell at the market, and her father worked as a lumberman. At the age of twelve, Marion, the eldest in a family of four sisters and one brother, became the head of the family after her mother died during childbirth. Although there were offers by family and friends to take the children, her father, Hank, was dedicated to keeping the family together.

“For his determination, his children were always grateful,” Ann says. “He nurtured in them an appreciation of music and music-making and the joy of sharing happiness and laughter at family gatherings.”

After graduating from high school, Marion was responsible for running the household and looking after the family. She also worked in a local bakery, earning \$5 a week. She soon realized that she could do more for the family if she attended college, and she decided to work toward a teaching certificate. Marion shared her desire with her high school English teacher, who loaned her \$100 so she could attend Central Michigan College. After complet-

ing the program, Marion taught in both the western Michigan and Detroit area schools.

James Croak was born in Coral, Michigan, in March 1906, also the child of farming parents, one in a family of three boys and three girls. The children became separated after the death of their parents in 1919 from the flu epidemic and the subsequent death of the oldest son, Bernie, who had struggled to keep the family together.

Forced to leave school in the ninth grade, James worked at various jobs in Grand Rapids and played baseball in the area. He met Marion after hearing about “the pretty new teacher at the Coral School” and attending an evening music show. They married soon after and moved to Detroit. James worked at Crowley-Milners and Hudson’s department stores. Struggling during the early years of the Depression, James opened a carpet business in Saginaw. Unfortunately the business was lost due to bank failures in 1933. James then worked in the wholesale carpet business.

Refusing offers for deferment during World War II, James served in the U.S. Navy’s Pacific fleet in Okinawa. Until the end of his life he was haunted by the events of that campaign. He also was a member of the first party to land at Nagasaki on September 23, 1945.

After his discharge, he resumed his career in the wholesale carpet business, retiring in 1968. He and Marion enjoyed a pleasant retirement in Hubbard Lake, Michigan, which provided them with the opportunity to travel abroad. After Marion’s death in 1990, James moved to Grand Rapids and then Kalamazoo. He passed away in 2000.

Although they were isolated on farms and lost their mothers when young, Marion and James Croak, the eldest surviving children of large families, made rich and diverse contributions to their nation and communities. The Marion Kurtz Croak Endowed Scholarship in English is dedicated to James and Marion Croak in commemoration of their life of hard work, determination, and love of language and learning. Together they overcame financial and emotional hardships and raised a happy and well-educated family.

Ann states: “Don and I hope and trust this award will encourage and inspire potential recipients to pass on the love of learning that we received from our parents, which was initiated by Marion and supported by her English teacher. Teaching English is a challenge, but through that challenge comes the blessing of watching students experience the appreciation of literature and the joy of writing.” ■

Leaving a Legacy

Great universities, like Michigan State University, thrive on challenge and imagination and grow on initiative and success. Each year, thousands of alumni and friends support MSU by contributing their time, talents, and money in support of our students, faculty, and programs. Indeed, private philanthropy represents an enormous resource that has enabled the College of Arts and Letters’ outstanding faculty and student body to excel at teaching and learning.

Many donors to the Department of English, for example, have chosen to continue their support beyond their lifetime by including the department in their estate planning. Legacy gifts from an estate by way of will, trust, or life income agreement allow donors the opportunity to make a significant gift to their alma mater. Planned gifts can provide discretionary funds to be used as determined by the chair of the department or can be designated to a specific use directed by the donor’s estate or through an agreement with the university. Named endowed funds, whether established with outright gifts or with a planned gift, provide annual funding to the department in perpetuity.

MSU alumni and friends often choose to document (formalize in writing) their intention to make a future gift. Documenting a future gift from an estate is not a binding legal obligation upon the donor or their estate, and information remains strictly confidential. It is an important process through which donors can establish guidelines, with the help of the college development office, detailing wishes for the use of their potential future gift.

If you are interested in learning more about leaving a gift to MSU through your estate or about establishing a named endowed fund, please contact Kristin Peterson, director of development, College of Arts and Letters, at (517) 353-4725.

World-Renowned Stratford Festival Visits MSU

The largest classical repertory theatre in North America, the world-renowned Stratford Festival of Canada, visited MSU and the Department of English last fall for the first of several annual teaching and performing residencies in East Lansing. The visiting company included nearly a dozen actors, artistic director Richard Monette, designer John Pennoyer, and senior marketing director Anita Gaffney.

The first residency provided students with the opportunity to meet professional theatre artists, gain insight into the creative process, and explore the works of William Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams in depth. Several faculty members in the Department of English incorporated the visit into their literature courses. In Sandra Logan's ENG 221 and ENG 421 courses, for example, the Stratford Festival actors spent two class periods working with students on performance-related interpretive activities focusing on *Henry IV*.

"The goal was to enhance the students' ability to engage with and understand the literary and performative elements of the play and to broaden their interpretive strategies and experience," says Logan, an assistant professor of English who taught the English department's "English Literature in London" study abroad program last summer and led a student field trip to Stratford last fall with associate professor Jyotsna Singh. ■



Members of the Stratford Festival of Canada discussed Henry V with students in Sandra Logan's ENG 421 course.

Stay in Touch

Let us know what you've been up to. Send your news to *The Tattler*, Department of English, Michigan State University, 201 Morrill Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824 or arch@msu.edu.

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