



SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Fall 2011

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Reawaken: 2012 Sigma Tau Delta Convention

Shannin Schroeder
Convention Chair
Southern Arkansas University



Location sets the tone for Convention, and often (as is the case this year) the convention city even informs the theme. From February 29 to March 3, New Orleans will provide the backdrop for diverse speakers, engaging sessions, informative workshops, and inspiring panels—promising to reawaken us all at the 2012 Sigma Tau Delta Convention.

New Orleans has been the birthplace of a variety of Americana: Dixieland, an early style of jazz; Creole, the blending of French and Caribbean cultures; and, arguably, American multiculturalism. Yet from the original indigenous peoples who called it home, to the early 18th-century French settlers of New Orleans, to the resilient citizens responsible for the slow but steady revitalization since Katrina landed six years ago, residents have known that to realize the opportunities afforded by the region around New Orleans is to overcome extreme geography: a sweltering, swampy depression at the mouth of the Mississippi, often as much as six feet below sea level.

The harsh conditions demand an irrepressible populace, and the people of the Crescent City have risen to the challenge again and again. In the 19th and 20th centuries, civil war and Jim Crow laws threatened to divide the city and its inhabitants along racial lines for the first time in its history. Here, too, New Orleans reawakened—living up to its adopted moniker “The Big Easy,” taking everything in stride and re-embracing its accepting, multicultural roots.

In part because of its very diversity, no place in the United States is better known for Mardi Gras revelry, and each year New Orleans (NOLA) celebrates by coming alive with tourists and locals alike in a symbolic rekindling of the passions and excess that will ostensibly be put aside during Lent. Even in its nicknames we find the lore of rebirth: the Crescent City, reminiscent not only of being nestled into the bend of the Mississippi but also of the waxing crescent moon.

In New Orleans this coming spring, the 2012 Convention offers a space for renewing our love for the discipline of English. As you present, attend panels, listen to speakers, and discover—or rediscover—New Orleans, we invite you to reawaken as a member of Sigma Tau Delta.



Interested in going to the ΣΤΔ Convention?
Proposals due in November!
www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions



Sid Watson
President
Oklahoma Baptist University, OK

The President's Corner

Why English?

“What do you plan to do when you graduate?” At one point or another most of us who choose to major in English have heard that question asked with certain undertones that probably aren’t addressed to those who choose to major in more “practical” fields, say computer science or business. The unspoken part seems to be “What is the value of a major in English?” or maybe even “Is there any value in a major in English?”

The recent recession has intensified some people’s concerns about the value of humanities degrees, leading even *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to publish articles with titles like “Defenders of the Humanities Look for New Ways to Explain Their Value.” As members of Sigma Tau Delta, perhaps we should think more carefully about our role as “defenders of the humanities.” We need to be outspoken about the value of English to our campuses and our society. Toward that end, I asked two very articulate Sigma Tau Deltans, former president and Delta Award winner Beth DeMeo and College of New Jersey chapter sponsor Diane Steinberg, to help us find the words for what we know is true: the study of English isn’t frivolous; it’s essential.

The problem isn’t limited to the natural worry of well-meaning relatives that their loved ones can find jobs when they graduate, but rather extends to some people questioning why non-English majors should bother to take English courses, particularly those that focus on literature. Responding to this charge, Professor Steinberg compares the study of English to more “practical” concerns: “Yes, feeding the hungry is important, but feeding souls and minds with the best that has been written, or performed, or created also does good in the world. Telling young people, ‘This wonderful drama or novel or poem is part of your cultural heritage as Americans and you are a part owner of that heritage,’ should make them feel proud to be members of the culture and to work for it.”

Professor DeMeo responds with a question of her own: “What can be accomplished without understanding human history, motives, context?” Drawing on David Reynolds’s *Mightier than the Sword* about Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, DeMeo points out that “Reynolds makes a convincing case that this novel, plus the hundreds of acting troupes that put on later dramatic versions of the book across America (a phenomenon comparable to today’s *Harry Potter* series but even more widespread and certainly with a greater moral intent), changed the way Americans—particularly non-abolitionist northerners—viewed the institution of slavery and changed history. . . . Using language to influence public opinion is one way to accomplish needs in ‘the real world.’”

Perhaps then *some* English is good, but how do we explain to others that our decision to immerse ourselves for four years (or more!) in the pleasures of well-crafted language is not simple self-indulgence? Professor Steinberg argues for the utility of English as a major: “Because we ask students to read, to interpret, and to argue their individual interpretations, a major in English is good for anyone preparing to work independently. . . . American businesses want self-starters who do not need to be told what to do, and they want people who can look at what is in front of them and interpret that information.” Taking the long view, Professor DeMeo suggests, “the skills and understanding needed to complete an English major are significantly valuable for progression beyond an entry level position.”

So how can Sigma Tau Deltans, whether at the local chapter or the national level, function as defenders of the study of English and other humanities? Professor Steinberg would like to see local chapters connect more directly with their local libraries and chapter members “go out of their way to support and use the services of our local public libraries. . . . The libraries often use readership to justify their costs to local governments, and many libraries located in college towns could benefit from student readership and student volunteers.”

So how can Sigma Tau Deltans, whether at the local chapter or the national level, function as defenders of the study of English and other humanities?

Professor DeMeo stresses the importance of the convention experience: “I think of Sigma Tau Deltans as ‘my people.’ They get the same jokes, recognize the same allusions, tackle the same problems, rejoice in all the wonderful speakers, and celebrate our discipline. . . . So, first,

keep the conventions. Keep the scholarships, the awards, the workshops, *The Rectangle* and *The Review*, keep it all and publicize it more.” She suggests, for instance, that chapters post their award winners on school websites.

One of the terrific advantages to being lovers of the English language is that most of us write very well. So let’s use that ability. Submit articles about your local chapter to the student leadership blog so we can all be inspired by your accomplishments. Also consider writing articles about your chapter activities or your department’s accomplishments for your school or local newspapers. Consider writing an article celebrating a favorite professor or an especially wonderful library program. The study of English enriches our lives. Let’s use what we’ve learned to advertise our on-campus successes and the resources (such as local library and literacy programs) that make the study of English possible beyond the borders of our campuses.

Executive Director's Report

Being a Member of Sigma Tau Delta

William C. Johnson
Executive Director
Northern Illinois University



One of the many benefits of my work with Sigma Tau Delta—and with our program for secondary school students and teachers, the National English Honor Society (NEHS)—is the opportunity to meet people all over the world. During almost three decades of heading the Central Office operations I've found $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ members, often quite by accident, in the Pacific Rim, in Europe and the United Kingdom, and in many parts of the USA.

Just this summer, walking through an Oxford (England) market I saw a young woman wearing one of our $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ hoodies; it was an excellent excuse for starting a conversation! Three weeks earlier, in Cologne, Germany, a young man visiting that city's magnificent cathedral was sporting one of our Society t-shirts, providing me yet another opportunity to extend a greeting and to make a contact.

My favorite t-shirt experience turned out to be seeing one worn by an avowed bibliophile whose enviable shirt contained the following definition: "Biblioholism (Gr. Biblion) n. Biblio-holism. Books, of books: the habitual longing to purchase, read, store, admire, and consume books in excess."

Doesn't that hit the mark? It expresses in a nutshell so much about who we in $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ and NEHS are and what we do, and so much of what Tom Raabe, in *Biblioholism: The Literary Addiction*, amusingly describes as the disease of countless persons who, like me, find themselves irresistibly drawn to the printed page.

Casual meetings such as those noted above, no matter how brief, are always very pleasant connections in part because they inevitably lead to sharing this addiction with another addict. I find myself comfortable when these things happen, and the common bond of our $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ membership not only yields an immediate conversation starter but very often leads to a conversation sprinkled liberally with comments about favorite authors, most recently read books, and just as often some excited comments about writing.

I'm reminded by these chats of what I love about our academic disposition, and especially of the shared (and enormous) community of readers and writers, worldwide, who take great pleasure in the discipline of English. "Discipline" is, I think, the correct word; we are, after all, disciples of these writers whose works we love to read, disciples of the studies we are doing, and disciples of the poetry and prose we ourselves are creating (and that are creating us).

Sigma Tau Delta exists to acknowledge, celebrate, and support such community. Your membership, like mine, recognizes that we are people for whom language is more than a tool. It is a means of living in community with authors who have found and developed a way to use words that speak to our hearts,

our heads, our very being. Reading, we are in contact not only with yesterdays, but also with todays, and tomorrows. Writing, we create a space where others are invited into our being and where we can reach into the lives of the seen and the unseen. There is magic in the words, received and given—"magic in the web," as Othello says.

As we move farther into the fall term at our various schools, as we get on with our reading and our writing, poetry being read and prose being written, let me encourage you to give some thought to your own connections with words.

Think, too, about how your own chapter can celebrate the discipline, can share the excitement we find in language, and how our own engagement with literature and language connects us, spatially and temporally, to worlds of the past, the present, and those yet to be born.

And as we move "farther up and further in" (to use C.S. Lewis' phrase) into our studies, celebrate too your own membership

in this wonderful organization.

Bounties of $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ scholarships exist to help with your studies, and our two journals provide numerous opportunities for you to publish your writings (both fiction and non-fiction).

Study abroad assistance encourages you to do what that $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ student

in Oxford, and the other in Cologne, were doing—exploring literary backgrounds. Next spring's convention in New Orleans will yield an experience of literary community unlike any you've ever had, when over a thousand students and faculty from throughout our Society will converge, share research and chapter ideas, hear great speakers, and join in convivial English fellowship.

This is your Society. You've earned membership in it. Celebrate that accomplishment, and be encouraged and motivated to reach even farther. Perhaps next year I will bump into you somewhere in the world; you'll know me by the smile, a book in hand, and the $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ pin I'm sure to be wearing. Be sure to identify yourself as part of the fellowship! Tolkien writes that "not all who wander are lost." Wear your $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ shirt—and wander with me.

Biblioholically,
William C. Johnson
Executive Director

This is your Society. You've earned membership in it. Celebrate that accomplishment, and be encouraged and motivated to reach even farther.

The Treasurer's Update

Shannin Schroeder
Secretary-Treasurer
Southern Arkansas University



The Wuthering Financial Heights

The search for appropriate metaphors for our finances has, over the years, led me to explore some unexpected comparisons: weight-lifting, fairy tales, the stage, dating—even Winnie the Pooh and Disney. But in order to understand this year's events, I imagined the relationship between our organization and our investment management as a love triangle. Early in 2010, it looked like happily ever after was just around the corner: Wall Street villains vanquished, witch-like financial woes melted away, economically down-turned dragons flung from the highest towers of the castle.

If it had been a romantic comedy, the end credits would have rolled. But the best stories come with plot twists, and classic love stories offer up complications for the lovers, the sort that keeps us turning pages. Given that our investment portfolio is the heroine of this story, she faced some tough choices this year. Imagine Catherine Earnshaw, torn between the romantic but tormented Heathcliff and . . . Edgar Linton, whose very name conjures up the stuff we fish out of pockets and who promises Catherine a perfectly boring, though safe, life.

This past year, when our financial advisor made a move to a new bank, the two banks themselves became Sigma Tau Delta's Linton and Heathcliff moment. We could see merit in both: we had had terrific success with MorganStanley (whom we'll equate with old reliable Linton for the moment), but we had to admit that Wells Fargo had some attractive assets, not the least of which was our reliable, investment-savvy advisor. And so, late last fall, the Board chose to follow its financial advisor into the welcoming arms of Wells Fargo. And here's where my analogy to *Wuthering Heights* finally falls apart.

Unlike Catherine—and without peat moss or moors or broken hearts involved—we had in our Heathcliff a pretty secure-looking package. No demands. No brooding. Well, maybe a bit of brooding (it is Heathcliff, after all), but Wells Fargo now offered us the security of a financial advisor who had shepherded our money through one of the worst crises in U.S. financial history and with whose help Sigma Tau Delta doubled its investments within the span of a few years.

The heroine seems to have adjusted to her choice pretty well. At the end of the first quarter this year, her rather generous "figure" had seen a 16% increase from the end of 2009. The second quarter (a rough one for the financial market) still netted us comfortable 4% earnings. Like the quintessential character from a classic romance, our investment is looking ravishing.

What's Happening in NEHS?



Dave Wendelin
National English Honor Society Director
Northern Illinois University

With 440 chapters, the National English Honor Society (NEHS) continues to grow, engaging members in significant literacy projects across the country and, indeed, around the world. As part of the NEHS experience, almost all chapters engage in service projects, using the talents of the members to positively impact the lives of others. For example, members of the Judith M. Grossman Chapter of NEHS at Lemont (IL) High School have partnered with "Books for Hope" and have, according to the sponsor, "prepared and sent

over 1,000 student-made texts and \$750 in donations to [their] sister school in Uganda." In addition, the Lemont students have established an "adopt-a-buddy" mentor program at the Lemont library that pairs an NEHS student with a child (age 4-12). The pair reads together at least twice a month.

Another example of the amazing work being done by NEHS members is the project embraced by members of the Divine Comedy Chapter at St. Petersburg (FL) Catholic High School. Members worked with the local assisted living residence for the elderly. Students worked in pairs, paying weekly visits to the residents and interviewing them about their life stories. The interview materials were then compiled into a book by the students and presented at a "biography bash" at the assisted living facility.

The NEHS motto, "Gelast Scael Mid Are"—"Duty Goes With Honor," is indeed being played out by students and their sponsors. What a privilege to be a part of such an honor society, filled with individuals willing to use their passion for English studies to help others while simultaneously enriching their own lives. Chapters have collected countless numbers of books, held read-a-thons, sponsored poetry slams, developed writing centers, and tutored elementary students in reading. Other highlights:

- Utilizing *Enrique's Journey*, the common reader for 2011, as a "starter," one school with a large immigrant population developed an "Immigrant Project," a series of essays, poems, biographical pieces, and fictional stories about the immigrant experience. (Mother Cabrini High School, New York, NY)
- Another chapter bought dictionaries and binders for a community of immigrants enrolled in an English class. The sponsor writes, "What was so rewarding were the thank you notes we received written by each member of the class in less than perfect English, but in more than perfect sincerity." (Blessed Trinity Catholic High School, Roswell, GA)
- Another chapter participated in the "Read for the Record" project and had over 100 children reading the same book on the same date. (Whitehall Jr./Sr. High School, Whitehall, NY)
- One final example: the faculty sponsor shared, "Many of the chapter students could knit and crochet. They taught others and we sold scarves, hats, and 'texting [fingerless] gloves' to raise money for our Warm Up for a Good Book campaign. The money from this and other initiatives went to buy a book for every incoming freshman to read over the summer." (Catocin High School, Thurmont, MD)

Are there NEHS chapters in your area high schools? Do you know Sigma Tau Delta members who are teaching high school who should be encouraged to start a chapter? How might your $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ chapter reach out to NEHS chapter schools in your community? Visit www.nehs.us for more information about NEHS and be a voice that supports this vital segment of Sigma Tau Delta.

2012 Convention Speakers



Natasha Trethewey

Natasha Trethewey is the Phillis Wheatley Distinguished Chair in Poetry and Professor of English at Emory University. Trethewey's works have appeared in such journals as *Callaloo* and the *American Poetry Review*. Her first collection, *Domestic Work*, won numerous awards, including the first Cave Canem poetry prize in 1999. She received the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for her work *Native Guard*, and *Thrall*, her fourth collection of poetry, comes out in 2012. She is also the author of *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, a collection of creative non-fiction. Her awards and honors include fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the

Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts; she was named the 2008 Georgia Woman of the Year.

Trethewey's second collection, *Bellocq's Ophelia*, is the Common Reader for the 2012 Convention.

Excerpt from "Letter Home" (*Bellocq's Ophelia*, 2002)

I thought not to do the work I once did, back bending
and domestic; my schooling a gift—even those half days
at picking time, listening to Miss J—. How
I'd come to know words, the recitations I practiced
to sound like her, lilting, my sentences curling up
or trailing off at the ends. I read my books until
I nearly broke their spines, and in the cotton field,
I repeated whole sections I'd learned by heart,
spelling each word in my head to make a picture
I could see, as well as a weight I could feel
in my mouth. So now, even as I write this
and think of you at home, *Goodbye*

is the waving map of your palm, is
a stone on my tongue.

Naomi Shihab Nye



Naomi Shihab Nye is a Palestinian-American writer, speaker, and educator who has authored or edited more than 30 works and whose works draw from her own heritage and from 37 years of traveling around the world. Her poetry has appeared in such works as *The Atlantic*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Ploughshares*, and her collections include *Red Suitcase*, *Fuel*, and *You & Yours*, which was a best-selling poetry book for 2006. Nye, who has been a visiting writer for The Michener Center at the University of Texas at Austin and at the University of Hawai'i, also writes works for children and young adults, among them *A Maze Me: Poems for Girls* and the novel *Habibi*. Her newest volume of poetry, *Transfer*, and a short story collection, *There Is No Long Distance Now*, are forthcoming in winter 2012. Among her awards Nye counts a Lannan Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, four Pushcart Prizes, and she has appeared on *NOW with Bill Moyers*.

Excerpt from "Arabic" in *Red Suitcase*

I thought pain had no tongue. Or every tongue
at once, supreme translator, sieve. I admit my
shame. To live on the brink of Arabic, tugging

its rich threads without understanding
how to weave the rug . . . I have no gift.
The sound, but not the sense.

I kept looking over his shoulder for someone else
to talk to. . . .

. . . I touched his arm, held it hard,
which is something you don't do in the Middle East, and said,
I'll work on it, feeling sad

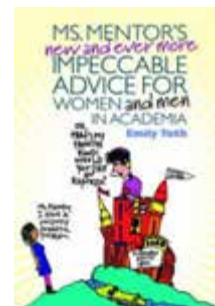
for his good strict heart, but later in the slick street
hailed a taxi by shouting *Pain!* and it stopped
in every language and opened its doors.

2012 Convention Speakers, Continued

Emily Toth

Emily Toth will speak on Mentorship and Academia at the Sponsor's Luncheon.

Emily Toth is Professor of English and Women's Studies at Louisiana State University. Toth, a Pulitzer Prize nominee, has published extensively on Kate Chopin since the late 1970s, including the influential biography *Unweiling Kate Chopin* and *Kate Chopin's Private Papers*. She is also founder and editor of *Regionalism and the Female Imagination* (formerly the *Kate Chopin Newsletter*). Toth's other books include *Inside Peyton Place: The Life of Grace Metalious*, *Ms. Mentor's Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia*, and *Ms. Mentor's New and Ever More Impeccable Advice for Women and Men in Academia*. Her Ms. Mentor advice column has been appearing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for more than a decade.



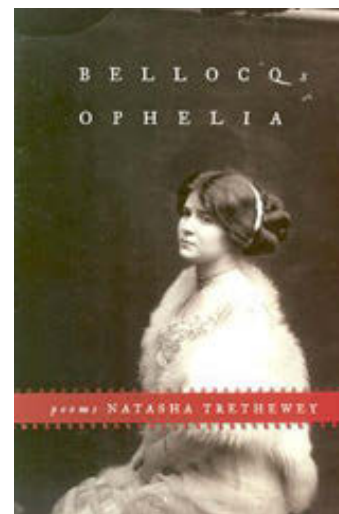
Review of Common Reader

Belloc's Ophelia: Giving Voice to the Forgotten



Carrie Fitzpatrick
Historian
Albemarle University, PA

In Millais's painting, Ophelia dies face up,
eyes and mouth open as if caught in the gasp
of her last word or breath, flowers and reeds
growing out of the pond, floating on the surface
around her. The young woman who posed
lay in a bath for hours, shivering,
catching cold, perhaps imagining fish
tangling in her hair or nibbling a dark mole
raised upon her white skin. Ophelia's final gaze
aims skyward, her palms curling open
as if she's just said, Take me.
~excerpt from *Belloc's Ophelia*



Inspired by the photographs of Ernest J. Bellocq, Natasha Trethewey intimates the past in her volume of free verse, *Bellocq's Ophelia*, which shares the fictional narrative of a young biracial prostitute from New Orleans in the early 1900s.

Reminiscent of John Everett Millais's portrait of Ophelia, one of Bellocq's photographs from 1912 provided Trethewey inspiration to establish connections between the literary Ophelia of Shakespeare and the illusory Ophelia of her collection. Reflecting the tragedy and sadness associated with her name, the evocative Ophelia shares her life story as a mulatto woman moving from Mississippi to New Orleans to make a living.

In Ophelia's writing to her former teacher and close friend, Miss Constance Wright, we learn of her journey into prostitution as she describes her surroundings, customers, and fellow sex workers.

And then, in my borrowed gown
I went upstairs with the highest
bidder.
He did not know to call me
Ophelia. (14)

Review Of Common Reader, Continued

Otherworldly in subject matter and unique in vision, Trethewey's small volume uses letters, diary entries, and historical photographs to create an intimate bond between the main character and the reader while addressing themes of identity, race, and social mores. Although tragic in circumstance, Ophelia is influenced by Bellocq's work and begins a transformation. At first presented as an object to be looked at and through, Ophelia purchases a Kodak camera, learns from Bellocq's photography, and re-envision her self.

I thrill to the magic of it—silver
crystals like constellations of stars arranging on film. In the negative
the whole world reverse, my black
dress turned
white, my skin blackened to pitch.
Inside out,
I said, thinking of what I've tried
to hide. (43)

Interestingly, the real Bellocq was a commercial photographer during the early 1900s who earned his living taking photographic records of landmarks and machinery for local companies. However, he is most well known for his photographic series of the prostitutes working in the "octoroon" brothels of Storyville, the New Orleans' legalized red light district of about 1910-1912. He paid the prostitutes to take their pictures, and it is believed that the photographs were never meant for public distribution.

Bellocq's glass negatives were found by Lee Friedlander, who printed them for the Museum of Modern Art. Notably, in reflecting on the traditional portraits of women from the 1900s, both rigid and formal in pose, Bellocq's nude photographs create striking contrasts—not so much for the nudity as the natural expressions of the women in the images as they drink, talk, and play. Trethewey saw the portraits of one of the unknown fair-skinned black women gazing defiantly into the lens, named her, and gave her a voice. In an interview with Charles Rowell for *The Journal of Contemporary African-American Poetry* (2004), Trethewey discusses her interest with untold stories and unheard voices from the past as she talks about an earlier collection of poetry, *Domestic Work* (2000):

I think I've been concerned with what I have noticed to be the erasures of history for a very long time. Those stories often left to silence or oblivion, the gaps within the stories that we are told, both in the larger public historical records and in our family histories as well, the stories within families that people don't talk about, the things that are kept hushed. And so, I've always been interested in those contentions between public and cultural memory, larger history and private or family memory and stories. And so I do seek to restore or to recover those subjugated narratives. (1023)

Bellocq's Ophelia is a slim text full of memorable images and contemplative poetry. The book gives some understanding into what it must feel like to be regarded with an identity assigned to you, a persona constructed by society, an otherness not quite your own.

Natasha Trethewey has been published in numerous anthologies and magazines. Her body of work also includes *Native Guard* (2006), *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf* (2010), and *Thrall* (to be published in 2012). She was the winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the 2008 Mississippi Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts for Poetry. She currently works as an assistant professor of English, poetry, and creative writing at Emory University in Decatur, Georgia.

2011-2012 Writing Awards for *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*

Judson Q. Owen Award for Best Piece Overall

Wil Norton, "The Collective Unconscious, Zen Buddhism and Zeami's *Atsumori*:
Aesthetics as a Means of Transcending the Self"

Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award

Wil Norton, "The Collective Unconscious, Zen Buddhism and Zeami's *Atsumori*:
Aesthetics as a Means of Transcending the Self"

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award

Ainsley Kelly, "Firestorm"

Herbert Hughes Short Story Award

Sarah Tarkany, "One Hundred"

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award

Margaret O'Brien, "Sweet Water"

Student Advisors



Alexandra Reznik
Student Advisor
Duquesne University, PA

Here we stand at the beginning of another year full of amazing opportunities. As a first year graduate student, I'm looking forward to teaching, conferencing on topics from race and crime in Twain's *Pudd'n'head Wilson* to bloodshed's effect on land in *Richard II* and drinking rituals in *Jersey Shore*, as well as expanding my boundaries and comfort zones. While many of these are bound to be fabulous experiences, I am most excited to serve as your Student Advisor for Sigma Tau Delta. I look forward to closely working with you to make this the most productive year yet!

As facebookers, tweeters, google plussers, and every other type of social network pluggers, the power is in our hands to expand communication and development among chapters. I have enjoyed working with students from the Eastern region over the past two years, specifically in coordinating the Carson Academic and Creative Writing Conference at Chatham University. The phenomenal inspiration that this conference created led to the Alpha Delta Lambda chapter winning Outstanding Chapter, Outstanding Advisor, and Outstanding Service Project awards. My time as an undergrad at Chatham has taught me Sigma Tau Delta's power to make an enormous impact on your academic and local community. I look forward to connecting with you to strengthen your chapter's connections to your own academic and local communities. As a graduate student at Duquesne University, I will work with fellow Student Advisor Kelsey to reach out to chapters on a national level to foster growth in the Sigma Tau Delta community.

Kelsey Hixson-Bowles
Student Advisor
Kansas State University



Classes have started, assignments have been handed out, and I have already read an entire novel for my London Literature class—I think it is safe to say summer has ended. While I am sad to say goodbye to the freedom of having late-night conversations with Englishy friends any night of the week, I welcome the class discussions on crafting the memoir. As this is my senior year, I am savoring every last moment of being an undergraduate at Kansas State University. Our chapter is busy working on a couple of different service projects while we continue to recruit more members. As the former president, I am filled with pride to see how far we have come in such a short amount of time!

I am thrilled to be a part of this exciting time of growth in our organization as a Student Advisor to the Student Leadership committee. In addition to preparing helpful, fun, and thought-provoking sessions for convention, we are also working on a couple other projects. We will continue to add and improve our Student Leadership Blog, so make sure to keep an eye on it. I am looking forward to working with the exceptional group of leaders we have on the Student Leadership committee throughout this year. Most of all, though, I am itching to get to New Orleans for the 2012 Convention. Hopefully, I will see all of you there!

Alumni Representatives



Deborah A. Dessaso
Alumni Representative
University of the District of Columbia

Are you feeling like a disconnected graduate? Listen up! Sigma Tau Delta's Alumni Epsilon chapter may be just what you need to keep writing during that period between graduation and graduate school and/or that new job. Or if you graduated some time ago and feel that you're out of the loop, Alumni Epsilon is one of the best ways to reconnect to a writing community. From our Facebook page to our blog, you can keep up with your colleagues, whether they are involved with a Sigma Tau event or any other writing-related activity. Through the Alumni Epsilon chapter, you can keep your creative juices flowing through such mediums as the online literary journal launched last year. Manuscripts are due January 15, 2011, and submission guidelines can be found on the Alumni Epsilon website at english.org/sigmatd/alumni.shtml. Have questions or want to chat? Shoot us an e-mail at sigmatd.ae@gmail.com. We know you've got something to say, so let us hear from you!

Alumni Representatives, Continued



Lauren Brandeberry
Associate Alumni Representative
University of Central Oklahoma

Greetings from your Associate Alumni Representative for the 2011-2012 term. I am a former Student Advisor for Sigma Tau Delta (2009-2011), and I am excited to continue to serve. I am also Sigma Tau Delta's Project Coordinator.

I look forward to working with Deborah Dessaso to continue to grow and strengthen the Alumni Epsilon chapter and to represent and advocate for the unique needs and contributions of alumni members. We plan to do everything we can, from increasing membership benefits and opportunities to building a community and helping with networking, job hunting, and other issues important to alumni. But we need you to help, too! We plan to encourage alumni members to present papers and panels at the convention, write articles for the blog, and generally act as resources for the younger members. I hope many alumni members will join us in making Alumni Epsilon a much more significant part of Sigma Tau Delta.

Student Leadership: A New Conversation

Lauren Brandeberry

The Student Leadership News has undergone some exciting changes recently. Two years ago, the Student Leadership Committee went from producing six regional newsletters to one combined newsletter, and last year they changed things up again, scrapping the newsletter altogether and combining forces with the Alumni Committee to produce the new and improved Student Leadership News Blog. These changes may have caused some confusion, but now that everyone has settled into the new system the benefits are obvious.

With six regional newsletters, plus a separate alumni newsletter, there was a lot of overlapping information from one publication to the next and a lot of work was being duplicated. The combined format relieved this issue but made several other drawbacks to the newsletter even more obvious. For one thing, it was too long. Since it came out only twice a year, it contained all of the news, resources, ideas, and suggestions gathered over six months, crammed into one really long publication. It truly had something for everyone, but nobody had the time or interest to read all or even most of it, and great information was being missed.

Publishing twice a year also meant it was really hard to provide time-sensitive information like calls for submissions or reminders about deadlines. The format also didn't invite any interaction between the authors and the readers. There was no place to leave questions or comments or to interact with the leaders or other members. By switching to a blog format, the Student Leadership Committee has completely changed how the student and alumni leaders can interact with Sigma Tau Delta's members. Now interesting articles and helpful resources will be published regularly throughout the year, along with news, reminders, and fun distractions. Readers can interact with each other and with the author in the comments section, and the representatives can answer questions or respond to requests for help right away.

The benefits don't stop there. The blog also gives readers a lot more options for how they want to get their information. You can sign up to get new blog posts delivered directly to your email, the feed reader of your choice, or your Facebook feed. But that's not all! Perhaps you don't want to get every single article. You might want news for the whole society and your region, but not news that only applies to other regions. Sponsors may want to get all of the news and resources, but not the fun extras. Alumni may only care for Alumni news. Student Leadership has you covered. You can specify your subscriptions by region and/or content type to get exactly the information you want delivered straight to you in whatever format you prefer. If you don't want anything cluttering your inbox, you can visit the site at your leisure and navigate by region or topic to find the topics that matter to you.

More features are coming soon, and the Student Leadership Committee and Alumni Committee always welcome your questions, suggestions, and feedback. Check out the new and improved Student Leadership News Blog and join the conversation today!

Money, Money, Money.
www.english.org/sigmatd/awards

An Education in Reality, an Education of a Voice



Hilary Titus
Phi Beta Kappa Chapter
Santa Clara University

“There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the ‘practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” Jane Thompson, author of *Radical Learning for Social Change*.

The people will be your textbook.

November 2, 2010, El Día de Los Difuntos, the Day of the Dead. We stood amongst the hundreds of burial plots in a cemetery in Ayutuxtepeque, San Salvador, surrounded by what seemed like thousands of joyful families who had come to celebrate their late loved ones. I anxiously hoped I wasn’t unwittingly standing on top of any of the crowded graves. The atmosphere was gay, but so many in our party were overcome with tears. My friend Iberica had lost her child eight months into her first pregnancy.

Although Iberica went religiously to each of her monthly appointments, we couldn’t figure out what exactly they had been doing for her. It must not have been much, because when the baby stopped moving, she didn’t know to go to the hospital. When her belly started getting hard, she didn’t go to a clinic. When she stood up from a bus ride in the city and her water had broken, she walked 45 minutes back up the volcano to her home because she didn’t know what to do. She wasn’t having pains and no one had ever warned her about these unexpected situations.

Amidst the festivities in the cemetery that day, we gathered around a tiny mound of dirt while Iberica’s family and friends praised the Lord for his love and faithfulness.

I found myself in that cemetery because I chose to study abroad with a program in San Salvador, El Salvador, called La Casa de la Solidaridad, a program which puts its students in contact with the reality of El Salvador through both classroom education and direct relationships with Salvadoran communities. The program practices a different sort of education, the kind of education that calls students to “deal critically with reality” and enables them to “participate in the transformation of their world.” They call it praxis-based education, simply meaning an education based on active experience with the world and deep reflection upon those experiences. Students immerse themselves in the reality of El Salvador, a country still reeling from its recent civil war, the problems that caused the war in the first place, and the new ones that have spun out of it, such as the two gangs with enough power to shut down the country’s public transportation system, as they did while I was there this past September. The students see the repercussions of this country’s daily struggle with violence against women, inequitable distribution of wealth, and natural disasters. Students do not only encounter the effects of these realities, they also engage in intense reflection upon this life that rages, and weeps, before them.

Action and reflection. Action and reflection.

In the face of that day in the cemetery with Iberica’s family, question after question emerged to swirl amongst my thoughts: How do cultures and individuals deal with death? Why had this beautiful baby girl never taken one breath? Would she have if her mother had money, and therefore access to healthcare? Should adequate healthcare constitute part of an individual’s basic human rights and needs? Can God exist amongst so much suffering? How can they praise God while they stand around this miniature grave?

The questions and lessons come from direct experience with everyday life itself. They are often overwhelming, frightening, complicated, and confusing, but they are just as often beautiful, humbling, inspiring, and—most importantly—life-changing.

In the wake of Iberica’s loss, I realized that I had come to think of her as my sister. I could not, and cannot, explain it. It’s not as if we had shared so many deep conversations or even shared very many life experiences, but there she was: my sister. But my sister would always face challenges that I cannot imagine. I will almost certainly never have to hike 45 minutes down a volcano in labor, and I will definitely never have to take a public bus to the hospital to deliver my baby—stillborn. Iberica and I come from two worlds completely different in kind. But my engagement with her reality, however brief or limited, opened me up to a new freedom: the freedom to see the world more fully, more clearly, with eyes more ready for compassion, a heart more willing to be taught by others, and a voice unwilling to remain silent.

Sponsorship: “Some Work of Noble Note” Awaits

Delores Stephens
Professor of English
Morehouse College
Sponsor, Upsilon Nu Chapter



The year was 1976. A launching was underway. A recognition was acknowledged. A small department was about to increase its scope and herald its significance on a campus known for its uniqueness and its traditions. The department chair, an alumnus, sought to make English as prominent a major for students as were the sciences and theology; thus, he sought to establish a chapter of Sigma Tau English Honor Society. This addition followed the chartering of a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at this small, all-male, historically black college or university (HBCU), and signaled to students that literary and critical scholarship are greatly respected on this campus. However, so small was the number of majors in English at that time that only two students were among the members inducted at chartering. I was also one of the eight faculty members inducted.

Thus began my affiliation with a campus organization that is now a seasoned and select one. And though I count among my scholarly “sons” many who were not members of Upsilon Nu, most of my on-going associations with alumni started when they were students in the Society. When I hear from an alumnus who has celebrated several reunions at the College, that person is usually one with whom I worked as sponsor and as informal advisor/mentor. Now that we are in easy reach digitally, a call or message from a Sigma Tau Delta member whom I had not seen for two decades is not a surprise. These graduates become resources for the current and future members to assist with navigating their undergraduate and career paths.

Indeed, Sigma Tau Delta has been a bonding experience for me and many students. Our meetings and activities have required the students’ leadership and discipline; prompted their commitment to presentations at national conventions; spawned many programs; generated poetry and articles that were submitted to and edited for campus literary publications; led to mixers with other chapters in the consortium to which our institution belonged; caused collaboration with diverse campus organizations, fostered camaraderie among members and their peers in the general population; and made our chapter a special group, not elitist, but positively provocative in the department. In fact, it is the organization that the faculty looks to for scholarly and creative leadership.

Yes, I have some regrets: I have not succeeded in getting members to run for regional or national office and have not been forceful enough to get regular submissions for Sigma Tau Delta publications. Yet, I take pride in nurturing the blooming of many a recalcitrant member and in having coaxed funds from a shrinking department budget for travel from coast-to-coast to conventions as well as in garnering support from college sources when further underwriting was needed. The conventions have always opened new vistas for our members as they increase their critical acuity, meet students whom they might see again in graduate programs, and gain ideas for programs.

The pleasures of my position could fill a tome, but I have failed to complete one major plan: the compilation of a pictorial history of the chapter. My archives are plentiful; thus, I will renew my personal pledge, and perhaps make fulfilling it a chapter project. Doing so will conjure up memories and stories of inductions, travel with “my guys,” service projects, film festivals, poetry readings, writers’ birthday celebrations, hours of conversations about future endeavors, and notes from and on the diverse paths of many successful alumni of the chapter.

The year is 2011, and I have served almost thirty years as sponsor. But this is not a valedictory. I am not storing my medallion yet! Tennyson’s words bid me to continue: “To strive, to seek, to find” means to make Upsilon Nu more vital to Morehouse College.



The Upsilon Nu Chapter at Morehouse College

Literary Digital Archives



Gretchen Panzer
Alpha Tau Chapter
St. Norbert College, WI

With the expansion of the interdisciplinary field of Digital Humanities (DH), it's easier than ever to access that piece of literature you're searching for. DH scholars have made an impressive array of texts available online by placing them in digital archives. Even the few archives listed

here include works by authors as disparate as Shakespeare and Allen Ginsberg, as well as non-literary texts that may provide historical context for a critical analysis or inspire a new project. Even if you don't find that particular text you're looking for, you will certainly find something worth reading.

The following digital archives are student-friendly—they are free of charge and don't require a subscription. In some cases, however, the supporting institution restricts access to certain texts or collections.

Project Gutenberg

The original producer of free e-books, Project Gutenberg is an excellent resource for literary scholars. The site houses over 36,000 e-books, which can be viewed on your computer, iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle, or other portable device.

http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page

The Oxford Text Archive

The OTA contains thousands of texts in over 25 languages. Most of these are canonical works such as *Beowulf*, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, making the OTA a particularly great resource for students. Access to certain texts is restricted.

<http://ota.ahds.ac.uk/>

The National Library of Scotland

A digital archive and a digital gallery are available on the National Library of Scotland's website. While the site features works from other countries as well, the collections of Scottish literature—which include high-quality scans of early Scottish texts—are especially noteworthy.

<http://digital.nls.uk/archive/index.cfm>

Cornell University Library Windows on the Past

Cornell's rather eclectic compilation of literary and non-literary archives includes the university's witchcraft collection, the Home Economics Archives, and the Hive and Honeybee Collection (a small archive of books on beekeeping). Access to some collections is restricted.

<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/>

The Library of Congress Digital Collections

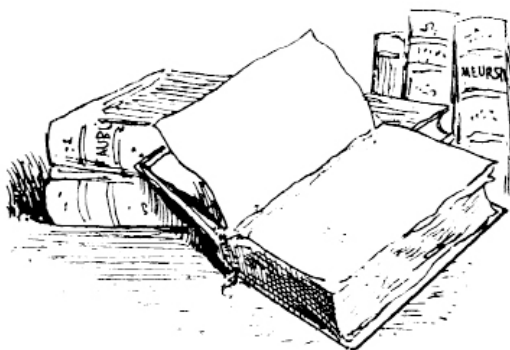
Though the Library of Congress' literature collection is limited, the site also contains extensive collections of historical materials, including scans of historic newspapers, legislative information, and website archives. Its careful records should prove useful to New Historicists.

<http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html>

The Poetry Center Digital Archive

The digital archive of San Francisco State University's Poetry Center is unique in that it features live audio recordings of poets reading their work. Unfortunately, the site does not include transcripts; however, those who enjoy the spoken word will appreciate this archive of poets' voices.

<https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/poetrycenter>



The International English Honor Society

Sincerity • Truth • Design

Member of the Association of College Honor Societies, Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society is chartered in Illinois in accordance with the laws of the United States as a non-profit, educational organization. Founded in 1924, the society serves university and college chapters, providing recognition for academic excellence in the study of English.

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