

"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Southern Methodist Univ.
Department of English
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erudition

Finding Joy in the Old: SMU Welcomes its Newest Member

I'm standing outside of the Student Center at the University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo on a late afternoon in May, 2009, after a long day at the 44th Annual International Congress on Medieval Studies. My colleague, Mike Anderson, and I are debating dinner possibilities and giving in to the fact that we are probably doomed to eat yet another bland meal in the cafeteria, when we see a familiar face coming toward us. It's Irina Dumitrescu, our newest faculty member at SMU, looking hungry and happy and surrounded by smiling friends. After hearing our sad dinner plans, Dr. Dumitrescu immediately takes pity on us: "Come to dinner with us," she urges, "we're meeting a bunch of Anglo-Saxonists and going out for burgers—it'll be fun!" Who knew that Anglo-Saxonists went out for burgers—or had fun, for that matter? So we pile into the car and head out to a little burger joint downtown. Our modest party is joined by another dozen or so Anglo-Saxonists, and as we sit down, I snag a seat next to Dr. Dumitrescu, who is clearly very popular in this circle.

As it turns out, Mike and I made quite a few friends that evening, eating and chatting with what apparently can be quite an exciting group of Anglo-Saxon scholars, but my favorite memories of the night involve talking one-on-one with Dr. Dumitrescu about life, school, and the profession. Later that summer, when I was asked to interview our newest faculty member for *Erudition*,



Irina Dumitrescu

I couldn't wait to get started. I sat down with Dr. Dumitrescu in her new office at the beginning of her first semester here at SMU and talked about life in Dallas, her passion for language, and the pursuit of a scholarly career.

Dr. Dumitrescu comes to SMU by way of Yale University, where she earned her Ph.D. in English and Medieval Studies. Her dissertation, entitled "The Instructional Moment in Anglo-Saxon Literature," for which she won the Veech Prize for the best dissertation in the Department of English at Yale, 2008-2009, considers the relationship between teachers and students in Anglo-Saxon literature, focusing in particular on discipline and punishment as pedagogical tools. Among the ten languages in which she is proficient are Romanian, French, Middle High German, Old English, and even Old Norse. I ask

Dr. Dumitrescu how she has found the time and the patience to study all of these languages. "I like languages," she explains; "books about language have always been my pleasure reading—I'm especially passionate about the strange histories of words." It soon becomes clear that she also loves sharing this passion with others, as she immediately begins recommending various books for me to read on the histories of language and grammar. Happily, Dr. Dumitrescu had the pleasure of sharing her passion with SMU undergraduates in several of the courses she taught this year: one, the Gateway to the English Major, another, an upper-level medieval course, focusing on the medieval epic. "I call that course 'Burly Boys in the Middle

continued on page 5

Spiegelman Celebrates 26 Years as Editor-in-Chief of *Southwest Review*

Mr. Willard Spiegelman has a reputation among SMU students, undergraduate and graduate alike. Those lucky enough to take his classes insist that their writing skills improve exponentially under his careful guidance and often urge their friends to enroll in his courses. Upon graduation, many senior English majors name Mr. Spiegelman among their all-time favorite professors at SMU. Given his popularity with students, it should be no surprise that Mr. Spiegelman has an equally powerful effect on the poets and fiction writers he encounters as editor-in-chief of the *Southwest Review*, a position he has held for the past twenty-six years.

The third oldest continuously published literary quarterly in the United States, the *Southwest Review* originated at the University of Texas at Austin. UT professors founded the journal, then called *The Texas Review*, in the hopes of creating a space to exhibit arts and letters in the then-rural landscape of Texas. From its inaugural issue, the quarterly was committed to publishing only the very best works of fiction, poetry, and essays it received. In 1924, the journal found a new home and a new name at Southern Methodist University; it was rechristened the *Southwest Review* to capture the growing urbanization of the Southwest. Famous literary critic Cleanth Brooks and Pulitzer Prize winning author Robert Penn Warren served as editors of the quarterly in the 1930s and helped ensure its survival during the Great Depression. Over the years, contributors to the *Southwest Review* have included such literary luminaries as D.H. Lawrence, Maxim Gorky, Mary Austin, Quentin Bell, Horton Foote, Larry McMurry, Joyce Carol Oates, Amy Clampitt, James Merrill, Margaret Drabble, Iris Murdoch, Arthur Miller, and Naguib Mahfouz.

Mr. Spiegelman joined the distinguished ranks of *Southwest Review* editors in 1984, the first time in 40 years that the position of editor-in-chief was held by a member of the SMU faculty. Under Mr. Spiegelman's leadership, the journal has amassed numerous honors and awards. Work appearing in the magazine has garnered O. Henry Prizes and Pushcart Prizes, and has been reprinted in collections such as *The Best American Short Stories*, *The Best American Essays*, *The Best American Poetry*, and *New Stories from the South*. The journal not only publishes well-established authors, but also fosters new talent and encourages nascent writers. *Southwest Review*-sponsored writing contests, such as the Morton Marr Poetry Prize and the David Nathan Meyerson prize for fiction, honor writers early in their career, before they have published their first book. In 2005, Mr. Spiegelman's work as editor-in-chief earned him the PEN/Nora Magrid award for literary editing from the PEN American Center, the U.S. branch of the of the world's oldest international literary and human rights organization.

Almost always clad in a bowtie and perfectly pressed slacks, Mr. Spiegelman reclines in his office chair. Books, art, and photos of opera singers (Mr. Spiegelman is an opera critic for *The Wall Street*



Mr. Spiegelman introduced the graduate students to award-winning poet Edward Hirsch at an event sponsored by the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture. From left to right: Ph.D. students Carrie Johnston, Kayla Walker Edin, Andrea Luttrell, poet Edward Hirsch, Mr. Spiegelman, Micah Robbins, and John Evans.

Journal, among other publications) cover his office walls. It is hard not to be in awe of Mr. Spiegelman's many accomplishments. He has written numerous articles and books, the latest of which, *Seven Pleasures: Essays on Ordinary Happiness*, was published in 2009 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. An expert on the English Romantic poets and twentieth- and twenty-first century American poets, Mr. Spiegelman also pens popular book reviews and essays about the history of literary journals, art, opera, Texas culture, and the benefits of learning classical Latin. His work has appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Paris Review*, *Opera News*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *American Scholar* and, of course, *The Wall Street Journal*. In addition, he is himself a poet and was recently featured in *The New York Times Magazine's* style issue as one of six chic professors who "[make] academia look good."

When I ask him how it felt to win the PEN award for editorial excellence, his reply reflects his wry sense of humor: "Very surprising, and it spoiled me. Everyday since then I turn on the computer and wonder what prize I've won. The answer is none." Although Mr. Spiegelman might playfully refer to himself as "spoiled" by the PEN award, in reality, he seems to derive his greatest sense of pleasure from discovering and nurturing new talent. When I ask him to relate the best part of being the *Southwest Review's* editor-in-chief, he quickly explains that he enjoys not so much the sense that he is "helping . . . literary culture at large" but rather the knowledge that "I am helping individual writers." He enjoys the feeling of "being part of a far-flung artistic community of readers and writers."

Although the *Southwest Review* publishes work from many well-known writers, it also receives an influx of stories and poems written by unknown, often unpublished writers. When I ask Mr. Spiegelman what he looks for in potential pieces for the *Southwest Review*, he paraphrases Jean Cocteau, the French poet, playwright and filmmaker, "I want to be surprised." He says, "Good writing is something

continued on page 5

Dickson-Carr Named Director of Graduate Studies in English

When Darryl Dickson-Carr was named the new Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in Fall 2009, it automatically felt like a good fit. The graduate students know him on many levels: as the professor of an intriguing graduate proseminar on American Pragmatism, as the master of a wealth of knowledge on jazz music, and as the guy who out-hiked everyone during the last two summers' seminars in Taos, New Mexico. Coupled with his excellent rapport among the graduate students, Dr. Dickson-Carr's vision for the Ph.D. program and his enthusiasm about its success make him an excellent man for the job.

In a recent conversation with Dr. Dickson-Carr, I had the opportunity to discuss his goals as DGS. He envisions a successful program as one that prepares its students to become the best professors and scholars they can be. This involves graduate students' entering into the ongoing conversation about the profession as soon as possible. "Becoming a part of the professoriate is also about understanding the profession at the same time you're learning about how your scholarship can contribute to the growth of the field," he says. Instead of turning everyone into competitive "careerists," he envisions professional development functioning as part of the fabric of the Ph.D. program, to provide opportunities for graduate students



Darryl Dickson-Carr

to present their work to each other and to faculty within and outside of the classroom.

Having been the DGS and the chair of the Graduate Placement Committee at Florida State University, Dr. Dickson-Carr knows what needs to be done to ensure the success of graduate students when they go on the job market. He laughingly admits that "boot camp" comes to mind when thinking about the series of meetings, mock-interviews, and CV revisions that take place when a student is

about to go on the job market, but stresses that even this intense preparation is not enough. He says, "That's why we should be developing ways to improve the classes and materials that will help with publication. It should be par for the course."

Dr. Dickson-Carr sees this preparation already taking place at SMU, crediting his colleagues for their hard work at establishing such a strong program in a short period of time. He has also observed a unique cohesion and dynamic among the SMU graduate students, that facilitates "an exponential growth in ability and quality of work that I've seldom seen before." All this adds up to a stellar program, one that is already being noticed in the field. Dr. Dickson-Carr notes, "I get emails and calls from people all the time saying that they really admire what we've started here. I want that reputation to grow."

With the experience, professionalism, and dedication that Dr. Dickson-Carr brings to the DGS position, we can only begin to imagine the ways in which the program will grow under his leadership. And he definitely leads by example, as he is in the middle of a book project that he believes will get scholars talking and thinking about authors of the Harlem Renaissance such as George Schuyler, Wallace Thurman, and Rudolph Fisher. Dr. Dickson-Carr writes about their significant yet largely unnoticed influence on African-American Literature and argues that recovering authors like these is the "heart of what we as scholars do."

This conviction of the importance of scholarly work does not stop with his own professional goals, as he admits to a "great deal of pride when we see any student go on to become a significant member of the professoriate." Knowing the hard work that goes into achieving that success, SMU graduate students are lucky to have Dr. Dickson-Carr's enthusiasm and expertise on our side.

by Carrie Johnston, a Ph.D. student in SMU's English Department

fountain of dreams

Its spouts spurt beads of water.
Like Olympic divers,
They pass through the arid air,
perfect,
Pristine and picturesque,
Making small splashes of opalescent
mist,
As they delve into the fountain.
The sun's rays, like javelins,
Tear asunder the mist,
Splitting the spectrum of colors –
Colors only visible because of light.
Such beauty is so,
Though too cliché for me.
Nature, give me the hidden items
At the bottom of the fountain
That look smeary and bleary on the
surface;

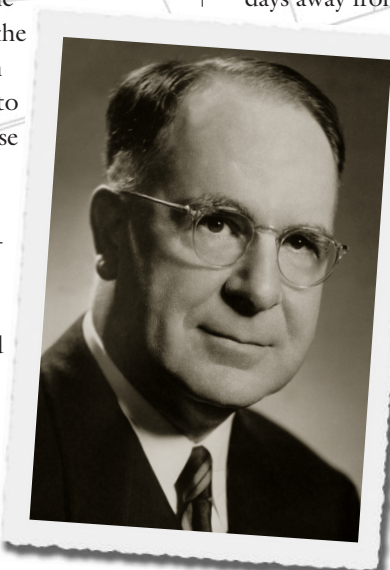
The ones bereaved of day,
Yet beneath, even without sight
All's clear,
For, by some innate wisdom we
know exist.
Such as the copper-covered
Lincolns,
Who when new, children wish
upon like stars.
How curious it is that we put so
much
Into what we value so little:
Pennies wished into millions
From a fountain;
A spirited belief unspent –
Our dreams riding on one cent.

– VINCENT CERVANTES,
a senior English major with
emphasis on creative writing

The Man in Gray: Looking behind one of SMU's most famous spirits

The musty odor of books, their jackets dusted by decades of disuse, gives the sense of times long past; the tightly packed stacks and low, cracked ceilings elicit a slight state of claustrophobia. The random knocking of plumbing and flickering of the fluorescent lights startle the lone undergraduate seeking a quiet study carrel or the grad student combing the stacks for long-forgotten titles. While these conditions alone might give rise to fright, another soul supposedly keeps company those who venture into the quiet corners of Fondren Library's West stacks. His name is Umphrey Lee.

Perhaps no one has shared a connection as interesting and intimate to SMU as did Umphrey Lee. He earned his Master of Theology in 1916 as part of the first graduating class of SMU, and he enjoyed the distinction of being the University's first student body president. Lee went on to earn his Ph.D. from Columbia University in New York in 1931 after serving as pastor at Highland Park Methodist Church. In 1939, after a two-year term as Dean of Vanderbilt University's School of Religion, Lee was selected to be SMU's fourth president.



Dr. Umphrey Lee

Several people have reported seeing a man in a gray suit wandering the upper levels of both DeGolyer and Fondren West.

During his tenure as president, Lee led the University through trying economic and political times that saw out the span of World War II and the advent of the Cold War. When Lee spoke to the SMU community, he stressed the importance of morality in society and his unending desire to see the SMU community and its individuals thrive. In a 1940 address to SMU's incoming freshmen Lee said, "No man can educate you. That you must do for yourselves. But the men and women scholars are here. And the technical equip-

ment for scholars is here." Lee served as president until 1954, when he resigned from the position due to his health. The University's Board of Trustees then established the Office of the Chancellor, to which Lee was appointed. However, in late June of 1958, and mere days away from his official retirement from his post as Chancellor,

Lee passed away in his office, then located on the third floor of the DeGolyer Library.

Many in the SMU library community acknowledge the possible lingering of Dr. Lee's spirit around Fondren and DeGolyer. There is no documentation, photograph, or official eyewitness account, but murmurings about the haunted stacks have echoed through SMU's dorm halls and classrooms for decades. Several people have reported seeing a man in a gray suit wandering the upper levels of both DeGolyer and Fondren West. Some mornings, student workers have found doors in Fondren West blocked by stacks of books. One staff member of the Fondren Library mentioned encountering on more than one occasion what she believed to be a spirit in the West stacks. She spoke of sudden temperature drops and the inexplicable

feeling of being watched, of catching glimpses of move-

ment in the corner of her eye. However, she said that she has never felt threatened or that the spirit is malevolent in any way; rather, she feels a sense of being watched over. Perhaps

Dr. Lee never abandoned his dedication to the students and staff of SMU, and maybe his benevolent presence still looks after the school he led to excellence for so many years. So should you see the man in gray in those eerie West stacks, take comfort in his caring presence and know that one of SMU's greats is looking out for you.

Thank you to the DeGolyer and Fondren library staffs and Cindy Ruppi for their gracious help and wonderful stories.

by Megan Hinshaw, a Ph.D. student in SMU's English Department

other smu ghost stories

McFarlin Auditorium — A few years ago, some members of the SMU band were practicing in McFarlin Auditorium. The group left the room to take a break but came back shortly thereafter to find all of the ceiling's light bulbs unscrewed and sitting on the floor. The period of time during which the auditorium was empty was far too short for someone to bring in the special equipment needed in order to reach the ceiling.

Dallas Hall — For several years there have circulated accounts about the possible haunting of the apartment located at the top of Dallas Hall. Often it will be cleaned and locked one evening but when unlocked the following morning, papers and other objects will be scattered about the room. Maybe one of the many Dallas figures who took residence in the room enjoyed the view enough to stay.

Irina Dumitrescu *continued from page 1*

Ages,” she adds playfully. She also had the opportunity early in the semester to direct the discussion on Old English elegies for Bonnie Wheeler’s “Medieval Passions” graduate pro-seminar—for which the group stayed behind after class to hear Dr. Dumitrescu’s haunting reading of *The Wife’s Lament* in Old English. It was but a taste of the excitement to come, as Dr. Dumitrescu also taught an Old English course in the spring of 2010. This was the first time Old English had been taught at SMU in many years, and coming on the heels of the discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard (last summer’s archeological discovery of a huge collection of Anglo Saxon artifacts), this class was a most exciting experience for students.

A regular on the conference circuit, Dr. Dumitrescu has given numerous papers on topics in her areas of expertise at Kalamazoo, of course, but also at Yale, U.C. Berkeley, Columbia, and at conferences in Wales and Berlin. She has also published articles on violence and pain in pedagogy, subjects that might make her students anxious were she not, in fact, such an approachable and generous teacher. Meanwhile, busy as she is with her work, Dr. Dumitrescu assures me that she has been taking full advantage of the exciting shopping, dining, and cultural opportunities that Dallas has to offer. She considers the charm of Dallas life: “In a way it’s more interesting to be here than in a place like New York. Everyone I know who has lived here loves it, but they never say exactly why. I’m learning that

this is because Dallas invites you to explore and find out in your own way why people love it here.” I discover that Dr. Dumitrescu loves off-the-beaten-path foreign-food restaurants and immediately recommend my favorite little Vietnamese noodle place in Richardson—I guess she really has us Dallas-ites pegged!

As our interview time draws to a close, I ask Dr. Dumitrescu what drew her to SMU, and ultimately what made her decide to accept the department’s job offer. “At my campus visit, Willard Spiegelman walked into my presentation wearing a fur-lined, horned helmet,” she explains, laughing, “and I knew at that moment that this was where I wanted to be.” She continues: “there was this intense and special and human vibe that I got. Because the campus visit is so long, you really get a sense for the place. I could tell that SMU was full of people who are serious scholars, but are also passionate about literature and ideas and are not embarrassed to show it.” She explains, “It’s not brain surgery, what we do. Of course, we take our scholarship very seriously and treat it with the highest respect, but there should always be that element of joy and play involved—we get to study beauty for a living! Isn’t that amazing?” And it really is.

“By the way—” she calls to me as I walk out the door, “Willard promised me that helmet. He says he’s been polishing it.” Three days later, when I walk by Dr. Dumitrescu’s office, I see a shiny, fur-lined, horned helmet sitting proudly on top of her file cabinet.

By Jennifer Boulanger, a Ph.D. student in SMU’s English Department.

Spiegelman celebrates *continued from page 2*

which makes you interested in a subject in which you have no interest,” adding, “I know what I like—something that has a musical cadence to it or words in an order that intrigues me.” Given Mr. Spiegelman’s love of opera, his focus on the musicality of writing seems fitting.

In fact, it was the musicality of the prose that attracted Mr. Spiegelman to the first story he published in the *Southwest Review* as the journal’s editor-in-chief. Then-unknown author Ellen Akins had submitted her short story, “Near November,” in hopes of having it appear in the quarterly. Mr. Spiegelman recognized Ms. Akins talent as a writer and, though she had no previously published work, took a chance on including her work in the summer 1984 issue of the journal.

When I asked Ms. Akins, who currently teaches in the MFA writing program at Fairleigh-Dickinson University in New Jersey, how Mr. Spiegelman’s encouragement shaped her career, she replied, “When Willard accepted ‘Near November,’ it was an absolute thrill, though of course I assumed that, as a first-time editor, he was simply deluded, luckily for me.” She reflects that “Willard became something of a mentor to me...He recommended me for grants and prizes and referred me here and there and published two more of my stories in the *Southwest Review*, which, through all the writing and publishing and teaching I’ve done, has remained a touchstone for me.” Akins went on to write a collection of short stories, *World Like a Knife* (Johns Hopkins), and four critically celebrated novels, *Home Movie* (Simon & Schuster), *Little Woman* (Harper & Row), *Public Life* (HarperCollins), and *Hometown Brew* (Alfred A. Knopf).

Inspiring new and well-renowned authors as well as his students, Mr. Spiegelman’s contributions to SMU’s English department cannot be overstated. We celebrate his twenty-six years as editor-in-chief of the *Southwest Review* and look forward to the journal’s future under his continued leadership.

by Andrea Luttrell, a Ph.D. student in SMU’s English Department



“Good writing is something which makes you interested in a subject in which you have no interest.”

—WILLARD SPIEGELMAN

Love and First-Year Writing

Perhaps it doesn't seem as if "love" and "First-Year Writing" belong together. Some who do not teach First Year Writing (FYW) see it as a fate worse than death. I won't deny it's a daunting job. At times, it seems that we're expected to fill in all the gaps in our students' K-12 writing education virtually overnight. A semester is merely fifteen weeks, and even the most gifted instructor can only accomplish so much in that brief period. Most of our students haven't been required to think about the mechanics of language or the anatomy of a sentence since junior high, and they aren't sure how to begin thinking critically. Fortunately, our FYW program is stocked with instructors who enjoy these challenges. As a result, the students who come with enthusiasm and a desire to grow leave FYW with improved reading and writing skills and, just as importantly, an appreciation for interdisciplinary thinking and greater intellectual curiosity.

To serve the latter objectives, I try to build my English 1302 courses around topics that my students will find intriguing, but that are also relevant enough to encourage consideration and application beyond their time in my class. I was delighted by the level of interest in my new course, "Love and Other Demons." I doubted if any of my students had heard of the Marquez novel that inspired the title, and I feared they would find the course text list confusing, wondering, "What do any of these books have to do with love?" But that was precisely the idea—to surprise them by truly doing what the general course description promises: "[H]elp [them] look beyond the limited discussions of this course issue commonly encountered in the popular media and to develop analytical and interpretive perspectives which take into account historical and cultural contexts."

It's been more exciting than I anticipated. You probably knew that Tim O'Brien's haunting *In the Lake of the Woods* is a novel of the Vietnam War... but did you know that it is also a love story? I've taught this novel before, but doing so from this new perspective was an amazing experience. I've also had the pleasure of watching my students wake up to one of my favorite love stories, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as represented in Kenneth Branagh's film version. Most of them had no idea what to expect. Only two students had read the novel, and the rest knew only the typical old Hollywood misrepresentation of the characters (green monsters and raving mad scientist). Those were lively and inspiring moments as I watched them struggle with the question of who or what is the real monster in the story, who is deserving of our sympathy, and where love was misplaced or simply went wrong.

Obviously, these aren't traditional love stories. They aren't book-length valentines that leave us sure that at least one couple will live happily ever after, à la Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy. But isn't it important—and, dare I say, sometimes even more interesting—to

consider what happens when humans don't receive the love they need, can't love themselves, love when society's law (either written or implied) tells them they shouldn't? I think so, and what's most thrilling is that my students agree. I wish I had time to do more: to assign Martin Sherman's *Bent* and to show them *The Reader*. Sure, we're discussing dark and complicated issues here, but we're learning a lot and having a great time.

After a grueling conference one week with a struggling student who was diligently working to improve his writing skills, he turned before leaving my office and said, "This is really hard, but I'm so glad I took this class." That was a good day. The best part was being able to respond with total honesty, "I'm glad you did, too, and I love teaching it."



by Vanessa Hopper, M.A., First Year Writing Lecturer. Vanessa Hopper has degrees from UTA and SMU, is a graduate of Rice University's Publishing Program, and writes poetry. She is a full-time lecturer in the English Department and has fourteen years of teaching experience.

sixteenth

it was summer and i was sixteen.

it was a hundred degrees every day
and i would drive to your house
windows down because i was
always

on an almost empty tank
i would be praying just get me
there,

just get me there
because gasoline was 2.78 a gallon
and i could only afford
to fill up 10 dollars at a time.
but with that warm air always
pushing back my hair,
i never felt so free.
and we would make love
in those old neighborhoods

with abandoned houses
and no streetlights,
no way to get caught.

condensation on all the
windshields
your warm breath on my neck
we had no
idea
what we were doing,
and i would drive back to my
house
anxiously watching the clock
wishing minutes lasted longer
while simultaneously
trying not to get pulled over
but the speed limit was 35 miles
per hour,

Footnotes: A Feature from an Undergraduate Pen

“English Can Be Sexy, Too”

Four years after an amazing drama course with Professor Rosendale, I found myself a permanent (well, until graduation) fixture in the English Department. As a senior, I was nearing the precipice of college life and preparing to dive from it directly into the “real world,” since they told me I had no other choice. I was trying not to be scared, but I had heard that fearlessness in the face of job searches and paying bills was harder than trying to stay awake while reading *The Mill on the Floss*.

Before I got into that “real world,” however, I wanted to sum up my experience as an English major, which I’m confident I shared with all English majors at SMU. We’d been bonding over late-night papers and incomprehensible literary critics for many semesters, and I think our effort deserved a little recognition. So what makes an English major, anyway? I know by now it’s not a passion for anime or the Renaissance festival, and we’re not all slackers trying to find the easy route into law school. Yes, it’s true that most of us struggle with basic math and get violently jealous when we see the unfairly fancy business school. But on the other hand, at 22 years old, I still got nervous emailing my professors, fearing my informal writing would

be judged. (Ahem... So don’t judge me now, Professor Spiegelman.) For a semester, my friends and I lived in terror of being called on to recite in medieval English or to be put on the spot to “recall” the Latin or Greek roots of words—as if we knew them in the first place. I giggle every time I think about Emily Dickinson’s “A narrow fellow in the grass” and being called on by Professor Householder to explain the meaning to the class (apparently, maturity does not come with seniority). I talked more to the girls in my Brit Lit class after midnight than I did to my boyfriend, mostly because they could sympathize with my 2:00 a.m. writer’s block.

On the other hand, I know that we seniors were absolute geniuses for having made it to graduation. I finally understand all those nerdy literary jokes, and I am no longer helpless in a discussion of Derrida or (*gasp!*) Foucault with Professor Foster. Thanks to Sigmund Freud, I can safely blame my shortcomings on expressions of my sexual repressions. We have all written enough essays to fill our own academic journals, the result of which is that we know our way around the stacks better than anyone. Many of us are even card-carrying members of Sigma Tau Delta, the National Honor Society for English Students, intimately known as STD. And of course, as is the mark of true English majors, we relentlessly and cruelly correct the grammar of our loved ones.

At the risk of sounding clichéd, I do have to say I was very proud of all of us. We made it, even without someone inventing an IV for caffeine. All that was left at the end was to blow sixty bucks on a cap and gown and make a run for it (that is, as long as we could squeeze out those final assignments—where were the Villetta Sparknotes anyway?). We were all off to bigger and better things, so keep an eye out for the SMU Class of 2009. Graduate school, law school, starting that deep novel/soul-baring poem we’d been dreaming about since that last awful breakup...or, not reading anything with literary merit for a very, very long time (I recommend the *Twilight* series for those of you who cannot stand to look at Walt Whitman for awhile). Me? Well, I was off to be an English teacher myself, hoping to inspire young eighth graders to become passionate about something other than *High School Musical*. So, my last words should be nothing more than good luck...And sorry to all my professors for these jokes (kinda).



by Cheyenne Rogers, an English major who graduated from SMU in 2009. Cheyenne is a native Texan and is proud to be part of the charter corps of Teach for America in Dallas, teaching sixth grade language arts in an effort to bridge the achievement gap in Dallas public schools. She hopes to attend law school after her two years with TFA.

summer

and i had to be home at midnight.
it was the same every night:
silently sneak the key in the lock
turn and barely open the door
tip toe up the stairs to my room
and prepare myself for the trouble
i was in for.
because no matter how fast i drove
i was always late
and no matter how quiet i was
i always got caught.
and my mother’s words would go
in one ear
and out the other
and i would just smile to myself
look down at the ground
nod

completely unaware of anything
that she was trying to tell me like
“you’re too young,” or
the questions she would ask like
“how could you disobey me like
that?”
because all i could hear
was you, over and over again
it was just
“i love you, i love you, i love you,
i love you”
it was summer. i was sixteen.

— KATIE SCHAFFENBERGER,
a psychology major,
English and education minor

Summer Seminars in Taos

In July 2008, the Department began offering an annual week-long seminar at SMU's beautiful campus in Taos, NM, for students completing their first and second years in the Ph.D. program. Modeled loosely on NEH summer seminars, the 2008 Seminar focused on how "race" is constructed. The 2009 seminar focused on the important new field of Digital Humanities.



Erudition is published for alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends of the Department of English.

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