



Sigma Tau Delta

Fall 2007

WHAT'S NECESSARY ABOUT CONTRADICTIONS?

Find Out at the 2008 Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Louisville

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Shannin Schroeder, Convention Chair, Southern Arkansas University

The other members of the board and I just spent a week warming up Louisville for you (you're welcome). It was my first visit to the city, not counting touring its website. That virtual tour may be the perfect place to begin thinking about our convention in Louisville. Watch the rotating pictures at the top of www.gotolouisville.com, the official visitors bureau site, and you'll find a pleasantly confusing juxtaposition: a photo of a local zoo inhabitant dissolves into another shot of a lovely Kentucky Derby spectator. The pace of that fade was slower earlier in the summer—someone finally got to my e-mailed suggestion—but, for a nanosecond, it still looks as though the gorilla is wearing a very tasteful *chapeau*.

The city is everything you'd expect from a Sigma Tau Delta convention site: quiet, clean, peaceful, friendly. If you read this and thought, "well, yeah, but except for 'friendly' this doesn't sound like any city I know," you're probably not from Louisville. Already, I'm beginning to dissect the paradoxes of the place, and the more I learn about Louisville, the more excited I am about our theme, "Necessary Contradictions," playing out in this beautiful city.

What makes Louisville the city it is? Perched between the North and the South, between the French king from whom it gets its name and its American rebel founder, the city seems to have equal appeal for both the urbanites and those from much smaller parts of the country. For one thing, the downtown is, from afar, dominated by a skyline that virtually disappears once you're on the streets, surrounded by fountains and sculptures. Muhammad Ali, a native son of Louisville and champion of both boxing and peace, is remembered by the Muhammad Ali Center, elegant and serene near the river. Within easy walking distance, you will find a visitor's center and store where you can pose for a photo op with a wax figure of fast food icon Colonel Sanders—who, as one of Kentucky's most famous residents, is buried in Louisville. The city hosts the most famous American

version of the sport of kings at a park called Churchill Downs. Bourbon vies for menu space with the fine wine lists. Good clean Southern living meets horse racing and rare spirits. Louisville not only makes the juxtapositions work, it convinces visitors that the contradictions are, well, necessary.

You won't have to imbibe to find Louisville intoxicating. Nor will you have to wander far from our convention hotel, the Downtown Marriott, to find Louisville. From dining to specialty galleries, bowling alleys to English pubs, interactive museums to quiet city parks—Louisville offers us a feast of contradictions to explore this coming March 5-8. You may have just seen the convention poster outside your sponsor's office door, realizing as you read that the submission deadline is November 14.

Maybe you're in the middle of researching the essay you hope to submit at convention, or you've poked around the website at www.english.org to find out that our speakers this year cover any number of interests—a poet, a dramatist, a fiction writer. Maybe you're only cautiously optimistic that you can attend. Wherever you are in your journey toward Louisville, I hope you join us in making this, well, an awfully good convention.





CHILDREN OF SIGMA TAU DELTA

Peter Scholl, Luther College, IA

Many $\Sigma\Delta$ members probably do not know that in 2004 $\Sigma\Delta$ launched The National English Honor Society (NEHS), “the only national organization exclusively for high school students and faculty who, in the field of English, merit special note for past and current accomplishments.”

In a way, NEHS is the second “child” of $\Sigma\Delta$, which also founded Sigma Kappa Delta ($\Sigma\Delta$), the national English honor society for two-year colleges. $\Sigma\Delta$ is now an eleven year old pre-teen, and a precocious one at that, since from its birth in 1996 it has become an independent organization, with its own board of directors and budget, although $\Sigma\Delta$ holds its conventions along with $\Sigma\Delta$, sharing many of the same events and supplementing them with its own.

The NEHS, however, is only a toddler, born in 2004 and starting to charter chapters in September 2005. After less than two full years, it had 153 chapters by the end of June 2007, making it a pretty big kid with 6,848 members. $\Sigma\Delta$ is a very proud parent, since at 83 years of age, it has produced such recent healthy offspring, both joyously conceived in the spirit of its mission to “confer distinction for high achievement in English language and literature” and to “foster all aspects of the discipline of English, including literature, language, and writing.” Now that is philoprogenitiveness!

It is true that before NEHS was conceived, the mission of $\Sigma\Delta$ gave no hint that in its eighty-first year it would give birth to a high school honor society that with almost 7,000 members will in all likelihood soon grow larger than its parent. (Think of how many high schools there are!) And these must be lively groups, as you can tell by glancing at some of their chapter names: Maverick Inkwell, Swich Licour, Quoth the Darter, Illogical Fallacies, Prometheus Bound, Post Ellipsis. They have a motto in Old English: Gelast Seæl Mid Are (Duty Goes With Honor), and you can check out all this on their website, <http://www.nehs.us/index.shtml>.

Some people might think that a field-specific high school honor organization is not all that necessary or useful in a land where so many young people are run ragged with all their school activities and resume-building endeavors. But the role of an honor organization has some different dimensions in the world of the high school students. For some of these students, an organization like NEHS may serve a useful purpose not so much by “conferring

distinction” as by allowing them to get together with people who share their interests or by creating new outlets for their energies. With its national network (including its association with $\Sigma\Delta$) it can offer students some glimmerings of the “world of English” that shines more brightly than what they might see inside their regular classes and textbooks.

In an article from the NEHS *Museletter*, a chapter sponsor explains how she remembers from her own high school days how she felt that “the smart kids were the math whizzes and science fair winners, while I, at home, kept a detailed portfolio of my poetry, art and thoughts—a personal literary magazine—that no one ever saw. . . . Through my slightly right-brained and severely adolescent eyes, the only things I thought I was skilled at were not skills at all” (Jennifer Conwell, Spiritus Mundi Chapter, Gainesville, FL). An NEHS chapter provides a gathering place for such people, an outlet, a place in the sun of a braver new world.

Denver-based Dave Wendelin, one of the members of the NEHS Advisory Council, recently told our $\Sigma\Delta$ Board that in an era of relentless testing and crowding of the curriculum, NEHS can “lift up literacy” and provide access to authors, sponsor writing contests and scholarships, and do things for which so many teachers and schools don’t have the time or resources. And above all, it recognizes the interests of the students who “like English,” providing them a vision to guide them towards another level.

What does NEHS provide for $\Sigma\Delta$ members? We are already seeing $\Sigma\Delta$ alumni who are teachers in secondary schools starting chapters. And not only teachers but any $\Sigma\Delta$ chapter might want to plan some sort of activity involving a chapter of NEHS at a nearby high school. The 2008 $\Sigma\Delta$ Convention in Louisville will provide a special session to disseminate information about how to start a NEHS chapter.

We invite every $\Sigma\Delta$ and chapter to visit the NEHS website and get a feel for what it is you can do to help raise and nurture our newest child! Find out if there is a chapter near you, and consider inviting them to some appropriate program at your institution, or consider some service project that reaches out to them. NEHS offers new and exciting avenues to extend our mission in ways we hardly could imagine a few years back.

2008 Convention Speakers



Kim Edwards

Kentucky author **Kim Edwards** will present on Saturday afternoon, as well as host a workshop on Friday. Hers is something of a Cinderella story: her first novel, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, was an idea she carried around for years, hesitant to start what she knew would be a novel-length project. Its 2005 release offered moderate success...until word of mouth by its readers helped the novel surge onto the *New York Times* Bestseller list nearly one year after its publication, an unheard-of feat. But Edwards, already the author of a short story collection *The Secrets of a Fire King*

(our Common Reader, featured in an article on page 8 of this newsletter), had had her fair share of success as a writer before *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* wound its way up the bestseller's lists. Her works have appeared in such journals as *Ploughshares*, *Story*, and *The Paris Review*, and she received a National Magazine award for excellence in fiction and a Pushcart Prize; she was also an alternate for the PEN/Hemingway Award for *The Secrets of a Fire King*. Edwards, who graduated from the Iowa's Writers' Workshop, teaches writing at the University of Kentucky.

See excerpt from *The Secrets of a Fire King* on page 3

2008 Convention Speakers, cont.

Photo: Stephanie Diani



Suzan-Lori Parks

Suzan-Lori Parks won't be lecturing on Friday evening, or at the next morning's interview session, at the 2008 Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville. Instead, she will be giving what her audiences have called "the Suzan-Lori Parks show," a blend of high-energy storytelling and performance, laced with humor from one of the most exciting playwrights producing today. Her work is garnering top prizes, including a Pulitzer (for *Topdog/Underdog*), OBIE Awards (including a 1990 OBIE for Best New American Play), and a MacArthur "Genius" Award. And her work isn't confined to the stage; she has written screenplays for Hollywood heavyweights like Spike Lee, Denzel Washington, and Brad Pitt, and her adaptation of Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* appeared on Oprah Winfrey Presents and starred Halle Berry as Janie. One recent project, *Ray Charles Live!!*—for the producers of *Ray*—is a musical based on the life of Ray Charles. Parks published her first novel, *Getting Mother's Body*, in 2003 and is working on her second. Her writing teacher and mentor, James Baldwin, described her as "an astonishing and beautiful creature who may become one of the most valuable artists of our time."

See page 7 for excerpt from *Topdog/Underdog*

Opening from "Sky Juice"

Kim Edwards

Let me tell you, then, how it began: My only brother attracted the wrath of the heavens and stumbled into a fatal encounter with a cow.

The first time I told this story the man who was listening to me broke out in laughter. He did not see the great grief I carried with me, ugly and clumsy, a clay pot heavy with water, a perpetual weight. And so he laughed, blue eyes disappearing in his mirth. His teeth, as white and straight as small bones, were brilliant in his face. I stopped speaking. Even in that place I was shocked. But they had trained me well, and the smile never left my lips.

"A cow," he said, still laughing. "Unbelievable."

"No," I told him, pulling my hand away. "This story is the truth. You must not laugh at the memory of my brother."

"Sky Juice" by Kim Edwards. From *The Secrets of a Fire King*, Penguin, 1997. Used with permission.

The Story, Around the Corner

Naomi Shihab Nye

is not turning the way you thought
it would turn, gently, in a little spiral loop,
the way a child draws the tail of a pig.
What came out of your mouth,
a riff of common talk.
As a sudden weather shift on a beach,
sky looming mountains of cloud
in a way you cannot predict
or guide, the story shuffles elements, darkens,
takes its own side. And it is strange.
Far more complicated than a few phrases
pieced together around a kitchen table
on a July morning in Dallas, say,
a city you don't live in, where people
might shop forever or throw a thousand stories
away. You who carried or told a tiny bit of it
aren't sure. Is this what we wanted?
Stories wandering out,
having their own free lives?
Maybe they are planning something bad.
A scrap or cell of talk you barely remember
is growing into a weird body with many demands.
One day soon it will stumble up the walk and knock,
knock hard, and you will have to answer the door.

From: *You & Yours*. NY: Boa Editions, 2005. Reprinted with permission of the author, Naomi Shihab Nye, copyright © 2007-08.

Naomi Shihab Nye

A self-described "wandering poet," Palestinian-American author **Naomi Shihab Nye** boasts travel experiences that span over 33 years, four continents, and multiple genres; she has authored and/or edited over 20 works, many of which pull material directly from such disparate locales as the Middle East and southern Texas. Awards have followed on her heels—including Lannan, Guggenheim, and Witter Bynner fellowships; finalist honors for the National Book Award; numerous poetry prizes and awards, including four Pushcart Prizes; and numerous honors for her children's literature. Nye, who grew up in St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio, "is a champion of the literature of encouragement and heart," according to William Stafford. She currently serves as poetry editor for *The Texas Observer*, has had work featured on PBS and NPR programs, and has been a visiting writer in Texas and Hawaii. Her work *You & Yours* was the best-selling poetry book of 2006. Nye will give a reading on Thursday evening and will host a workshop on Friday morning.



Photo: Ha Lam



Serving to Lead at the Leadership Workshop

Lynzie Biggs, Student Advisor, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

In a year full of “Necessary Contradictions” and Whitman-esque multitudes, the Student Leadership Committee is preparing to bring you one more multitudinous contradiction that you won’t want to miss.

On the morning of Thursday, March 6, 2008, Sigma Tau Delta’s most successful and enthusiastic chapters will convene for this year’s Leadership Workshop. The title, **Necessary Contradictions: Serving to Lead**, denotes a contradiction that all Sigma Tau Deltans can be proud of. This year’s workshop will focus on ways that we can serve our chapters and our communities and emerge as leaders on the chapter level and beyond.

The Student Leadership Committee is already busy planning this year’s workshop where chapters will gather and share ideas on how we can serve in order to lead. The extended, two-hour workshop will be divided into six different breakout sessions; chapters can choose which sessions will be the most beneficial for them. The workshop will include many of our most popular sessions, but we are also very excited about the new additions this year. The sessions will include: **Fundraising; Publishing a Literary Journal; Small and New Chapter Development**; and our most recent additions of **Large and Growing Chapter Development; Integrating Technology: Getting Your Chapter Online**; and a new session for future and current Alumni Epsilon members.

The Fundraising session will provide tips for chapters of all sizes on how to profitably raise funds. The session will also provide a forum for chapters to come together to share past experiences and for the development of new ideas for effective fundraising strategies. The session on Publishing a Literary Journal will offer

ideas, techniques and advice for chapters large and small wishing to start a literary journal on campus, or to improve an existing publication. The Small and New Chapter Development session will focus on the unique needs and concerns of running a small or new chapter to its fullest potential. And likewise, the Large and Growing Chapter session will address the needs of the larger and growing chapters in the society. Both sessions will address topics such as: fundraising, service, chapter activities, administration, and advertising. The session on Integrating Technology: Getting Your Chapter Online will help you to thrust your chapter into the information age and will offer help and advice on how your chapter can best to utilize online resources. Topics will range from the use of online networking sites to strategies for developing your own chapter website. The final addition to the line-up this year is a session for new, future, and existing Alumni Epsilon members. This session will discuss the benefits of membership, how to become a member, and how to stay involved in Sigma Tau Delta after graduation on the national, regional, and local levels.

Back by popular demand, and running simultaneously with the student-centered workshop, is this year’s Chapter Sponsor Workshop. Due to the popularity of this session, the format this year has changed to accommodate the growing number of sponsors in attendance. There will now be topic specific breakout sessions which will each be run by some of Sigma Tau Delta’s most outstanding chapter sponsors. Sponsors will now be able to attend the sessions that they feel will be most beneficial to their chapters at home.

So join us on Thursday morning of the convention for a Necessary Contradiction that will help students and sponsors alike to serve their chapters in order to lead them to multitudes of success. ●

Student Advisor Column My Summer of Rejection

Micha Dean Hicks, Student Advisor, *Southern Arkansas University*



I’ve been getting rejected a lot lately.

You might be able to relate to this. Sometimes you get no explanation at all, just a few stock sentences you know she’s told a thousand people before you. Sometimes there are excuses or explanations: we’d have been great together, she says, except for this one thing. Or these several things. Some editors are more detailed in their rejections than others.

It struck me this summer that submitting your writing is a lot like burying a time capsule in your backyard. You start out with a clean jar, fill it with some things that are special to you, and hide it for a few months. It’s never the same when you get it back. Where once you were proud of the contents—maybe your favorites at the time?—now you’re slightly embarrassed. You’ve grown a lot since you put it away; your immaturity is all over it, sometimes highlighted by the editor’s pen.

The most disorienting thing about your work is the difference you feel when you dig it out of the mailbox. The return envelope is worn fuzzy along its creases, the postage is smeared across the corner, and often the envelope carries strange stains with it, courtesy of the editors and their staff, you think, or maybe a postal worker having breakfast while sorting mail.

It makes sense that, having submitted a lot of work all at once earlier this year, I’d begin to get it all back at about the same time. One week I managed to get rejected every single day. In the midst of all of these rejection letters, I did open my e-mail to one surprise. A mainstream, “genre-fiction” magazine accepted

one of my stories. Prior to this, my work had appeared in my university’s student-only creative writing publication and I’d read at conventions. Both are, for different reasons, very connected with academia. Being included in these more literary venues was special and valuable to me.

But I found that being included in a mainstream imprint meant something to me as well, something very different. This was something sluttier, I suppose. Someone could find this issue in a coffee shop, leaf through it, buy it (cheaply), and, for ten minutes, pleasure themselves with my work. Perhaps they would forget it before the day was over, but for those ten minutes, I would have them captive. For ten minutes, my words would be accepted, the only story in their minds.

If there’s anything you can take away from my experience, it’s that rejection is a natural part of the process, something even the writers you and I admire had to endure. (Alternatively, you could take away that I’m a hack and that the reason for my rejections should be obvious to me by now.) Although the rejections vastly outweigh the acceptances, the feeling of seeing an acceptance letter after such hard work is unparalleled.

I invite all of you to bury your own time capsules, and what better place to start than our own Sigma Tau Delta publications, *The Rectangle* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Review*, as well as next year’s convention in Louisville. ●

Simon Says: Some Idle Thoughts on Reviewing Convention Submissions

Bob Crafton, President Elect, *Slippery Rock University, PA*



I watch my share of television, I admit, but I draw the line at the reality-game-show-contest genre that has grown (groan?) in popularity in the past five years, where would-be millionaires survive great races and/or significant weight loss to become American idols before declining into answers to Trivial Pursuit (pop culture edition, fer sure) board games. But try as I might, I have been unable to escape completely unscathed from the baleful influence of such programming, and so suddenly felt quite Simon-like while reviewing convention submissions. Simon Cowell is, I suppose, preferable to what's-her-name from *Weakest Link* with her scathing pronouncements of mental fatigue, of neural pruning having left a few too many synapses snapped, her "You are the weakest link," stingingly superlative, though even here the contestant is destined for failure, doomed to be dethroned in the next episode by some dunderhead even duller than he/she. But Simon, so far, has survived, a model to those of us called upon to evaluate the efforts of others. Simon says, and the chosen few advance while many more, unfit for adulation—what could they have been thinking?—return to their prosaic lives and routines. That's me, only anonymous, without a live audience, and no British accent, sitting in judgment on a crop of critical essays.

Holding a Ph.D. in English, I am singularly well qualified, I suppose, for this job. Only a sado-masochist would pursue an advanced degree in English in the first place, willingly submitting to the ritualized abuse and humiliation such study entails. Only the MFAs have it worse. But then again, as comp instructors, we wield such power, keepers of the key, Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates, however poorly paid the position. Do unto others as they have done unto you. It's an Old Testament kind of thing, a matter of blind justice. Really, you know better, but you just can't resist. It just feels too good. A little like watching *24* on television. Come to think of it, Jack might have made a good English professor. He has all the right traits.

But along with that Ph.D. in English and all the psychological baggage it entails, I am also an educator, and, as such, I am possessed of this absurd notion that people can learn, that they are improvable, if not quite perfectible, an optimism out of keeping, to be sure, with what we know of international affairs and affairs of the heart, but again, we just can't resist.

So here I go, having read just a few too many submissions, with a few pronouncements, a few words to the would-be wise. Simon says. The following tips should help you when preparing your submission to the Sigma Tau Delta Convention.

The most common problems, so it seems, are ones of purpose, development, readability, and documentation.

Purpose: Engage the critical literature on this topic. Poetry comes from poetry; the only response to a poem, broadly defined as an imaginative act, so Harold Bloom noted long ago, is another poem, an equal and opposing act of the imagination. Though fraught with anxiety—and requiring some actual effort—that means we need to know our precursors. Why are you analyzing this particular piece? What is the question and where did this question come from? A good critical essay will engage the critical literature, will acknowledge those who have gone before us, the author entering into that community and conversation that literary discourse consists of. It may come as something of a shock to egocentric adolescents, but people have been reading and writing about most of these texts for a long

time. It's a little like sex. Every generation seems to think they invented sex, but they didn't. People have been doing it for a long time, even your parents (eek!). Get over it. Criticism begets criticism.

Moreover, there is a difference between a good classroom paper and a good conference paper. The best conference papers will transcend the limitations of the assignments that prompted these papers in the first place. At times, the immediate audience for a classroom assignment is the instructor (or someone just like the instructor), the goal of the paper to demonstrate a mastery of the material considered in that class. The class provides the context for the paper, the reasons for writing. The conference paper will address larger questions and a potentially larger audience, its purpose to address issues of interest in the discipline. A classroom instructor may ask students to write a "response statement," the student engaging directly with the text, a paper that, no matter how well written, will have limited value as a conference presentation. On the other hand, this paper might provide a springboard for the exploration of reader-response concerns relevant to the consideration of the work in question, a topic a conference paper might consider. Bottom line: If your only citations at the end of the paper are to primary sources, be concerned.

Development: Submission guidelines limit prose works to 2000 words, roughly seven pages or so of 12-point, double-spaced text. If you have seven pages at your disposal, you had better use all seven pages. A three or four-page paper just won't cut the mustard. Conversely, overrunning the word limit by more than 10% risks being rejected out right. Presentations are typically packaged four to a panel, each panelist given 15 minutes to present his or her work, the presentations taking up 60 minutes of a 75-minute session; that leaves 15 minutes for discussion. Delivered at a normal, conversational pace, a 2000-word paper requires 15 minutes to read. Papers that overshoot or that fall short of the target pose scheduling problems if nothing else, and you don't want to be a problem.

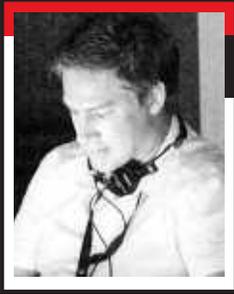
The short paper poses other problems. Most of the time, the discussion is underdeveloped. Critical essays are analytic in nature, and as analytic works, should move from technical description to functional analysis to causal analysis, taking the work apart, looking at how it works, and then considering the reasons why. The movement is from the relatively concrete to the increasingly abstract, from the materials on the page to thematic issues to questions of cause and effect, from what to how to, most importantly, why. Short papers consistently fail to consider the why questions, which is often the result of the author's failure to engage the critical literature and develop a context for the study in question.

Readability: As short papers, efficiency and economy are a premium. Don't tell us what you are going to do, just do it. Remove process-oriented statements (e.g. "The purpose of this paper is . . ."; "The analysis will consider three points . . ."; "In order to understand . . . , we must first consider . . ."). And while you're at it, avoid the first person statement; put yourself in the background. In short, keep the subject in the subject position. After that, work on phrasing and sentence structure, on paragraphing, on mechanics, on proofreading. Paragraphs that go on for pages, ill-placed punctuation, wordy and awkward

continued on page 7...

Sigma Tau Delta Alumnus and *Love in the Time of Cholera*

Dylan Russell, Alpha Delta Zeta ('99 - '00)



Ten years ago I was living in Brooklyn, staying with a friend, looking for a job and an excuse to stay in the big city of NY, having grown up in a suburb of Los Angeles. I had just broken up with my girlfriend of four years, whom I thought I would marry, dropped out of college and

went to stay with a friend who was working on Wall Street and had just come back from working and studying in Bogota, Colombia. I was licking my wounds and trying to decide what my future should be, after losing the only girl I thought I would ever love and ditching a track scholarship. My friend in NY, George, gave me a book called *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985; American translation, 1988) by Gabriel Garcia Márquez to read on the subway and a cd, by then unknown 19-year-old Latin songstress Shakira, called *Pies Descalzados*. I read the book, listened to the cd and escaped into a magical world of these Colombian treasures. The book gave me hope and inspired me to want to study literature. A month later I was back in Los Angeles taking a Spanish class over the summer and enrolling in California State University of Fullerton to study English Lit.

My first semester at CSUF I found the Alpha Delta Zeta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. I was very interested in publishing at the time and got a group of Alpha Delta Zeta members together to publish a literary magazine called *The Cache*. I took a Contemporary Novels class where we read several books that had either been adapted as films, or were being adapted. I realized then by trying to cram for exams by watching the movies instead of reading the books that books and their adaptations were two different things. It ended up being a close study group of fellow Sigma Tau Delta members that ultimately helped me get through the exams on novels like *Sophie's Choice* and *All the Pretty Horses*.

After college I had several internships in music, publishing, and tv/film before finally getting paid to work for a director as his assistant on a film called *Moonlight Mile*. A few assistant jobs later I found a part of the tv/film business that was really rewarding to me as a Producer at a company called Stone Village Pictures, where we do a lot of book adaptations. We produced films like *The Human Stain*, based on Phillip Roth's novel and *Empire Falls*, based on the Pulitzer-Prize winning novel by Richard Russo. Much of my job involves reading unpublished manuscripts for novels to decide if they would make good movies. Another great part of my job is hiring screenwriters and working with them to adapt the book to a screenplay.

Probably the best example of what I do as a producer doing film adaptations of novels is the making of our current film *Love in the Time of Cholera*, based on the novel I read ten years ago that gave me hope and inspired me to study literature. Working for a company that does book adaptations made me think of what an amazing film *Love in the Time of Cholera* would make. I knew the author Gabriel Garcia Márquez was notoriously hesitant to have his books made into films by Hollywood. What I later came to find out was his cautiousness was based on a bad experience over this very book. He once optioned the novel to a producer who never paid him for the rights and later sued him. Garcia Márquez's agent in Spain has represented the likes of Pablo Neruda and Isabel Allende, and almost every other great Spanish writer. I negotiated with her for two years, writing stacks of letters back and forth trying to be creative with my arguments for why we should be allowed to make the film, all the while trying to

structure a deal that economically made them happy and didn't overrun our budget.

When Garcia Márquez said "yes" we got calls from every screenwriter and director in town. We focused on the writer and hired Oscar winning screenwriter Ronald Harwood (*The Pianist*). We decided early on that we were doing a film in English for a broad International audience, like that of the book. Our first conversation with Harwood suggested he had cracked the structure of the story, which is usually the hardest thing to do when you're writing a script. After working on a few drafts of the script with Harwood, we got a call from Mike Newell's (*Four Weddings and a Funeral, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) agent saying he wanted to direct the film and that this was his favorite book. After a phone call and a meeting in London, we knew he was our guy. We spent the next six months casting the film, working on more drafts of the script and preparing a production in Cartagena, Colombia.

We decided to cast the film with an entirely Latin cast, though we were doing an English language film. Javier Bardem (*The Sea Inside*) called director Mike Newell and said he would die if he didn't cast him in the film. The hardest part of casting was choosing the female lead. We met with every Spanish speaking star you can imagine and couldn't find the right actress. When we broadened the net to meet an Italian star named Giovanna Mezzogiorno, the director and producers knew right away that she was right. Her persona was a match and her fresh face to audiences outside of Europe would make her a great discovery.

The production of the film was not without its tribulations, shooting in the heat and humidity of Cartagena during the rainy season. Not to mention trying to set up an infrastructure for a \$50 million Hollywood film in a city that had only supported very small budget Colombian films.

A highlight of the process was a meeting I had with Garcia Márquez at his house in Mexico City a few weeks before we started production. He said he liked the screenplay and gave us a few last minute notes. As I was telling him of our plans for the production, the locations, and the actors, I thought back to the first time I read the novel and listened to the Shakira album and remembered that he was a friend of hers. I asked him to help us get her to do some music for the film. He called her later that day and the next day I got a call from Shakira saying she was in!

The most nerve-wracking part of the film-making process was finally showing the author the film in Mexico City in August. After he watched the film with his family and friends, he said we should be proud of the film and that it was beautiful. It was then that the journey from Brooklyn came full circle. It started with discovering the novel from my friend George, continued through my days at college and my experience with Sigma Tau Delta, went through the winding path of my career in Hollywood, and came back around when a Nobel Prize winning author complemented the film adaptation of his work. The film will be released on November 16th.

Dylan Russell has been Vice President of Production at Stone Village Pictures since 2002. He was co-producer of Turistas starring Josh Duhammel and Melissa George; Executive Producer of the forthcoming film Penelope, starring Reese Witherspoon, Christina Ricci and James McAvoy; and Executive Producer of Love in the Time of Cholera, starring Javier Bardem, Giovanna Mezzogiorno and Benjamin Bratt.

Love in the Time of Cholera

Stone Village Pictures presents one of the greatest love stories ever told, based on the timeless masterpiece by Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel Garcia Marquez – *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

Spanning a half-century in the complex, magical and sensual city of Cartagena, Colombia, the sweeping romantic epic tells the story of a man who waits over fifty years for his one true love.

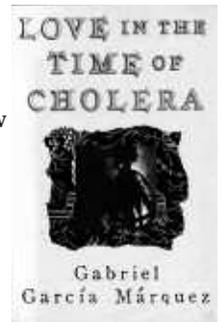
Florentino Ariza, discovers his life's passion when he sees Fermina Daza through the window of her father's villa. Though Florentino's letters awaken the young beauty's subdued heart, her father demands that she marry into one of Cartagena's grand families and forbids her from seeing him.

As years go by, Fermina marries the sophisticated and sensible Dr. Juvenal Urbino, who has brought order and medicine to

Cartagena, stemming the waves of cholera that have mysteriously haunted the city. Juvenal sweeps her off to Paris for a lengthy honeymoon, and when they begin their life together back home, she has all but forgotten her first love.

But Florentino has not forgotten her. Now a wealthy shipowner, Florentino engages in a series of affairs but still yearns for Fermina. His heart is patient, and he will wait a lifetime for the chance to be with her again.

The film will be released in the US and Canada by New Line Cinema and internationally by Summit Entertainment on November 16.



Jacket cover for 1st American edition, translated by Edith Grossman Knopf, 1988

Suzan-Lori Parks From *Topdog/Underdog*

Lincoln

They say the clothes make the man. All day long I wear that getup. But that dont make me who I am. Old black coat not even real old just fake old. Its got worn spots on the elbows, little raggedy places thatll break through into holes before the winters out. Shiny strips around the cuffs and the collar. Dust from the cap guns on the left shoulder where they shoot him, where they shoot me I should say but I never feel like they shooting me. The fella who had the gig before I had it wore the same coat. When I got the job they had the getup hanging there waiting for me. Said thuh fella before me just took it off one day and never came back. (Rest)

Remember how Dads clothes used to hang in the closet?

Booth

Until you took em outside and burned em.

(Rest)

He had some nice stuff. What he didnt spend on booze he spent on women. What he didnt spend on them two he spent on clothes. He had some nice stuff. I would look at his stuff and calculate thuh how long it would take till I was big enough to fit it. Then you went and burned it all up.

Lincoln

I got tired of looking at em without him in em.

(Rest)

They said thuh fella before me—he took off the getup one day, hung it up real nice, and never came back. And as they offered me thuh job, saying of course I would have to wear a little makeup and accept less than what they would offer a—another guy—

Booth

Go on, say it. “White.” Theyd pay you less than theyd pay a white guy.

Lincoln

I said to myself thats exactly what I would do: wear it out and then leave it hanging there and not come back. But until then, I would make a living at it. But it dont make me. Worn suit coat, not even worn by the fool that Im supposed to be playing, but making fools out of all those folks who come crowding in for they chance to play at something great. Fake beard. Top hat. Dont make me into no Lincoln. I was Lincoln on my own before any of that.

Dramatist's Play Service (2004). Used with permission.

Simon Says Cont.

phrasing—anything that serves to disrupt or frustrate the reading of the paper—these things are all problems. Remember that the paper will be presented orally, read out loud in front of a live audience. It must be readable.

Documentation: The guidelines for submission limit the paper to 2000 words, “exclusive of documentation.” That means that the words on the works cited page do not count in the total; it doesn't mean that you do not need to submit the works cited page. We need to see the references, to know which editions you are using and where the commentary cited in the paper is coming from. Currency, reliability, authority are all issues here; the documentation, consequently, plays a critical role in the rater's ability to evaluate the paper.

Additional problems also occur within the text of the paper where references to critical materials are dropped into the

discussion without appropriate introduction. The paper requires “signal phrases,” brief references to the author and the work where this material appears that cue listeners to quotation marks. The quotation marks may be visible on the printed page, but they are invisible when the text is read aloud. “Air quotes” are not an acceptable substitute. We need signal phrases, full names in the initial references, last names only in subsequent ones.

You know the drill. You have been hearing some of this stuff since high school, and, yes, there are always exceptions. George Orwell concludes his list of commandments at the end of “Politics and the English Language” with the appropriate disclaimer: “Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.” But you better have a damn good reason.

Simon says. ● ●

2008 Sigma Tau Delta Common Reader



Kevin Stemmler, Clarion University, PA

Sigma Tau Delta's Service Committee is pleased to announce this year's selection for the society's Common Reader. We have selected a text by one of this year's convention speakers, Kim Edwards. Kim Edwards is a resident of Kentucky, but her stories draw on settings from around the world. While Kim Edwards made literary history with the success of her second book, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, we have selected the newly re-issued collection of short stories *The Secrets of a Fire King* because it provides many opportunities for group discussions and literacy inspired service projects.

I imagine all readers turn to books in order to be moved. For me, the sign of a good book is that it challenges me to think about familiar topics in a new way. My opinions on a subject are rarely swayed by verbal discussions; however, an insight in a book can forever change my mind. I place more emphasis on the written word because I believe it has more power in its permanence. Furthermore, I believe that books have the power to change the world and that those of us who love books have been called to carry forth that charge. Sometimes books prompt us to take action and we engage in projects that are inspired by reading, such as participating in literacy training, undertaking book drives for local libraries, or living our lives according to the humane standards we find in books. Some of my students roll their eyes when I tell them this, but that's a response I am willing to shoulder, the chalice I am willing to carry through a throng of foes. I have deliberately paraphrased James Joyce here because I personally see Edwards' work on a par with *Dubliners* and Alice Munro's *The Moons of Jupiter*. These are collections of stories that have the potential to teach any aspiring writer the essential elements of the craft.

The Secrets of a Fire King provides a variety of intellectual and moral challenges for both the characters in the stories and for the readers. The stories allow us to examine the consequences of actions. The collection also provides various issues and topics for students to address in papers that may be presented at the annual Sigma Tau Delta Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. I would also remind you that there are opportunities for awards for essays that best address some aspect of the Common Reader.

The charge of Sigma Tau Delta's Service Committee is to select a Common Reader that will be the focus of each chapter's discussions and activities. We anticipate that chapters will be prompted by the content or ideas of the Common Reader to host discussions, to sponsor literary events on campus, or to react to a text through some type of community action. The Service Committee challenges you and your chapter to react to the text in meaningful and productive ways.



Great Illustrations from Literature



Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)
Author: Harriet Beecher Stowe
Illustrator: Hammatt Billings

Cover of the first edition of the novel. For a history of the various illustrations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*, edited by Henry Louis Gates and Hollis Robbins (Norton, 2007).



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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