

## Teaching James Merrill

A Conference of Merrill Scholars . August 2009

The Merrill House Committee, in conjunction with the LaGrua Center, was pleased to host Merrill Scholars from across the U.S. for a conference entitled, Teaching James Merrill. The scholars gathered in Stonington, Connecticut, from August 14-16 to present and discuss papers on the work of Merrill, and to experience the seaside village where Merrill lived and work during much of his life from 1954 until his death in 1995.

The Merrill house Committee opened Merrill's apartment to the group, who gathered in the author's former home to read aloud favorite Merrill poems in the very setting where the Merrill penned many of his famous works, most notably, *The Changing Light at Sandover*.

For the final event of the weekend conference, J.D. McLatchy, co-executor of Merrill's literary estate, President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and adjunct Professor of English at Yale University, interviewed Langdon Hammer, Yale University Professor of English and author of James Merrill's authorized biography. The discussion, entitled Life of the Poet, provided a unique opportunity to hear from two of the people who know and understand Merrill best about the life and work of the renowned American poet.

### Papers and presenters from the conference:

#### *Genesis of The Broken Home*

Tim Materer, Professor of English, University of Missouri

#### *Merrill's Menagerie*

Chris Coffman, Assistant Professor of Humanities, Boston University

#### *Merrill and Mallarme*

Claire Gallou, Phillips Academy Andover [dissertation, 2005, at UCLA with Professor Stephen Yenser]

#### *Days of Cavafy and Merrill*

David Mehnert, Princeton and Oxford degrees (distinguished teacher of special education music)

#### *Myth and the Long Poem: Merrill's Sandover*

Joe Moffett, Department of English, Kentucky Wesleyan College

#### *JM: Painterly Technique and Pentimenti*

Richie Hofmann: Emory University, [graduate student thesis at Boston University on James Merrill and painting]

#### *Teaching James Merrill: Mirabell's Lesson*

Kathe Marshall, dedicated reader of JM and JM Conference coordinator, Pepperdine University Administration

**For more information on the conference, or on any of the papers or presenters, please contact Conference organizer Kathe Marshall at [Kathleen.marshall@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Kathleen.marshall@pepperdine.edu)**

### Some scenes from the conference:



**Merrill House Committee members & Merrill scholars. 8.15.09**



**Fourth floor studio of the Merrill Apartment. 8.15.09**



**Langdon Hammer & JD McClatchy at LaGrua Center. 8.16.09**



**James Merrill in US Army Uniform. 8.16.09**



**Langdon Hammer & JD McClatchy. 8.16.09**